

THE LOW ROAD TO SPIRITUAL POWER

THE LAMB
WHO WAS SLAIN
HAS BEGUN
HIS REIGN



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TAKING THE WEIGHT

1

From the booklet "Set Our Hearts On Fire."

When we experience personal revival, we are invariably drawn to the Bible and are nourished by it. If our personal revival is to

continue to

sustain us, we will need to allow the Bible to keep us on course.

Without the counsel of Scripture, we are prone to veer from the path

of discipleship without knowing it. The Bible is the handbook of re-

vival and is meant to be our constant companion as we walk in the

Spirit.

It was as if this man had just awakened from a night's sleep except he wasn't in his bed. He was sitting on the floor of a room with no windows and no lamps. A strange grey light enabled him to distinguish the forms of others sitting there.

"Where am I?" he said to the form next to him.

No answer.

"How did I get here?"

Silence.

"This is ridiculous! Nobody's going to dump me into a place like this

and leave me! I have some rights! Somebody drugged me! That's it,

somebody drugged me and put me here. But why? What have I done?

I've always minded my own business, who'd want to do this to me?"

"Just yesterday ... I believe it was yesterday ... I said good-bye to my wife and was driving to work along the freeway. Oh, Oh! Wait a minute! There was this gasoline truck. You mean ... I'm dead? But that's impossible! Like when you're dead man you're dead! You're not in a place like this! You're gone! Your misery's over!"

"Maybe this is all a bad dream. Maybe I'll wake up in a few minutes."

He looked again at the shadowy forms sitting on the floor of this

shadowy room, leaning against the shadowy walls, staring at nothing.

"What's the matter with you people? Why don't you say something?"

"What's there to say?" answered one of them. "We went through all that stuff too when we first came here. You'll quiet down after a while."

"What are we doing here?"

"Waiting."

"Waiting? For what?"

No answer.

The shadowy room became silent, with a silence broken only by the sound of

weeping and the grinding of teeth. Silence filtered through smoke and

warmed by heat that told of approaching flames. The man understood that he

was dead and that his death in this shadowy world was but

a continuation of a death which had begun long, long before.

The man understood that he was dead before he ever plowed into the back of

that tanker truck! He was dead when he ate his last breakfast in the kingdom of flesh. Dead when he endorsed his paychecks. Dead when he went bowling 3

with his friends, argued with his wife, cursed his subordinates at work. He was dead for years and years and years. And the reason all those years that man kept looking away from the fact that one day his bodily life was going to end --- was because he knew in his soul that he was already dead and it scared him.

When Jesus said, ***"I have come that they might have life,"*** he was talking about those walking dead, those people who breathe, eat, indulge their desires, vent their wrath, but who have no life.

When Jesus said, ***"The hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear***

the voice of the Son of God," he was talking about those millions who walk the earth with hearts that are void of all light.

"Let the dead bury their dead."

Many of these dead go to church, read the Bible
sometimes, say they believe

in God, get upset about the issues of the day, talk about
love, but inside the soul is a vacuum.

Inside ... where there should be a flame of divine life
burning 24

hours a daytotal darkness.

Inside ... where the voice of the heavenly Father should be
heard

guiding them in the way of truth ... only the sound of their
own mum-

bling.

What these sad souls call life is nothing but a pathetic
game that is played until they plow into a fuel truck or
collapse on the floor. The object of the game is to evade
the fact that you are dead by surrounding yourself with
wealth, chattering friends, snowmobiles, motorcycles,
bowling leagues, grass and

coke, or some ideology to get lost in. But as time goes on
it gets harder to take the game seriously. After a while you
just want to give up and jump off the bridge. The whole
stupid thing is absurd. The so-called younger generation
seems to be aware of the fact that they won't have a normal
lifetime to play this game.

The End is too near. So they're playing it faster than anyone ever did before.

So they reach the point of despair when they're 25 instead of 59.

Meanwhile, God's Spirit broods over the face of this kingdom of dead souls,

and weeps. Weeps because this pointless, empty, hopeless death-existence is

so unnecessary. In unspeakable love God sent his Only Begotten into this

desolate world to take all this death into himself and destroy it by dying.

When Jesus breathed his last breath up on that cross the curse of death that hung over the human race since the fall of Adam broke. When Jesus died, the death principle inside every human being that was ever or would ever be born died with him. So that now Jesus' words literally bring life. When he speaks and you listen, you come to life.

4

Ever since he stepped out of his tomb, Jesus has been performing one continuous resurrection miracle on this

earth. Jesus breathes life into us just as the Father breathed life into him.

"It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail.

The words

that I have spoken to you, they are Spirit and they are life."

But this resurrection miracle has two sides: Jesus' side and our side.

- Jesus' side is to speak.

- Our side is to listen.

Jesus takes care of his side very well. He's taking care of it right now, as we read these words. Jesus raises us from the dead by speaking to us.

"Lazarus, come out!"

The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with bandages,

his face wrapped in a cloth. "Unbind him and let him go!"

"Young man, I say to you arise."

And he that was dead sat up and began to speak.

He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax of-

face; and he said to him, "Follow me," and he left everything, rose,

and followed him. And, as he did he came to life.

And passing along by the Sea of Galilee he saw Simon and Andrew

the brother of Simon casting a net in the sea; for they were fisher-

men. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you be-

come fishers of men." And immediately they left their nets and fol-

low him. And as they did, they came to life.

"The hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice

of the Son of God."

"The words that I speak to you, they are Spirit and they are life."

Someone reading these words will be hearing the voice of Jesus for the first time today. You will hear him calling you by name and you will know that it is Jesus who is speaking in your heart.

But there's that other side of the resurrection miracle: our

side.

Whether the miracle happens depends on whether we listen to that voice we hear.

"The hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice

of the Son of God and those who listen shall live."

You listen to Jesus not with the ear, but with the heart and your heart listens in two ways: 5

1. Your heart is listening to Jesus when it believes what he says....

...when it takes hold of Jesus' words as the only truth in the world, which is what they are. Not what you think. Not what somebody else imagines, but what Jesus tells you!

"Your sins are forgiven, my Child, they are washed away in my

blood." That's truth.

But you aren't hearing that truth until you believe with all your heart that your sins are washed away in his blood.

Jesus tells you that the guilt that stained your life is now gone. Will you believe it? The wrong you've done, the vile

things you've said, the filth you've wallowed in ... it's forgiven ... atoned for. Believe it and the curse lifts, the cloud disperses, and his light starts shining in you.

2. Your heart is listening to Jesus when it obeys what he commands.

When Jesus tells you to do something don't just sit there and blink your eyes.

Do it! If Jesus is telling you to repent, then repent right now.

If Jesus is

telling you to humble yourself, humble yourself! If he's telling you to fall on your face before the throne of God, do it. Maybe he's putting his finger on a person, a group of persons, for whom you have no love.

- Love that man!

- Love those people!

There isn't a single one of us, not a single one, who isn't being called at this moment by Jesus to some act of obedience. If you are listening with a heart that is set to obey, you will know what he is telling you to do.

- Some act of love, forgiveness, repentance.

- Some word he wants you to speak to your brother.

- Some distraction he wants you to turn away from..

And, as you do that thing, you will experience his life in you.

The time to start wondering whether you're dead or alive is not when your

spirit finds itself on the other side of the grave. The time to ask yourself whether you are dead or alive is now! There are plenty of people reading this now who walked into church, picked up a hymnal, read their bulletin but they're dead. You're breathing, your heart beats, but you're dead.

The difference between death and life is not found in religion, or respectability, or morals, or going to church when you feel like it, or memorizing the Bible ... the difference between life and death is JESUS.

God has given us eternal life and this life is in his Son. He who has

the Son has life, and he who has not the Son has not life.

6

You get the Son by listening to his words with your heart. If you listen, you live. If you won't listen to him, you'll walk away from these words unchanged.

You won't remember a thing he said until you're sitting in that shadowy place on the other side of the grave.

God help us to listen to what our Lord is saying in our hearts this day!

...To believe it.

... To do whatever he calls us to do ... now!

That listening to him we may wake up and live this day, and forever.

7

UNTIL THE SPIRIT IS POURED UPON US FROM ON HIGH

What the Body of Christ needs these days is not improved organization, or

better communications, or more money. What's needed is new life!

- A radical infusion of divine life.

- A supernatural outpouring of divine life.

What's needed in the man or woman who professes belief in Jesus but who is

bearing no fruit, bereft of joy, is not a touch here or an adjustment there – but new life. And there's only one place from which this new life can come: from on high, from God.

God has to pour out His Spirit and make the desert of our dry flesh bloom into a fruitful field.

No man or woman, however wise, can do this. God has to do this. And He does – with a love we'll never fathom.

To see a desert which has produced nothing but scorching winds and

grinding sandstorms suddenly receive rain – to see pools of refreshing

water, vegetation, flowers, trees, animals, men women and children –

finding a habitation in a wilderness which was once uninhabitable.....

To see an assembly of believers which for years and years and years

went through religious forms, quoted scripture, sang words of other

people's testimony, but were dead; suddenly come under an anointing

of God.... to see those lives change – genuine praise coming forth

from those lips, those clenched hands opening up with generosity and

giving blessings to those around them....

To see a town or city or neighborhood, which for generations showed

no signs of the redemptive presence of God begin to blossom forth

with men and women of faith –

- the shops,

- schools,

- factories,

- homes and streets.... this is what happens when the Spirit of

God is poured upon us from on high.

And we are seeing this – we are seeing this with our own eyes. But we've only seen the beginning. We've only seen a glimpse of what will be.

There are going to be streams in the desert. The wilderness is going to become a fruitful field. Life from God is going to visit the earth in the coming days as 8

never before, as a sign of what God wants to do for all people and what He will be doing on this planet earth when the days of judgment and tribulation have passed.

Call it the last great revival.

Call it the final sign of grace before the storm.

And God wants us to share in it in ways beyond anything we have ever expe-

rienced.

If we yield to Him, and let Him give us the outpouring we need, we will soon be partaking in ministries which will stagger our minds. Of course, if we won't yield to Him, God will find people who will.

There will be revival.

God will have anointed servants.

But before the desert can receive that rain from Heaven

- it has to admit that it's a desert,

- it has to give up claiming to be anything but a desert.

Perhaps the place where you live appears to be a booming city;

- cars rushing in every direction,

- bustling shopping centers,
- towering new buildings,
- beautifully renovated neighborhoods.

But beneath the facade of activity is a wasteland – a desert of spiritual bank-ruptcy and despair of heart. And this will have to be seen and admitted before the desert can become a fruitful field.

It's the same with our hearts. We often pretend to be alive when inside there's nothing – nothing. We have to admit this before we can be made alive.

Jerusalem in Isaiah's day was a teeming city, people were prosperous; the

Temple was busy – especially at Passover. But beneath all this, Jerusalem

was a desert. There was no genuine fear or love of God. Who needs God? We

have money in our pockets, food on our tables, and a military pact with Egypt to protect us from the armies of the East – we're all set!

So Isaiah says to them,

"Rise up, you women who are at ease, hear my voice. You compla-

cent daughters give ear to my speech. For many days

and years you

will be troubled you complacent women. For the vintage will fail,

the fruit of the harvest will not come....

9

Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine, for the

soil of my people growing up in thorns and briers. Yea, for all the

joyous houses in the joyful city.

For the palace will be forsaken, the populous city deserted. The hill

and the watchtower will become dens forever, a joy of wild asses, a

pasture of flocks, until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high."

And then, in the year 586 B.C., the Chaldean armies besieged Jerusalem,

crushed it, carried its people away bound to each other by rope, and the populous city became a wilderness until the people of Zion learned the hard way that their security

was in God alone. Until the Spirit was poured out upon them from on high and the wilderness became once more a fruitful field.

God does not pour out His Spirit upon our self-righteousness.

God does not build divine life upon our self-willed foundations.

The city that we've built has to first be destroyed so that there is nothing left but the wilderness it always was – nothing for which we can claim an ounce of credit.

So that we cannot say;

"I've got something good here, God – Bless it!"

All we can say is;

"I have nothing to offer. I have produced nothing. I am nothing Lord,

raise me from the dead!"

Two times the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus with quickening power. Both

times it was when Jesus had given Himself up to a death.

First, at His baptism. And what was His baptism?

A death!

A radical giving up of Himself to His Father's will by identifying with

this sin-sick human race!

When Jesus emerged from the waters of symbolic death, the Spirit came.

The second time the Spirit came to Jesus was when His body was lying in a

tomb. How did He get into that tomb? By dying on a cross!

When Jesus went up on that Cross, He took all human flesh up there with Him

and revealed human flesh to be a wilderness. If you want to understand what

human flesh really is,

- don't look at your favorite wide receiver going for a touchdown,

- don't look at Mr. Billionaire or Miss America.

10

If you want to see what human flesh really is, with all the dreams and illu-sions stripped away, - look at the bruised, bloody, disfigured face of Jesus of Nazareth as

He dies on the Cross.

There you see where the road of human flesh leads – it leads to the wilderness of a God-forsaken death.

There was nothing pretty about it. If Hollywood made Jesus' crucifixion look like it really was, the audience would be fainting in their seats. Eyes rolled back in His head, dry cracked lips, gasps for breathing, pain you can almost see.

Then when it's all over – when there's nothing left to hope for anymore, when that battered body is put in a tomb – then the Spirit is poured upon Him from on high and raises Him from the dead, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field.

There is no other way to the life of the Spirit of God. If you really want God to come down and quicken you, you have to give up and die and be that wilderness. Then the Spirit of God will come and make you a new creature – from scratch.

Too many of us are still trying to take a short-cut. We think that we can keep our right to ourselves, do our own thing, live the way we want to live,

hold our ego intact,

preserve our easy, safe, complacent, comfortable way and still have

the anointing of the Holy Spirit as a bonus.

No friend – we can't have the Spirit of God until we die to all else.

"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus

Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the

Holy Spirit" , said Peter.

He was telling them they had to die. Repent! What does it mean to repent? It means to die to your old life. Be baptized! What does it mean to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins? It means to die with Jesus to your old life. There is no other way.

If you really want to live in the name and power of God, you must start by dying to yourself.

- Go down into those waters of your baptism again and drown!

- As you eat His broken flesh and drink His shed blood, die with Jesus!

11

So that there are no rights to stand up for, no ego to

nurse, no self to de-fend, no grudge to carry, no glory to preserve, you're dead, you're under the water with Him, you're in the tomb with Him.

And there you remain – as motionless as a corpse – until the Spirit is

poured upon you from on high.

You won't have to wait long As soon as you're really dead, as soon as

you've really given up, the Spirit of God will come to you and your wilder-

ness will become a fruitful field. Streams will start flowing in the desert of your life until it becomes the garden of God.

God will begin to have His way with you, instead of you forever struggling to have your way with Him.

The love of God will swallow up every unholy thought left in you, and you

will begin to live and think and speak and feel and work like a prisoner set free – like a man or woman who has been raised from the dead never to die again, all fear of death gone.

And every new day God gives you, you'll let God make the wilderness a fruit-

ful field anew. God will be your life, your joy, your peace, your victory over evil, your hope.

This day Jesus Christ offers you His life in exchange for yours. If

there's any place in your heart where you do not have His life, make

that exchange,

make it now!

12

THEY SHALL SEE GOD

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Matthew 5:8

For three-and-a-half years Jesus went about preaching the Kingdom of God,

performing signs of the Kingdom, calling people to repent and enter the

Kingdom. He put everything he had into it. When he was finished, hanging on

that cross, Jesus had very little to show for his effort. The cities which had seen his mighty works did not repent. Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah ... Sodom and Gomorrah would have been on their faces if they had seen what those people saw. Bethsaida, Capernaum, Jerusalem were like stone

.... unmoved.

As Jesus was hanging on that cross dying, even his own disciples had forsak-

en him and fled and were now watching from a distance. There was no organ-

ization; there was no money in the bank. Everything seemed a failure.

Jesus had written no books. What little was left as he hung on that cross died with him when he died.

Then everything changed.

On the third day Jesus appeared alive to his disciples. And Jesus' appearance, alive from the dead, gave them the one thing that made the difference ... vision.

Seeing Jesus alive from the dead, they were seeing something which did not

belong to this age, something which normally the natural eye was unable to

see. They were seeing the glory of God. They were seeing God!

Fifty days after the resurrection, from the right hand of the Father's throne, Jesus poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit on the gathered believers. And again gave to them the one thing that made the difference vision.

"...but this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

'And in the last

days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all

flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your

young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream

dreams;.....'"

Acts 2.17

.....vision. These people now were moving out into the streets of Jerusalem

with a powerful message. They were able to give utterance to this message

because it was the outflow of a glory which they had now seen with their

anointed eyes.

Jesus' death on the cross, his resurrection, the outpouring of the Spirit worked together to give to these people the one necessary thing: vision.

The difference between a life of endless stagnation and a life of divine power is vision. Without vision we stagnate. With vision, if we walk in our vision, we live.

13

All of us, without exception are like the people who grew up in a prison. As far back as we can remember we've been in this prison. Time and time again we try to break out of this prison which is self-preoccupation, better known as sin. And every time we try to break out we get caught, beat up, wounded, thrown back in our cell. So

after a few attempts to escape self and sin we finally just give up.

What's the use? There's no way out. I might as well settle down and

become acclimated to this prison.

And so we occupy ourselves with trinkets, get ourselves a little T.V., radio, a few books and pretend that this is all there is; and try to forget that there's anything better on the outside.

One day a stranger comes to visit us. He pulls out of his briefcase a photo-

graph of a house down by the ocean and some friendly faces. And he says,

"That's your home. Those are your friends and your loved ones. That's

where you belong. You don't belong in this prison. Get out of here!"

And by means of this vision given to us we become courageous and strong

with a strength we never had and we break out of the prison and we never go

back.

Where there is no vision the people perish. Where there

is no revelation the people cast off restraint.

Where there is no glory the people sink down in despair.

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Je-

sus, and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give

thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our

Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wis-

dom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of

your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to

which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inher-

itance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his

power in us who believe, according to the working of his great

*might which he accomplished in Christ when he raised
him from
the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the
heavenly plac-*

es.....

Ephesians 1:15-20

Paul is saying, "I'm praying that you may have vision. That God will open your eyes." He knows that God will do it if these people desire it ... if they come toward God with a pure heart.

This idea that only certain gifted people can have vision is a myth. In this age of the New Covenant in which we now live, vision is offered to anybody who is poor in spirit, anybody who hungers and thirsts after righteousness, anybody who longs for God.

"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

14

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a

throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple....

Isaiah 6:1

Isaiah saw the Lord in the year that King Uzziah died ...
why the year that

King Uzziah died? Because in the year that King Uzziah
died Isaiah became

poor in spirit,

Isaiah became pure in heart. The death of King Uzziah
shook Isaiah...drove

him to the end of himself.

It brought him to the place where he despaired of ever
finding fulfillment in anything his eyes could see or his
hands could touch. Now Isaiah wants only God.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" Then flew one of the seraphim to me, having in his hand a burning

coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven." And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me." And he said, "Go, and say to this people: 'Hear and hear, but do not understand; see and see, but do not perceive.'....."

Isaiah 6:1-9

Isaiah saw the Lord in the temple. He wasn't the only one in the temple that day...lots of people were in the temple.

They didn't see anything. Was Isaiah hallucinating? No, Isaiah is seeing beyond the visible. He is seeing the Reality beyond reality. He is seeing the glory of God because God is giving him vision. And when this vision is over Isaiah is a new man.

When Moses saw the vision he became a new man.

When Ezekiel saw the vision by the river Chebar he became a new man.

When Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up he became a new man.

15

And so will we become new men and women.

"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

At the end of the road they will see him face-to-face.

But even now they will see him by means of vision which God will give. And

if today, this hour, we draw near with a pure heart ... a heart that just wants him ... we will receive vision.

Vision vision is to have our eyes open.

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a

throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple.

....And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of un-

clean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for

my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"

With the natural eye we see the walls, the windows, the ceiling, the floor. But with the inner eye we see glory, and we fall on our face. But do we want to have that vision? Are we willing that the glory of God should so invade our lives that that glory shakes us down to our boots? Are we willing to pay the price of seeing the hand of God at work in our daily life so that we now begin to see people in a totally different way? We begin to see heaven and we begin to see hell, we see glory, we see horror, we see ourselves as we are stripped, naked, undone, and in utter need of God. You want vision?....you can have it.

"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

- If you want it badly enough, you'll get it.

Vision also means to have our mouth and our heart made clean.

And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man

of unclean

lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes

have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"

Then flew one of the seraphim to me, having in his hand a burning

coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched

my mouth, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt

is taken away, and your sin is forgiven."

Fire for the sin-sick mouth. And who of us doesn't have one?

Blood ... for the sin-sick heart. And who of us doesn't have one?

The minute Isaiah confessed the sin he saw, when the light came on for him....

"I'm undone.... woe is me!"

...God saw to it that he experienced cleansing. When we begin to cry out and call for his forgiveness and his mercy, not only do the angels come and touch 16

our mouths with a burning coal, the Lamb of God himself comes to us, touch-es our heart with his blood and says, "Son, Daughter, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven."

You want cleansing? ... you can have it ... if you want it with a pure heart.

"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

Vision means that our ears are open.

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and

who will go for us?"

....I heard the voice of the Lord. They tell us that it's a scientific fact that people who wear glasses hear better when their glasses are on. It's an absolute fact of the Kingdom that our ears begin to hear the voice of the Lord with clarity when our eyes and our hearts worship that glory.

First Moses saw the burning bush, then he heard the voice of the

Lord.

First Ezekiel saw the glory of God on the river Chebar, then he heard

the voice of the Lord.

First the disciples saw Jesus risen and alive from the dead, then they

heard words that utterly changed them.

Do you really want to hear God speak? You can....

"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

Finally, vision means that my tongue has been set free.

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and

who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me!" And he

said, "Go!"

At this point Isaiah becomes a prophet ... a man who speaks for God. And

what was given to Isaiah then is given to the Body of Christ now to anyone

who wants it, who is open to it ... who desires to be of use to God with a pure heart.

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one

place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a

mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 2:1-4

And after this they no longer hide behind the walls of that room, they're out in the city and they're out in the world and they speak with boldness and their 17

word is alive because they've seen glory. And they can give utterance the glory they have seen.

Do you want to speak with boldness? Do you want a bold

tongue? You can

have it.

"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

And the more clearly we see the glory of God the more perfectly we can give

voice to that glory and the more powerfully our witness to that glory enables people to behold that glory.

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Je-

sus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks

for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord

Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom

and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your

hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he

has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the

saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his

power in us

*who believe, according to the working of his great
might which he*

*accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the
dead and made*

him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 1:15-20

Do we want a spirit of wisdom and revelation? Do we
really want the eyes of

our hearts enlightened so that we know what is our hope ...
what are the riches of the inheritance he gives to his saints
... and what awesome and powerful things he does by
means of his Spirit in us?

Do we want vision to the point we're willing to pay the
price of the disruption that vision will bring to our lives?
If so, let's purify our hearts and draw near...

- ask,

- seek,

- knock, even as we open our hearts to receive the gift of vision,

which God will surely give us.

"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

18

FAITH THAT BRINGS THE FIRE

How did Elijah do it?

How did he get the fire of heaven to fall on his sacrifice?

Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose for yourselves one

bull and prepare it first, for you are many; and call on the name of your

god, but put no fire to it." And they took the bull which was given them,

and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning until

noon, saying, "O Baal, answer us!" But there was no voice, and no one

answered. And they limped about the altar which they

had made. And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is musing, or he has gone aside, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened." And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their custom with swords and lances, until the blood gushed out upon them.

And as midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice; no one answered, no one heeded.

Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me"; and all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that had been thrown down; Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD came, saying, "Israel shall be your name"; and with the stones he

*built an altar in the
name of the LORD. And he made a trench about the
altar, as great as would
contain two measures of seed. And he put the wood in
order, and cut the
bull in pieces and laid it on the wood. And he said,
"Fill four jars with wa-
ter, and pour it on the burnt offering, and on the
wood." And he said, "Do
it a second time"; and they did it a second time. And he
said, "Do it a third
time"; and they did it a third time. And the water ran
round about the altar,
and filled the trench also with water.
And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah
the prophet came
near and said, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and
Israel, let it be known
this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy
servant, and that I
have done all these things at thy word. Answer me, O
LORD, answer me,*

that this people may know that thou, O LORD, art God, and that thou hast turned their hearts back." Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God."

(1 Kings 18: 25-39)

So the prophets of Baal built their altar and laid their sacrifice, but no fire came.

They had religion, but it had no life.

Elijah built an altar, laid the sacrifice, doused it with water three times so it would be evident that he wasn't

playing any tricks on them, and prayed. Sud-19

denly fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the dust, and even drank up the water.

Much of the time we believers have a faith, which is much more like

the altar of Baal then the altar of God.

We have the sacrifice on the altar and it's neatly laid out, but no fire comes.

Nothing happens.

Nobody comes to repentance.

No lives are changed.

There is no power.

Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at

least believe me for the sake of the works themselves.

Truly, truly, I say to

you, whoever believes in me will also do the works I do.

And greater works

than these they will do, because I go to the Father.

(John 14:11-12)

Jesus teaches clearly, that if we believe in him,
not just mouth religious words,
not just run around and do our own thing and call it a faith,
but really believe in him,
then our nature will be absorbed by his nature.

We will begin

- to think his thoughts

- and do his works,

and the lives around us will be cleansed by the power
of his crucifixion.....lifted by the power of his res-
urrection...in us.

When we say, as we so often do, "How come nothing is
happening from my

life? How come nobody is being changed through my
ministry?"

He says, "When you believe, things will start to happen."

"Wait a minute Lord! I believe! Look at the changes I've
made. Look at the hardships I've endured. Look at my
discipline. Look at my sacrifices."

And yet there is an awareness in our heart-of-hearts that there is

something missing.... the sacrifice is there, but there is no fire.

Not only is the power missing in our ministry to other people, it's

missing in our own inner lives.

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The life we really live, away from the eyes of others, is earth bound.

Isn't it ridiculous? We want to open the eyes of the blind, and set the

captives free, when we ourselves are still in captivity.

The most helpful thing we can do is frankly admit how far we are from the

faith Jesus calls us to have.

When Jesus says, "Whoever believes in me, the works I do he will do also", he's not exaggerating, but describing a faith which is far beyond where we now are.

Of course, if we want that faith, it can be ours.

We can have a faith that is visited by fire from heaven,

that licks up the wood, the sacrifice,
the stones, the dust, and the water.

A faith where we begin to do the works Jesus does,
and even greater works than these, as he pours out his
Spirit from the right hand of the Father.

***"This is the work of God" , Jesus says, "that you believe
on him whom he
has sent."***

***Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father is in
me; or else believe***

***me for the sake of the works themselves. Whoever
believes in me the works***

that I do, will they do also.

But this belief is not a matter of the mind or of the
imagination.

It is a thing of the will.

Don't sit around, as we so often have, wondering, when is
it going to

come? Hoping that faith will come and envelop us like a
cloud.

This faith will burn in our hearts as we bend our will

toward the will of God.

The faith that brings down fire from heaven begins with a deliberate abandonment of our lives into the hands of Jesus.

Okay. We all know that.

We've heard it a thousand times.

Yes, we know the theory well, but have we actually done it?

Whoever comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters - yes, and even his own life – he cannot

be my disciple.

(Luke 14: 26)

This commitment belongs only to Jesus.

The commitment we have made to our father, or mother,

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or wife, or husband, or child,

or brother or sister, or to ourselves,

or our particular religious community,

or our favorite kind of evangelism,

or our particular choice in doctrine,

has to be replaced with a commitment to Jesus as the
supreme focus

of our lives. To Jesus only.

If we haven't made such a commitment to the Lord Jesus,

if we aren't maintaining that commitment every day,

We cannot possibly understand what Jesus is talking about

when he calls us to have faith.

"Unless you forsake, renounce, all that you have, you can't be my disciple,"

Or if you prefer: Unless we renounce **all that has us**, we can't have that kind of faith.

When we begin to renounce the things that **have us** - these attach-

ments, whatever they are, then we begin to understand what Jesus is calling for.

When renounce the things that **have us**, we are able to do the things

he commands us. And we also know how to apply his commands in

daily life.

The faith that brings down the fire involves:

- moving out with Jesus onto the sea of the uncertain
- following him into a world of risk.

Launch out into the deep.

Deny yourself.

Take up your cross.

Launch out into the deep.....

It won't be a popular risk—if there is such a thing.

It may not mean that we are supposed to go to South Sudan,

or break into the heart of the Muslim world,

or do some dramatic thing that causes us to be fired from our job.

Although, it could mean any of those things.

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Yet somehow, as we follow him, we will find ourselves traveling a road where things become quite uncertain.

For instance, most of us have been quite clever about not doing or saying

things that might upset our friends, or alienate those whose respect we crave.

We don't care what the rest of the world thinks, but these people—we seem to really need their admiration, their friendship.

Then one day, we find that we're moved from within, to

Speak to

them of God's mercy. And as we do, our friends shake their heads

and turn away from us as if we had leprosy.

Of course, the adventure that God has in store for each of us is going to be different; and nobody can predict what that is. It's entirely up to the Lord.

But we can be sure of this: as we follow him we are going to find our-

selves walking down a road where the things that comforted us and gave us

security are gone.

Now, the only certainty that we have left is Jesus.

Deny yourself.....

This may be offensive to some readers, but here it is...

The faith that brings the fire involves a deliberate turning away of our heart love from those past pleasures and fixing our heart's love on the joy of remaining faithful to Jesus in the midst of derision, privation, or even death.

"I'm taking you to a banquet", Jesus says to us, "but the

road to the banquet is not a picnic. And if you are going to survive the hardships on that road, you are going to have to deliberately and continuously learn to give up distractions and find your meaning exclusively in me."

O, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man/woman

that trusts in him.

(Psalm 34: 8)

You taste the goodness of the Lord by deliberately subjecting yourself to being disenchanting from your former distractions, whatever they are - the things that made life pleasant and livable in the past, and learning to find a new kind of joy, a new kind of meaning..

This is not morbidity.

We are not saying that you have to be unhappy to be a disciple of Jesus. But now we have to find a new kind of joy and a new kind of meaning.

You give up the pleasures of Baal and take hold of the pleasures of

God—which are far better, and far more lasting.

Take up your cross.....

Finally; the faith that brings the fire involves a daring trust....

that the way of Jesus' cross is the right way,

the best way,
the most satisfying way,
no matter how absurd it looks in the eyes of the world.

"When I came to you", says Paul, " I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified."

When Paul was saying that, he was not talking about his "doctrinal position."

He was talking about his life.

Jesus Christ and him crucified was the door to God for Paul.

The source of his joy.

His life.

His everything - day by day, and hour by hour.

But Jesus Christ and him crucified was also for Paul his example,

his pattern.

This is what he was learning to do, day by day and hour by hour.

Paul was walking in the footsteps of his Master - the bleeding foot-
steps of his Master.

Learning to deny himself.

And as Paul did this, he learned to deny himself that others might

taste God - the fire from heaven fell upon him and his ministry.

As we learn to do this joyfully----daily to deny ourselves that others might taste God----the fire from heaven falls upon us.

And it will continue to fall as we find ourselves doing the works of

Jesus, and even greater works, as the Spirit moves upon us.

This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he has sent. Believe

me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me or else, believe me for

the sake of the works themselves. Whoever believes in me will do the works

I do, and greater works than these will they do, because

I go to the Father.

There are people on this earth right now, who are in possession of that kind of faith.

We can join their ranks if we will. It all depends on how earnestly we desire to have a faith that brings the fire.

A Prayer.....

Lord, you know our hearts. And you know the longing in them to be

able to do something effective. And Father, you know how frustrated

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we get when it just doesn't seem to happen. We ask you to help us to be the men and women you are calling us to be. And to come into a life of faith beyond anything we've ever tasted. Disillusion us in

whatever way necessary, if we think that we have it when we don't,

Lord. Help us to press on until we begin to enter into that territory

where the life of Jesus becomes everything to us. Where the delight of knowing him far surpasses every other delight. We ask it Father in Jesus' name. Amen.

25

USING WHAT WE HAVE

Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of

prayer, the ninth hour. And a man lame from birth was being car-

ried, whom they laid daily at that gate of the temple which is called

Beautiful, to ask alms of those who entered the temple. Seeing Peter

and John about to go into the temple, he asked for alms. And Peter

directed his gaze at him, with John, and said, "Look at us." And he

fixed his attention upon them, expecting to receive something from

them.

But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I

have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." And he took

him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet

and ankles were made strong. And leaping up he stood and walked

and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising

God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God, and

recognized him as the one who sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of

the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at

what had happened to him.

Acts 3:1-10

Every time we read the above passage there is a tinge of jealousy in most of us.

- If only we could do as much for people who cry to us in their des-

peration!

- If only we could give them more than words or promises.

- If we could touch them with the touch of God, as Peter touched this

man.

"I have no silver or gold, but I give you what I have...."

Peter knew that he had something to give this man, and he gave it.

"In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!"

Is it possible that there are people in the Body of Christ who have what Peter had and don't even know it?

Is it possible that there are people among us who are meant to have what Peter had and could be exercising this gift?

- God knows there are enough crippled lives crying out for alms!

Peter hadn't come to the temple to do healing. Peter and John had come to the temple to worship God. But when this need arose Peter did what he had done by the Master's side and in the Master's name for some years. This healing wasn't some new radical departure for Peter ... it was a gift which Peter had been exercising right along as needs arose, in company with his Lord.

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Now that Jesus had gone back to the Father and had sent the Holy Spirit, Peter continues to exercise the gift. He gives the man what he has.

Is it too much to expect that we, as a body of believers, should be living in that realm? Is it too much to expect that we can have the gift of God within us so clearly that when these needs cry out we too can say, "I give you what I have. In the name of Jesus I open the door for you into a new life"?

The apostolic church lived in that realm and they were people of like passions and weaknesses as we. If there is anything that sets them apart from us it's that they used what they had ... they exercised their gifts as needs arose

far more consistently than we do. Even if they didn't have exactly what was requested they gave what they had.

The man wanted silver and gold. Peter didn't have that but he had the healing of Christ. Our tendency is to sit around and feel depressed because we don't have certain things people desire.

- They want clear answers,
- where the answers are hidden in God.
- They want instant happiness,
- peace without a cross,
- prosperity on the surface of things.

These we don't have. But we do have the life of God. We get upset because

we don't have the same thing to offer that some other believer might have.

What does it matter if we don't have---

- the insight of Sister Sue,
- the eloquence of Brother Bill, or we can't seem to pray the mighty

prayers Brother George prays? We do have life from God in the form

of specific gifts which will develop only as we use them.

When a friend comes to you at midnight and you have nothing to set before

him, you go to the door of your heavenly Father and knock until he opens and gives you something. But if a friend comes at midnight and you go to the cupboard and find that while you don't have exactly what he asked for you do have something ... the Holy Spirit has already imparted to you some gift ...

then you give him what you have.

For by the grace given to me I bid every one among you not to think

of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with so-

ber judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God

has assigned him. For as in one body we have many members, and

all the members do not have the same function, so we, though

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many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of an-

other. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Romans 12:3-8

...each according to the measure of faith God has assigned to him.... having

gifts that differ.

Do you think the apostle John got upset that day because Peter did the healing and Peter did the talking?

"Lord, how come Peter always gets the spotlight? How come I always

end up standing in the shadows with my mouth shut?"

You can be sure that John rejoiced that day when Peter raised up the cripple and preached the word to the multitude that gathered. This was no threat to John because John knew that he had something to give too.... and he used his gifts as opportunities opened for him.

- *"...each according to the measure of faith God has assigned to him:"*

- *"...having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them."*

As we use the gift, the gift develops. If we have five gifts or three gifts we use them all as occasions arise and let the Lord himself develop whichever of our gifts he chooses to.

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us; let us use

them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serv-

ing; he who teaches, in his teaching, he who exhorts, in his exhorta-

tion; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal;

he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Seven gifts are listed here. And we find out which gifts seem to be ours by

giving what we have of God to every situation.

- I have no silver and gold but I give you what I have. In the name of

Jesus, walk.

- I have no prophecy but I give you what I have. Please take this

money and buy your family some food.

- I have no teaching for you, but I can come by and weep with you

and pray with you.

As we give what we have to the needs that come, the power of the Spirit of

God begins to move.

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1. *Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us let us use them.*

If prophecy - in proportion to our faith.

So, if we have a word from God, a word burning in our heart which we truly

believe God wants us to bring forth, then we speak.

If we are not thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, but

thinking with sober judgment according to the measure of faith we've been

given, then we need not be afraid to prophesy.

That's what we have to give ... so we are to give it.

2. *If service - in our serving.*

Any act of service to a brother or sister or to a stranger. "I do not have silver or gold, nor do I prophesy, but it's my privilege it's my honor, my pleasure, to put down what I'm doing, get in the car and drive that person to the hospital, or help them move, or wash that elderly lady's windows."

When we serve in the name of Jesus and for the glory of

God, awesome

things flow through our service. God makes himself known in our service just as surely as he made himself known in Peter's healing of the lame man.

3. He who teaches in his teaching.

And this does not necessarily mean teaching booming Bible studies. It may

mean Priscilla and Aquila taking Apollos aside and showing him the way of

God more perfectly.

It may mean sharing something we have found helpful with someone who is

walking through a valley we just came out of ... an explanation ... a word of encouragement.

4. He who exhorts in his exhortation.

What a need there is for someone to come along at the right time and urge the weary ones to keep going ... to plead with the one who is casting longing eyes at the poisoned pie.

Who of us doesn't need to be told at that hour when we feel like quitting, "In the name of Jesus you can do it! God is with you! You're going to make it!

Get up and move!"

5. He who contributes with liberality.

If the Spirit of God is moving our hearts, one of the clearest evidences of it is that when we see someone in genuine financial need we're right there with help ... without strings ... and without making a production out of it.

"Healing and prophecy I do not have, but what I have I give to you.

Take this money in the name of Jesus."

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6. He who gives aid, with zeal.

"Could you help me carry this trunk?" "Sure."yet you get the feeling the helper might drop it any minute. There's a helping hand which is slack and weak and halfhearted, making the one who's being helped feel especially

guilty for accepting help, and there's a helping hand which is free and glad and zealous. She or he picks up the trunk and carries it with gusto it gives you a lift inside your heart.

And what a strengthening influence a few such helpers are in the Body of

Christ. Something needs doing, somebody needs a hand,
and they're in there

pitching, with zeal. It transforms the atmosphere.

7. He who does acts of mercy with cheerfulness.

I was hungry and you gave me food.

I was thirsty and you gave me drink.

I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

I was naked and you clothed me.

I was sick.

I was in prison. --- with cheerfulness!

This is the stuff the Body of Christ is made of. This is how it functions ...

mercy flowing out all the time. Day in and day out using the gifts of grace we have.

There is not a believer among us who doesn't have at least one of

these gifts. May God help us to quit moping over what we don't have

and start using what we have. For when we start faithfully using the

gifts we have the mercy of God will be seen as clearly as it was seen

when Peter healed the lame man.

Heavenly Father, we give thanks for your abundant mercy. We offer back to you what you have given us, that it may be multiplied in the hands of the Lord Jesus who indwells us, and cause the lives we touch to be visited by your healing grace.

THE SERVANT MENTALITY AND THE BREATH OF GOD

A church is transformed from a "club for nice people," to a true manifestation of the Body of Christ, when it chooses to take on a Servant Mentality, an approach to life that shows up in.....

- in their homes,
 - here in the Body,
 - in their neighborhoods,
- ... servants.

"You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I

then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought

to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that

you also should do as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you,

a servant is not greater than he who sent him. If you know these

things, blessed are you if you do them."

John 13:13-17

It seems to happen when people start coming to church, not so much with the

question, "What am I going to get out of it today?" but, "What is the Lord giving me to do in there today?" We're learning to serve.

- To serve God in worship.

- To serve each other with words and deeds of encouragement, up building and help.

- To serve the searching ones out there in the world with a living word.

Serving is a mind-set ... it's a way of thinking ... and it creates an atmosphere which always draws the Spirit of God into our midst.

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting (it says in Acts 13

...i.e. while they were serving the Lord), the Holy Spirit said, "Set

apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which

***I have called
them."***

This is the pattern of heaven....

- the Holy Spirit comes to a servant Body, to a servant people.

- the Holy Spirit inhabits the servant mind.

If we will persevere with this servant mentality we will see the Holy Spirit work among us with resurrection power. The simplest expression of this comes from the mouth of our Lord in Luke 11....

And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him

at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a

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friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set

before him'; and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the

door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get

up and give you anything'? I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impor- tunity he will rise and give him whatever he needs. And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent, or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil; know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

This is the classic teaching in all scripture of the promise

of the Holy Spirit ...

and it begins with a person who deliberately makes himself a servant.

A friend comes to you in the middle of the night. Your friend is not a moocher

... he doesn't make a habit of sponging off people and calling it "living by faith"... he has a genuine need.

So you make yourself his servant, her servant.

You want to give him something to eat to refresh him, but you discover that

your cupboards are bare ... you have nothing in the house. But you have a

friend, the living God, who has all the bread you could ever want. So you go to your friend in the middle of the night and wake him up.

But notice you're going there as a servant. You're going there because you

have a guest who needs what you don't have and you want to serve him. So

you cry out to God...

"Friend, I need three loaves of bread. A friend of mine has arrived on

a journey and I have nothing to set before him."

And even though the heavenly Father seems to be giving you a hard time...

"It's too late! My children are with me in bed ... come back tomorrow!"

You persist.

"But friend, I have a hungry guest. I have a needy one. I must have

the bread tonight."

So the heavenly Father pours out his Spirit on you,

- his breath,

- his life,

enabling you to feed your guest with living bread.

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No doubt we all agree that our greatest need as a Body of believers is to have more of the Spirit of God so that we have power to - give good news to the poor,

- deliver the captives,

- give sight to the blind,

- bring freedom to the oppressed.

There is a steady stream of hungry souls coming into us, coming across our

path at work and in our neighborhoods, calling us on the phone, spilling their guts to us at family reunions ... and we want power from God to genuinely help them.

The promise is that we will be given this power if we will only ask...

"What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a

fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a

scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to

your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the

Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

But it's a strange thing: the only ones who ever really catch on to this teaching of Jesus and take hold of it, and make it work, are those who fit into the first part of the teaching ...who enter into that servant mentality when the friend arrives in need. And the only congregations of believers that are capable not only of receiving an outpouring of the Holy Spirit from God, but also translating this outpouring of the Spirit into flesh and blood deeds, into something

that lasts, are those congregations that are ruled by a servant mind.

Without the servant mind we have a little hooting and hollering and jumping

up and down ... a few months or a couple of years of charismatic excitement

with little or no lasting fruit.

But when we have the servant mentality, the Spirit of God stays and his work among us goes on and on and bears fruit that lasts. To cultivate a servant mentality in our walk with God there are four things we need to aim at: **1. A servant strives to please the Master, not the whole world.**

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,

who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with

God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself taking the form of a

servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in hu-

man form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death,

even death on a cross.

Philippians 2:5-8

Jesus did not come here to put on a show for the human race. He came here to serve his Father, his one desire was to please his Father. This gave Jesus tremendous freedom in dealing with people.

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- He never had to worry about his ratings.

He didn't care whether they loved him or hated him, he loved them. There was only one eye he had to please, one eye which was his joy to please: the Father's eye. And now we are his servants, we are servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

- When our eyes are on him,

we cannot fail.

- When our heart is eager to please him,

we are a success (in Kingdom terms) every time!

When we become discouraged and confused and defeated

it's always because

we've taken our eyes off the Master and we're making a pitch for the approval of our audience.

Even if the whole world begins to clap and shout, "Bravo!" we know in our own soul that we're failures and hypocrites, until we get back to pleasing our one glorious Master ... his eye alone is the eye that counts.

2. A servant knows who he/she is. Everybody else is confused about his

identity, but the servant knows who he is.

And during supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart

of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that

the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had

come from God and was going to God, rose from supper, laid aside

his garments, and girded himself with a towel. Then he poured wa-

ter into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe

them with the towel with which he was girded. John 13:2-5

- Knowing the Father had given all things into his hand....
- Knowing that he had come from God and was going to God....

Jesus knew this never more clearly than when he was serving his Father by

serving those disciples. He knew this most clearly when he was serving his

Father by laying down his life on the cross as a ransom for many. He knew

who he was, because he was a servant.

And the man or woman who is a servant of Christ, that man knows who he is

... that woman knows where she's going.

Commit yourself again today to being a servant of Christ and your identity

crisis will be over ... you will know who you are.

3. A servant is unafraid to take initiative.

And he said to them, "Which of you, who has a friend will go to him

at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three

loaves; for a

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friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'...."

When you're serving your guest in Jesus' name, you know what you have to

do and you do it. If you have to pound on heaven's door in the middle of the night you do it.

When you're a servant of Christ you're not afraid to speak a straightforward word, - you write that letter,

- you make that phone call,

- you gather those friends together, you start that Bible study,

- you go and visit that sick friend. You are Christ's servant and this is

what needs to be done, so you do it.

4. A servant is confident that the Master will provide the bread ... the Ho-ly Spirit.

"...and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me;

the door is

now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and

give you anything' I tell you, though he will not get up and give him

anything because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he

will rise and give him whatever he needs."

.....because of his importunity.

.....because of his persistence. This servant knows his friend will give him bread because the friend who has the bread is the Master.

If God is my Master and I am his servant, I can ask boldly for what I

need.

If Jesus is my Master and I am his servant, I can ask boldly for what I

need.

The people who pussyfoot and hem and haw before the throne of God, never

sure if it's worth asking,

or if it's proper to ask,

or if it will do any good to ask, are not servants, they are the specta-

tors, the critics, the arm chair prophets of Christendom.

The servant always has a clear shot.

"Father, I need bread!" and gets it.

"Father, I need the power of the Holy Spirit!"and gets it.

"Jesus, give me a word for these hungry ones!"and it comes.

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We have been called, not to be a club for nice people, not to be a Christian social agency.

We have been called to be a servant church, an army of servants of God.

Each one of us;

- a servant who strives to please the Master not the whole world,

- a servant who knows who he/she is,

- a servant who is unafraid to take initiative,

- a servant who is confident that the Master will give us the bread; the

Holy Spirit in power.

If we will aim at being servants,

If we will pursue a servant mentality,

heaven will open upon us and the power of heaven will pour through

us like a river of living water.

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THE STRUGGLE OF THE SAINT

The fourth chapter of the gospel of John contains Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman. This simple episode carries a powerful message.

- Jesus stops at a well and asks a woman of Samaria for a drink...

- He unearths her secret past and offers her the living water of his

Spirit....

- Jesus then reveals himself as the Messiah.

Now let's pay attention to how Jesus' encounter with this

woman impacts on

his baffled disciples. How Jesus is trying to teach the twelve (and us) that the struggle of the believer is not only normal, it leads to life.

Basically, these twelve disciples were pretty "dull." They were especially dense during this stop in Samaria. Not only were they unaware of the miracle taking place right before their eyes, they were also ignorant of the great struggle that was taking place that day in the life of our Lord.

Miraculously in a simple and clear way Jesus revealed to this woman, and her entire village, that he was the Messiah. While the disciples were still calling Jesus "Rabbi...good teacher" ... he revealed himself, in Samaria, as "The Savior of the World." Rarely was Jesus so transparent about his mission.

In a few minutes Jesus was able to touch this woman with the power of the

Kingdom of God. Jesus overcame vast cultural, religious barriers. The Jew-

Samaritan feud, burning for centuries, suddenly was no longer important. In

that village the Spirit of God descended as powerfully as it had on Mount Si-nai...changing not only her, but all who

welcomed Jesus.

How was he able to do this? ... **because of his struggle.**

Jesus;

- labored and struggled...

- wrestled long sleepless nights in prayer...

- set himself apart to fast in an empty wilderness ...

learning to con-

centrate...

- he learned obedience at the hand of his heavenly Father
in the midst

of suffering.

And even now Jesus was laboring in the midst of the
disciples in a way they

didn't understand ... He wanted them to see this labor and
enter into it.

Let's pick up the story now as the disciples return from
lunch in town.

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*Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to
find him talk-*

ing with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or,

"Why are you talking with her?"

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and

said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever

did. Could this be the Messiah?" They came out of the town and

made their way toward him. Meanwhile his disciples urged him,

"Rabbi, eat something." But he said to them, "I have food to eat

that you know nothing about."

Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought

him food?"

"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to

finish his work. Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the

harvest?' I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together: Thus the saying, 'One sows and another reaps' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."

John 4:27-38

The disciples have no idea of what's going on! Their response to the woman they see Jesus talking with (even though they don't say it) is, "Hey lady, what are you doing here...you're a Samaritan!" And to Jesus they're thinking, "Why are you wasting your time with that woman?" Sensing the hostility from the disciples she quickly leaves.

But she cannot

restrain herself from telling everyone the amazing things that happened to her.

But, the attitude of the disciples infuriates Jesus!

"Wasting my time? Wake up! This is the harvest. This is what I

have been praying and fasting for. We're not just passing through

to make a pit-stop!

And you're offering me lunch! How can you even think of eating at

a time like this! Don't you see what's going on here? This is my

work, my labor ... there is a harvest I must bring in!

This struggle is my life ... it should be your life! This labor, is my

food ... it should be your food."

The labor/struggle Jesus is describing is not only "the 'harvest'", he is also trying to teach them about the struggle involved in living as a disciple....

- learning obedience under the hand of God,

- allowing God to work his character into us.

Once immersed in these struggles we will find;

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1. Bread from heaven (real spiritual bread).
2. Prophetic vision.
3. The power to sustain us in our work.
4. Where we fit into God's plan for his Kingdom.

All this happens as we labor... as we struggle.

There are two points we should remember about this struggle:

1. It is normal.
2. Struggle in the life of a believer is not desperation , but growing faith..

1. Struggle, in the life of a saint is normal...not to be avoided ... or feared.

- We labor in the harvest.

- We labor and struggle as we are molded into the likeness of Christ.

- This type of "work" is normal.

There are many people reading this who are working hard to follow Jesus ...

struggling ... and this glorifies God. Every day they are at it ... trying! Some are battling alcohol, lust, fear, anger. As others get a word from God, they labor to change their lifestyle.

Many are laboring to bring living words to the lost at the Sunset Hotel ... or a neighbor. Others are working to salvage the lives of broken families ... children ... Others battle inner boredom, haunting fears, paralyzing loneliness.

In the Body of Christ this struggle is normal! If anything characterizes a living church it's not relaxation, or tranquil repose it's this struggle!

Listen to our brother Paul's struggle....

- to the church in Galatia,.. ***"I labor till Christ be formed in you."***

- to the church in Philippi.. ***"Work out your salvation in fear and trembling."***

- to the church in Ephesus, (by way of Timothy)... ***"Fight the good"***

fight."

- to the churches of Colossae and Laodicea,... ***"To this end I labor,***

struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me. I

want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those

at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally."

This type of labor is not "working our way to heaven." It is submitting our lives in faith to the work of the cross where I die and the life of Christ is born 39

in me. This living as a disciple is practiced with other disciples in the true Body of Christ, and the struggle is normal.

2. Struggle in the life of a believer is not desperation , but growing faith..

- Despair is a struggle that ends in "burnt-out" collapse.

- Despair is frenzied pressure and toil, without rest or hope.

- Despair is laying down, giving up, and dying.

If our struggle, instead of leading to life, leads to despair, maybe we are not making the simple changes that God has called for in our life.

Or, maybe

we are too wrapped up in our own "inward holiness" to see straight. And God will make that clear.

But the labor of the saint, the struggle you and I go through, is the travail of childbirth...new life is born in struggle by the hand of God. Not only do our bodies, minds, and spirits crave transformation, the entire creation itself craves this new birth.

Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation but it is not to the sinful

nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful

nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the mis-

deeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the

Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that

makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of son-

ship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in

his glory.

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of

the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains

of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we our-

selves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we

wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Romans 8

...our bodies groan...creation groans... and these birth pains lead to life.

This is the labor our Lord entered into and also the labor he called the twelve disciples to enter into... and now the call comes to us.

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Jesus said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." Then the disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?" "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest?' I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life,

*so that the
sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the
saying, 'One
sows and another reaps' is true: I sent you to reap what
you have
not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and
you have
reaped the benefits of their labor."*

John 4

For those of us already in the thick of the battle Jesus wants to encourage us to press on, and to continue to **find his life in that struggle.**

To those still outside the struggle, or to those who have long neglected the call on their life, Jesus says, "Enter it!..... Today!"

And by his mercy we can enter in at any point.

1. If you need bread...that's where you enter into the work.
2. If you have no vision ... enter the work there.
3. If you need sustaining joy ... enter.
4. If you can't see God's hand at work in the believers around you or

how you fit in with them...that's where you start.

Let's look at these four points more closely....

1. If you want bread from God enter into the struggle.

Je sus said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing

about." Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have

brought him food?"

We enter the labor asking for living bread...expecting it for ourselves and others. We won't find real bread by gorging to the table of "deeper life teaching"

...reading stirring missionary biographies, or even at feasts of spiritual ecstasy.

We find bread by joining Jesus in the harvest ... involved in real labor ...

where we are brought to the end of our own resources.

In the midst of that harvest of hungry, broken, lost souls he sends our way, we learn to knock on our Father's door asking for living bread...and we find it.

We also find it when we join Jesus as we struggle to let go of the mammon

that tugs at our soul, the anxiety and care that drains us. We do this expecting God to satisfy our spiritual, emotional, even our physical needs. As we join Jesus in his labor, we will find bread from heaven.

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2. Do you want vision from God? ...prophetic insight?... then enter the struggle.

"Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you,

open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest."

Vision isn't born at the feet of spiritual gurus or reading heavy books.

- It's born as we join Jesus in the labor of prayer!

- It's born as we join Jesus, laboring in the harvest field!

Even if we are stirred by a genuine prophet, that vision will not endure unless we are under the yoke with Jesus. When we follow him out into that field, sickle in hand, ready to work (where he puts us) we will see him lift up his finger and point, ***"Behold, the field is ripe...ready for harvest."***

And that vision will seep into our bones and change us forever.

3. Do you want to be sustained in your work... find joy in your calling?...then enter the labor...today!

"Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the

crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad

together."

...sustaining joy ... refreshment ... is not found nearly so often on retreats. It is found consistently as we join Jesus laboring in the harvest field.

Today, workers in the harvest are finding encouragement. They are being sus-

tained by the hand of God ... finding power to meet whatever task confronts

them.

Today, joy is found by the one who sows,

Today, joy is found by the one who reaps.

- Joy ... when we give someone the seed of life just when they need it.

- Joy ... when we go out of our way to plant that seed in a desert

where it seems like nothing will grow.

- Joy ... when I stop rushing around and water the seed of a thirsty

brother or sister that God sends my way.

- Joy ... in the struggle of the harvest... the labor of new birth, impart-

ing God's hope, salvation, forgiveness.

4. Do you want to find your place in the Body? ... Learn to

see God's hand

building his church right in the place where you are, with the people sitting next to you? ... then enter into the work.

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"Thus the saying, 'One sows and another reaps', is true. I sent you

to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard

work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."

- We don't find our place by taking aptitude tests,

- We don't see the hand of God building the church by jumping from

one congregation to another in search of spiritual thrills or by reading

books on "Body Life", or escaping to a monastery.

No! We find our ministry, and at the same time see our Lord's hand building

his church, living stone by living stone, as we enter the struggle ... as we serve, as we work; And to our surprise we find that: -Guidance is given to the Body as it labors and struggles to be faithful.

- Gifts are given to us and the Body as we labor amid the anguish and
ills of this world.

- Forgiveness will flow through our church to the world as we labor to
forgive and serve one another.

As we labor we also find that;

- unity is given to the Body, not because we all see eye to eye on everything, but because we are struggling together.

It is in the harvest together we see one sowing seed, another reaping. And we fall on our knees and thank God that the same power at work in us is at work in people and places we never expected.

My very spiritual life may be dependent on someone I have taken for granted.

The ministry I have (where I am secretly patting myself on the back) may be
the result of someone else's intercession.

We will find that the good news ... that precious seed we scatter ... doesn't come out of a three dollar packet we buy at the "Gospel Shop." Living words are not pious phrases we toss like coins from our pocket. Prophetic life-giving

words are born in our struggle with the evil of this world--around us and within us.

This is how the Body takes on the image of Christ ... we immerse ourselves in the struggle of the harvest and there find God creating servant-leaders, giving gifts of grace, pouring out his forgiveness, bringing unity, empowering us with good news. As the Master does this we will see where we belong and

recognize those who belong at our side.

For this reason....

"I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you

through the laying on of my hands....

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Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct,

rebuke and encourage---with great patience and careful instruc-

tion...

Keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an

evangelist, discharge all duties of your ministry...

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the

time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I

have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store

for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous

Judge, will award to me on that day---and not only to me, but also to

all who have longed for his appearing."

Let's join Paul in this race. Let's enter the labor of the harvest.

- **We will find bread** as we enter the work.
- **Joy will sustain us** as we labor.
- **Rejoicing** as we see, **God's hand building his church....**

And in this struggle we will look forward with joy and hope to his appearing.

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THE ULTIMATE COMMITMENT

And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was

walking ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who fol-

lowed were afraid.

Mark 10:32a

Jesus was ahead of them because he knew exactly where he was going. He was leading them to a place where they would behold the love of God with their naked eye....

- where every chain would break and they would be free men and women,

- where they would be absolutely flooded with the life of God.

There was a door up ahead on that road that would do all this and more ... it was called Calvary. If he could keep them with him all the way to Calvary, their lives would be changed forever. But they would have to stick with him.

Jesus could see that their courage was starting to fail.

And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was

walking ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who fol-

lowed were afraid.

If there's any verse in scripture that describes the Body of Christ ... at least as we find it where we are ... it's this verse.

Jesus is walking ahead - the twelve and all the other followers of Jesus are lagging behind. Why are they lagging behind? Because they're amazed at Jesus ... he's heading for Jerusalem ... and they've been told by all the people who should know that if Jesus shows up in Jerusalem for this Passover there's going to be trouble.

The disciples are lagging behind because they're afraid.

"If we go up to Jerusalem with him and he gets in trouble, what's go-

ing to happen to us?"

Peter tried to tell him,

"Lord, you're heading the wrong way. Let's go back to Galilee and let

things cool off."

But Jesus shot him down,

"Get behind me Satan."

The professing church is trying every excuse it can think of to keep from going up to Jerusalem with Jesus.

"We're not ready to go to Jerusalem Lord. We don't know each other well enough yet. Don't you think we should get to know each other better?"

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"Our self-esteem is wounded. Give us a little more time to improve our self-esteem."

"There isn't enough joy among us yet Lord. We can't go up to Jerusa-

lem until we have more joy."

But Jesus turns around and says,

"Are you coming? ... Are you coming with me?"

And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was

walking ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who fol-

lowed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell

them what was to happen to him, saying, "Behold, we

are going up

to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief

priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and de-

liver him to the Gentiles; and they will mock him, and spit upon

him, and scourge him, and kill him; and after three days he will

rise."

Mark 10:32-34

"I'm going up to Jerusalem to die and I want you to come with me. I

want you to watch me lay down my life so that you can see God's

love for you and so that you can learn how to lay down your life too."

But instead of taking in what Jesus is saying, they're far too busy with their own agenda.

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him,

and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we

ask of you." And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for

you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand

and one at your left, in your glory."

Mark 10:35-37

Little do they realize that what they're asking for involves a cross---the very thing they're trying to escape.

But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are

you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the bap-

tism with which I am baptized?" And they said to him, "We are able."

And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and

with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Mark 10:38-45

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"I've come to lay down my life ... follow me and you'll see God's face at Calvary and you'll learn how to lay down your life too."

Now let's give the disciples credit.

- They were reluctant.
- They were amazed and afraid and stumbling over their own egos,

... but they kept going with Jesus.

James and John did drink the cup Jesus drank ... Peter drank the cup. They

were the remnant of a huge army of disciples which started out with Jesus and withdrew from Jesus as soon as the cross came into view.

The same sifting is going on in the Body of Christ on earth right now. Jesus is on the road to Jerusalem ... he's up ahead ... we're lagging behind because we're amazed and afraid. And now we have to decide whether we're going to keep going to Jerusalem and the cross, or head back to the sunny peaceful

shores of Galilee where it's safe and comfortable.

The professing church is made up of two kinds of people...

- **the ones who are busy trying to find themselves,**
- **and the ones who are losing themselves step-by-step as they fol-**

low Jesus on the road to Jerusalem.

At first it was hard to tell who was who. It was one big happy crowd. But now the crowd is beginning to separate. And the question that decides where we fit in all this is: Where is your ultimate commitment?

Is it to yourself, or is it to Jesus?

- If it's to yourself, for goodness sake why put yourself through any

more hassle ... go on back to Galilee.

- If it's to Jesus, you have no choice. You have to follow him even if

you lose every friend you ever had ... half your family ... even your own life.

Let me be blunt. If your ultimate commitment is to yourself, do yourself a

favor and forget about Jesus ... he'll always mess up your plans. But if your ultimate commitment is to Jesus, then let him be your joy. Make it clear to yourself, to him, and to the world that he is your Lord.

If your ultimate commitment is to Jesus, then turn from the things that com-

promise this commitment, whatever or whoever they are.

We hear much these days, about the call of the Spirit for all of us to draw together ... to fit in with each other ... to wash each other's feet. We know that our impact on the world for the kingdom is directly connected to our unity
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with each other. But the key to this unity, the source of this bond of peace which is to hold us together, still comes down to a single issue in each of our lives: our commitment first and last to Jesus himself.

He is the vine we are the branches.

Our unity with each other is possible only through our unity with him.

- If I am alive in him, then I can walk in unity with you.

- If I have drifted from him ... if my vision of him is vague ... my uni-

ty with you will be superficial, and the first wind that blows will tear

it apart.

"Simon, son of John, do you love me? Feed my sheep."

The issue is not,

"Come on Peter, are you going to feed my sheep or aren't you?"

but,

"Peter, do you love me?"

If Peter's love for Jesus isn't clear, he'll forever be going off on fishing trips of his own. Peter will only feed the sheep when he's clear about his love for Jesus.

The Spirit of the Lord is gathering a people to himself. At an hour when the professing church is caught up in its own vanity, Jesus is gathering disciples ... men and women who are first and last committed to him.

When we talk about Jesus we're not talking about an idea or a concept or a set of rules. We are talking about a person who knows us and can be known by us, who can speak to us, who can breathe life into our souls, who stands in

judgment of everything in us that's evil, false, devious and vain.

He died on that cross, he rose from the dead. He is God the Son, who through the Spirit stands in our midst and searches every heart reading these words.

Behind every symptom of disunity in the Body, every form of lukewarmness,

every depression,

every case of burn-out, is the foundation issue:

"Where is your ultimate commitment? Is it to Jesus or is it to yourself?"

When I came to you, brethren, I did not come proclaiming to you

the testimony of God in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to

know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

I Corinthians 2:1-2

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This was Paul's ultimate commitment when he came to Corinth and all the time he was there ... Jesus Christ and him crucified. Paul followed Jesus on that road up to Jerusalem, that's why he had such power, bore such fruit. He knew where his commitment was.

If any other man thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law a Pharisee, as to zeal a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness

under the law blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith....

Philippians 3:4b-10

When Jesus says to Paul,
"Come on Paul, we're going up to Jerusalem. Walk with

me and I'll

show you the love of God and I'll teach you how to lay
down your

life,"

Paul says,

"Lead on Lord, my life is yours"

*And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and
Jesus was*

*walking ahead of them; and they were amazed, and
those who fol-*

*lowed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he
began to tell*

*them what was to happen to him, saying, "Behold, we
are going up*

*to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to
the chief*

*priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to
death, and de-*

*liver him to the Gentiles; and they will mock him, and
spit upon*

*him, and scourge him, and kill him; and after three
days he will*

rise."

Mark 10:32-34

Now it's we who are on that road to Jerusalem. The Spirit of Jesus is searching our hearts and asking, "Are you with me ... are you with me? Will you let me take authority over your everyday life, over your thoughts, over your dreams, over your memory, over your attitudes, over your material wealth?"

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Many of us are frustrated about our ministries. We are saying,

"I haven't found my ministry. Nobody has given me a chance to use my gifts. I'm not fulfilled."

The only way to any ministry, that is truly a ministry in the eyes of God, is to take this road with Jesus to Jerusalem. It leads to a cross. It leads to the pouring out not only of his life but of yours. Take this road and you will find resurrection power and resurrection life for a dying church in a world of death.

"Follow me. Follow me and I will lead you to the place where you

will see the love of God with your naked eye.

Follow me and I will bring you to the place where every chain will

break and you will be a free man, a free woman.

Follow me and I will bring you to the place where you will be flooded

with life from God.

Follow me to Jerusalem ... to the cross ... to drink my cup ... share in

my baptism of fire."

.... Either we answer with our lives, or we turn back to our own vain little worlds.

TRIALS

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon

you, to prove you, as though something strange were happening to

you. But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you

may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are

reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the

Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer

as a murderer, or a thief, or a wrongdoer, or a mischief-maker; yet

if one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but under that

name let him glorify God.

I Peter 4:12-16

Who of us hasn't complained secretly in our heart, (or perhaps even at the top of our lungs), "Why is my life constantly disrupted? Why do I have to go through all this? Why can't I have a little peace and quiet?"

As if these trials we're going through were some kind of abnormal thing, in-

truding on our divine peace, spoiling our joy in the Lord.

Have you ever known anyone who is seriously following Jesus whose life

wasn't disrupted? Who had no trials?

If you think you met such a person it was only because that person's trials

were hidden from your view. Behind their outwardly tranquil circumstances,

and outwardly comfortable life, that follower of Jesus was going through trials too.

The abnormal Christian life, the life that will never

survive this world, is the life without trials, where things are always smooth. No hassles, no dangers, never any money problems, no enemies; satisfaction and fulfillment on every front.

In this world of flesh and blood an undisrupted, untroubled, satiated life, is a life of certain death. Such a life ends up in Laodicea where believers are so proud of their prosperity and so comfortable in their lukewarmness that they have no idea how dead they are.

For you say, "I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not

knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that

you may be rich; and white garments to clothe you and to keep the

shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your

eyes, that you may see.

Revelation 3:17-18

Gold refined by fire ... gold made pure by being brought through the heat and the flame of trial. The white garments

are given to those who have come through great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Salve to anoint your eyes that you may see...

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

51

What is this salve that opens our blind eyes to reality - to see things as they are - but the trials that shake us out of enchanted slumber?

One thing all believers have in common along with the presence of Jesus in

our lives - love, joy, peace in the Holy Spirit - is trial of one kind or another.

Something that puts our lives under stress, causes pain, baffles us, makes us weak. It is by these very trials that the Spirit of God

- develops us into the likeness of Jesus,

- forms us into sons and daughters of the living God.

Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you

know that the testing of your faith produces

steadfastness. And let

*steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be
perfect and com-*

plete lacking in nothing.

James 1:2-4

Without these trials we would never emerge from our spiritual infancy and we would be flattened by the first storm that hits.

Some of us are experiencing the **trial of persecution** ... people are giving us a hard time because we're walking a road strange to them. If they are giving us a hard time because we're so obnoxious, because we're self-righteous, hypo-critical, lazy, thoughtless of others in our great piety, that's not persecution.

But there is genuine persecution going on in the lives of some among us, and this persecution is a trial, a refining fire.

There is the trial of monotony. Do you think Jesus' trials began only after He started to preach? What about those thirty years of monotony in the drab, tedious, narrow minded town of Nazareth? ... a detestable place according to Na-thanael...

"Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

It's not all high adventure. It's serving God among people that are petty, amid routines that are dry as dust, on and on, day-after-day, year-after-year, in the same boring place. But this very monotony is a refining fire.

There is the trial of loss...

a loved one,

a friend turns his back and walks out of your life, divorce tears up a

home,

a mate or a parent takes off,

and it's like part of your very soul is gone. This too is a refining fire.

There is the trial of danger...

Paul talks about the perils he experienced.

Perils of water,

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perils of robbers,

perils by Jews,

perils by Gentiles,

perils in the city, in the wilderness, in the sea,

among false brethren. We too are exposed to dangers of violence to

our person, our property. These very dangers are refining fires.

... some physical or mental malady that buffets us and we ask the Lord to take it away and He tells us that His grace is sufficient. And we begin to accept this thorn in the flesh as a refining fire.

There is the *trial of weakness.* ..

...some tendency, some twist inside us like a broken wheel on the cart in the supermarket that causes it to keep crashing into the merchandise. Some fear, some perverse desire, some sick compulsion. Of many of these things we can expect to be healed. But from some there comes a refining flame that keeps

driving us to our one source of strength.

There is the trial of loneliness...

...where we seem to be isolated by an invisible wall that no one can get

through - not even our loved ones.

"Which of us has known his brother?"

Which of us has looked into his father's heart?"

Which of us is not forever prison pent?"

Which of us is not forever a stranger and alone?"

Thomas Wolfe may have exaggerated in these words, but there are moments

in most of our lives when that certainly seems to be true. And by those flames of loneliness our lives are refined some more.

So the trials come and the flames lick our lives. What do they produce?

More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering

produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and char-

acter produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us because God's

love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which

has been given to us.

Romans 5:3-5

1. If we let them, our trials **produce endurance.**

The only way a runner builds up endurance is to run, and the only way a

fighter learns how to take punches is to take punches, and the only way a

child of God develops the power to endure is by passing on through trials.

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Some of us look back on insults which almost drove us to suicide in the past ... now we laugh them off and praise God. Setbacks that once seemed like the end of the world are all now part of a day's work. Disappointments that once would depress us for days ... now we shrug them off and keep going.

2. If we let them, trials **produce character, moral strength.**

The power to walk through temptation and not fall apart.

There are those

whose moral strength puts us to shame because while we were living in the

hothouse, they were plowing through storms and hard times. The solid de-

pendable mind of Christ is formed in us only by enduring trials.

3. If we let them, trials **produce hope**.

Our eyes begin to see the goal instead of forever, chasing the little goodies by the side of the road. When you're hanging on to God in a trial, - your vision of the Kingdom sharpens,

- your desire for the Kingdom increases.

John didn't have his Revelation vision during the good times in Ephesus. He

had it when he was exiled on the barren isle of Patmos.

Stephen saw Jesus more clearly as he was being pelted with the stones that

killed him than at any other time in his life.

Our destiny, now that we've entered the Kingdom is not confined to this earth.

Our very home is in the universe beyond --- it all belongs to us as sons and daughters of God. But when do we catch a glimpse of our Father's universe?

Only when it's dark.

4. If we let them, trials cause the **love of God to be shed abroad in our**

hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The love of God will flow into anybody who opens their heart. But for the

love of God to flow out of us with any consistency we need the flames of trial.

There was once a man who had ten children. He loved them in his own way

but was always distant, hard, critical of them. Then one of his sons became

mentally ill, and suddenly for the first time in his life the father forgot his own concerns, dropped everything, spent piles of money, drove miles and miles, stayed up whole nights, became a broken man. And the kindness that began

flowing toward that stricken son soon was flowing toward all his children. He began to love.

5. If we let them, trials bring us into **fellowship with Jesus** as never before.

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon

you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to

you. But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's suffering...

1 Peter 4:12-13

54

When you share in Christ's suffering you fellowship with Christ Himself. You experience unspeakable peace, your inmost heart walks and talks with the Son of God.

6. If we let them, trials **bring the Spirit of Glory and of God to rest upon us.**

If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are

blessed, be-

*cause the spirit of glory and of God rests upon, you. I
Peter 4:14*

When the trial is connected with the name of Christ, when we begin to suffer with Him outside the camp, - the Spirit that was on Him, received Him in death, raised Him the third day, rests on us!

7. If we let them, trials **make us complete in God.**

Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you

know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let

steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and com-

plete, lacking in nothing.

James 1:2-4

When we're complete in God they can take everything away from us that can

be taken away - even life itself - and we're still complete in God. We can pass into the next world with His praises on our lips.

There are many places in Christendom where they
proclaim a gospel free
from trials.

"Follow Jesus and your problems are over."

"Follow Jesus and you'll go first class all the way."

Multitudes are flocking to those places. And who of us
hasn't sometimes

thought how nice it would be to lie down on those rose
petals and float to

heaven? But God knows what we need. As surely as we
need the baptism of

the Holy Spirit we need the baptism of fire --- trials.

We don't have to go looking for them, they come by
themselves. All we need

to do is receive them in the name of the Lord, trusting that
these trials may accomplish their purpose in our lives.

***Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which
comes upon***

***you to prove you, as though something strange were
happening to***

***you. But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's
sufferings, that you***

may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a wrongdoer, or a mischief-maker; yet if one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but under that

name let him glorify God.

I Peter 4:12-16

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TAKING THE WEIGHT

Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

Whenever Moses held

up his hand, Israel prevailed; and whenever he lowered his hand,

Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands grew weary; so they took a

stone and put it under him, and he sat upon it, and Aaron and Hur

held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side;

so his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And

Joshua mowed down Amalek and his people with the edge of the

sword.

Exodus 17

Very soon after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea and escaped bondage

in Egypt, they found themselves under attack by a fierce desert tribe ... the Amalekites. The Israelites were no match, they needed help from God. So Moses stands on the top of the hill with his hands lifted up to heaven, the rod of the Lord in one of them. The life of God comes down into Moses as his hands are lifted up to receive, and overflows to the Israelites fighting in the valley below. But when Moses' hands drop, he's no longer in a receiving position.

The life of God doesn't seem to flow in and the Amalekites, who are much

stronger, prevail over the Israelites.

So they roll a large stone to the brow of the hill ... Moses sits down ... and Aaron holds up his one hand and Hur his other so that the life of God flows continuously and Israel wins the battle.

By lifting up his hands Moses was receiving the glory of God. But this glory has a certain weight. It's a free gift

from above, but Moses has to carry it in his uplifted hands.

Moses is a symbol of the Body of Christ which is meant to stretch forth its

hands to heaven to receive the glory of God so that evil may be conquered,

the captives freed,

the sick healed,

the dead raised.

God's glory has weight. The hands of the Body will grow weary unless there

is an Aaron and a Hur to steady those hands and keep them uplifted.

Whenever the Body of Christ is "alive with God's glory",

- its hands are up,

- it is receiving power from above,

- it is carrying the weight of this glory which God sends it.

And this always means that there are many Aarons and many Hurs steadying

its hands ... taking the weight of Moses' hands into their hands. It all hinges on people who are committed enough to the call of Jesus to take the weight.

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give

you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gen-

tle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my

yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Matthew 11:28-30

"My yoke is easy, and my burden is light. You won't be crushed by my yoke.

You won't stagger and stumble under my burden."

- It's not nearly as heavy as the guilt you carried around for so many

years ... before it was washed away in the Lamb's blood.

- It doesn't weigh nearly as much as the fear, the anger, the despair

that pressed down on your life for so long before it was washed away

in the Lamb's blood.

This yoke, by comparison, is easy ... it's light, but you do

have to take it and carry it.

Jesus is saying to us,

"Get under this yoke with me just as Aaron and Hur got under Moses'

hands and held them up.

Share with me in carrying the weight of glory into this world."

What many of us have not understood is that if we want the glory of God in

our lives we have to carry the weight of that glory. If we want to be part of the redemptive purpose of God on this earth at this hour, - and free the captives,

- and heal the sick,

we have to carry the weight of God's free grace.

How do we do this? ...very simple. If Moses up on the hill with his hands

stretched toward heaven represents the Body of Christ receiving glory from

God, then each one of us becomes an Aaron or a Hur holding up his hands.

Each of us picks up the weight of the Body of Christ in some specific way ...

some ministry, some service that I will carry with my heart, with my prayers, with my very hands.

For those among us who have already accepted responsibility, it's a matter of committing ourselves before God to take the full weight of it.

i.e.

"I'm going to pray for these people every day."

"I'm going to drive these people in my car every week."

"I'm going to go to the nursing home once a week."

"I'm going to visit those shut-ins once a month."

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"I'm going to commit myself to stay in touch with three people who seem discouraged."

"I'm going to take the full weight of this thing and carry it. And I'm

going to pray for these people on a daily basis."

For those among us who haven't found anything to take hold of ... any service to commit themselves to ... it's a matter of saying, "Lord, I'm willing. Show me one area where I can take responsibility. Direct me to one person you want me to serve in some way.

Fit me in to one weak area in this Body that needs my help.

- I will be responsible,

- I will pray,

- I will be consistent."

In all of us there is a fear of being tied down to anything. We don't want to take the weight. We'll pitch in when we're in the mood or when it's convenient, or when it's fun, or when we're not too pressed for time.

But when Jesus says,

"Get under my yoke."

he's saying,

"Take the weight ... commit yourself to this thing on a daily basis."

Or when he says,

"If anyone will come after me let him deny himself, take up his cross

daily and follow me" ... he means commitment to carry the weight

daily, consistently.

The minute we say,

"Yes Lord, put your yoke over me, I'll carry it. Fit me in with whoever you say, I'll work with them. Assign me, I'll serve.".....

The minute we do this we find this weight to be a weight of glory ... the

doorway to supernatural freedom. Power from on high comes down into these

"Moses' hands", as we hold them up and battles are won, captives are freed, lives are changed.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the trans-

endent power belongs to God and not to us. II

Corinthians 4:7

Here's the testimony of a man who has learned how to carry the glory of God

around in his daily life ... heavenly treasure in an earthen vessel ... so that lives are touched by God ... healed and changed. What does it cost him?

58

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed, (---he keeps going),

perplexed, but not driven to despair; (---he keeps going), persecuted,

but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed; (---he keeps go-

ing), always carrying in the body (the weight of) the death of Jesus,

so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

II Corinthians 4:16-17

Is he complaining? Not at all. He's rejoicing!

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away,

our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momen-

tary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond

all comparison.....

II Corinthians 11:16-17

One day Paul is going to carry a weight of glory, beyond all comparison, and so are we. Our preparation, our training, is to learn to carry the weight of glory now, in this life, by taking the weight of the Body of Christ into our hands and holding on.

The sifting that's going on in the Body of Christ at this hour is very simple.

The Spirit is asking,

"Who's going to take the weight?"

Some say, "Here I am, give me the yoke."

Some say, "See you later."

Then came Amalek and fought with Israel at Rephidim. And Moses

said to Joshua, "Choose for us men, and go out, fight with Ama-

lek tomorrow, I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God

in my hand." So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands grew weary; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat upon it, and Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; so his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua mowed down Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

Exodus 17:8-12

God is raising up people among us who are willing to hold up Moses' hands ...

not just for five minutes or an hour, but to hold those hands steady until the going down of the sun ... the end.

Ask yourself,

"Is there any place in God's kingdom (not my kingdom ...
God's king-

dom) where I have committed myself to take the weight?"

If you have taken the weight, may the Lord strengthen you
and prosper you

and make you fruitful.

59

If you haven't, may the Lord help you to take hold of one of
Moses' hands today ... lift it, hold it, steady it, until
Amalek, the kingdom of darkness, is destroyed and the
captives are freed and the glory of God is visible on this
earth.

***You are the light of the world ... (take the weight of that
light .. let***

***your light so shine before men, that they may see your
good works***

and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 5

***And there are varieties of ministries, and the same
Lord. And there***

are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for

the common good.

I Corinthians 12:5-8

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