
A Voice in the Wilderness

The Journey Begins, 1999



Dalen Garris

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

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Articles from 1999

By Dr. Dalen Garris

*This is a work of history. Historical individuals and places
and events are mentioned.*

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*For information, address
dale@revivalfire.org*

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Introduction

In 1998, I started writing a religious column for a local newspaper that, within a short time, spread to other newspapers around the country. Eventually, we started sending out those articles through email and then, of course, through social media. As the saying goes, the methods have certainly changed, but the message of revival remains the same. It is that message that I hope we have reflected in these articles you are about to read.

A Voice in the Wilderness is a series that comes from 20 years of those newspaper columns. Throughout those 20 years, I felt like that voice crying in the wilderness to a world that, in many cases, acknowledged the integrity of the messages I sent out, but like those in Ezekiel 33:30-33, they heard, they agreed, they even enjoyed the message, but they would not do.

There are those who have said that I was too judgmental, too harsh, and not loving enough. They had a different gospel that they followed and were not going to hear a voice crying for repentance. As in Isaiah 29, the Book became sealed to them, and God hid the wisdom and understanding of their wise and prudent.

As the Church began its long descent from the '60s to today, those who followed this new, easier gospel of grace and blessing grew to become the new normal. They were now the mainstream church, and the old-time gospel of the fear of God, holiness and righteousness, and of a crucified walk of the Cross became out of date and too critical. That which had been good was now

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considered evil, and that which had been evil was now considered good. Times had changed, but not the message. The voice was crying in a greater wilderness than ever.

But then there were those from around the world that heard the voice and recognized it. For 20 years, it was those believers that encouraged us to keep going, keep speaking, and keep making the crooked way straight. We shared that hope that God will return to His people one more time in a move of the Holy Spirit that will be greater than ever before.

Until then, we will hold up the Blood-Stained Banner high and keep declaring the truth of God as a voice crying in the wilderness.

Passing on the Glory

We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done ... that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments. (Psalm 78)

Oh, the Glory! Can any of you out there remember what it was like to feel the outpouring of the Holy Ghost filling up services with His Shekinah Glory? Do you remember when God came down, and hearts were overwhelmed, and praises poured out from hearts that were open? When souls were filled to overflowing, and the Spirit of God flowed like anointing oil through our streets? Souls were saved, people were healed, and multitudes were drawn to the fountain of life pouring out from the Throne.

Those who remember, they know what I'm talking about.

Where has it gone? What happened to the great moves of God in our churches? Those who should have passed on the glory have instead given us over to man-made doctrines, to secular preaching, and to churches that have lost their vibrancy. Depths in God have been turned over to educated preachers who know so much theology about God that they no longer know what it's like to be led by the Spirit. If that is not so, then where is the manifestation of the Power of God?

The Kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. But our churches have turned the Gospel of Jesus Christ into just another religion. Lost souls that are desperate for

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God have looked upon us as another philosophy, another dead religion with no power, no Spirit, and no glory.

Their cry is, "Sir, we would see Jesus!" Give us the demonstration of the Spirit and power. Let Holy Ghost conviction open our hearts to return to that place in God that we once had. Church "as usual" is death. We need Life! And that can only come from men of God who are not afraid to take a stand for righteousness and for the fear of God. Men that are willing to walk the walk of the lowly Nazarene and allow their lives to be filled with the power of God instead of theology.

The indictment stands against those who remember, and who did not pass it on.

Love Offerings

The old King James translators correctly used the word “charity” in 1 Corinthians 13. Today, where we are inundated with “relationships,” we have turned to the word “love.” Love has taken on the meaning of a warm and fuzzy emotion to us, but God defines it as the keeping of His commandments. There’s a bit of a difference there. Charity goes beyond an ethereal feeling or emotion because charity is the giving of oneself out of love to see souls get saved. And stay saved. It is Faith in action.

In broadcast after broadcast, we see one evangelist after another end their programs with their hands out for a “love offering.” Oh, they wring their hands and talk of all the wonderful things their ministry is doing and of all the wonderful tapes and books they have made available for us. If only we will send a “love offering” to them of \$24.95.

I have a few problems with this routine. First of all, I have never read where Jesus had such sophisticated and complicated philosophies as they do; He spoke to the people on their own terms. But I guess if you want to sell something, it’s got to be something new. Everybody’s already got the old stuff in the Bible.

When Jesus broke the bread and fishes, however, he commanded His disciples to give them to the multitude. We’re supposed to feed the sheep, not feed off them.

Second, they always say the same three things: 1) their video is so-o-o powerful, and 2) it’ll change your life. Geez! And here I thought it was the Word of God that was so powerful and could change people’s lives. And 3)

they really want you to have this thing.

I know how much money it takes to put the Gospel out, but since when is God broke? Did He lose on the stock market or something? Bad investment somewhere wiped Him out?

Tithes and offerings are supposed to be determined out of your heart before God. When did these people get the authority to dictate the terms and amounts of your offering?

“What would Jesus do?” I’ll tell you what He did when he was here in the flesh. He whipped them out of the Temple for making merchandise of the House of God. If they’ve got such a powerful message that will change your life, then why don’t they give it away for free? That’s what our Lord did.

Friend, don’t be fooled by men who make a career out of the Gospel in this way. Charity is the essence of real Christianity. Let’s get back to the great things in the Word of God, stick with the basics, and look to the Lord to lead us and guide us in the way. Tithe to a soul-winning work where the preacher is not afraid to stand up for righteousness, to keep us in the reproof of the Word of God wherein is the way of life, and Holy Ghost conviction to keep us out of Hell. Those are the works of charity, and that is where you will find the seeds of revival.

God will take care of the rest.

Two Trees

This article was sent to the pastors in the county, the idea being that it is the church leadership that has the most influence on the Body of Christ. They can also do the most damage by resisting a move of God. Therefore it is always to them first that the Lord appeals in preparation for any great move of God. We are at one of those times now.

Spiritually, the ground is fallow, dry, and hard. It is time now to break up that fallow ground. The rain is coming, and when it comes, it will be a deluge, but the ground must be prepared first. We are at a focal point, a fork in the road of sorts, where we will decide for ourselves and for our society which path we will take. We will either be satisfied with "church as usual", content that we have "taken care" of the religious aspects of our life; or we will recognize how dry we are and not be satisfied until we have an outpouring of the Holy Ghost like has never been since the beginning of time.

Throughout Church history, there have always been two forces at work. Countering a sharp, focused evangelical fire, there is always a move to slow down the pace and be "normal." On the one hand, we have the fiery prophets interested only in exposing the raw truth. On the other we have the pastoral influence to protect the sheep and to keep them from being offended and lost. Either one, taken to an extreme and excluding the other's influence, does not have long-lasting results.

The old brush arbor revivals have often been used as an example of extreme "hell, fire, and brimstone" preachers who have offended more souls than they won. At least, that's what Hollywood would have us to believe.

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On the contrary, however, thousands of souls were saved and transformed, churches were revived and started, ministries were ignited, and the fabric of our nation was changed. True, many were offended and blamed the strong preaching as an excuse, but many more were not. They had seen Jesus, had felt the Spirit of God and had gone on.

Bible colleges and seminaries, worried about rashness in the past, however, began to counsel their students to sway from such strong preaching. The idea was that it was too easy for every would-be and self-styled prophet to raise himself up to tell the rest of us of our condemnation. We began to transform the Gospel into a religion. An ecclesiastical structure was built as a framework to hang the Gospel on, and a more “socially responsive” church began to be formed.

The problem is that, in becoming more educated, we lost the fire of being driven by the Spirit of God. Instead, we have filtered everything through a sophisticated lens. We have become more directed by prepared messages, sociological programs, and psychological approaches than by the leading of the Holy Spirit. Jesus and all the prophets didn't seem the least worried about offending the wicked, but our pulpits today are sanitized from such offensive preaching and are more concerned with convincing people of God's love. There is a subtle and yet very important difference; it is the same as the difference between the two trees in the Garden of Eden.

The Spirit of Whoredom

The Lord wants to move in your community in a great and mighty way – the kind of way that is so supernatural that it will be spoken of for years to come. What a wonderful opportunity! But you have to understand that there are always conditions with God. Revival fire does not just fall out of the sky. There is a formula that must be followed. You can read it in the Book of Joel, in Daniel, Nehemiah, Chronicles, and even Revelations. The people of God have to realize that they can no longer be settled on their lees. We have to come to a place of repentance and start crying out with all our hearts for God to move.

Instead of hearing messages of Holy Ghost conviction to bring us to a place of repentance before God, however, all we ever hear, especially on TV and radio, are messages of peace and love. But what kind of messages did the prophets in the Word of God preach? From the Old Testament prophets through John the Baptist to John the Revelator, the message has been to repent and walk in the fear of God. The job of a prophet is to declare unto the people of God their sin, not to give messages of peace and prosperity.

There is a spirit of whoredom in the world that Hosea warns about, which can enter the church and bring it into a false sense of prosperity and security. Jeremiah cried out to his people to repent, but they turned their ears away and ended up being carried off unto Babylon. We also, if we do not hearken, will end up being carried away to that Great Whore of Babylon, the one-world church.

It is time to gather together a solemn assembly to rend our hearts, not our garments, and cry out to God for

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revival. There's a price to be paid. If we are not willing to pay that price, we will shortly reach that time when the Lord says, "That's enough," and He will turn from us and look to someone else. We could end up in that rut of "church as usual" that we like so much, thinking that everything is beautiful until that great day of Judgement descends upon us. Then the covering will be ripped off our eyes, and we will then see how we had been seduced into an easy Gospel and left without oil in our lamps.

Let us find a way to gather together in prayer to receive the revival that the Lord wants so desperately to give us and for all the lost out there that depend upon us to pray for this great and mighty move of God.

Herod Feared John

"Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him ... (Mark 6:20)

If you picked up a newspaper today and saw that John the Baptist was holding revival services at a local church, would you drop everything you're doing to make it there? How about Elijah? or Peter? Would it be because they are famous? Or is it because you would expect to hear a man speak with authority in God?

Souls are drawn to men of God who can stand up in the power and authority of God. Revivals are poured out on anointed vessels to whom people flock to hear the Word of God and see the amazing outpouring of the Holy Spirit work. They came to Jesus to be healed, but they stayed to listen because He spoke with authority.

We need that authority today. Actually, we are desperate to see a man of God stand up in that kind of power and authority. We have a lot of nice preachers, but we don't have anyone like John the Baptist, Elijah, or Paul. Why is that?

Search the Scriptures and you will find that the kind of power and authority I am referring to only comes the hard way. We all read and pray, but how many of us storm the Throne? We all fast, but how many of us crucify our flesh? All this lifts us up to a higher plateau in God, but the real holy boldness, the real strength and power in God, and the genuine authority in God only comes through the fear of the Lord. That is what gives a man strong confidence makes his face to shine, gives him that entrance into the presence of God's power. Moses' knees

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smote together, David's flesh trembled, the prophets spoke of Him being their dread, Paul feared and trembled. It is the common attribute for every powerful man with authority in God. And we need that today.

During the last couple of generations, the message of the Fear of the Lord has been extracted from our pulpits and has been preached out of our hearts to the point that most Christians don't even believe it anymore. They've been told that "Love" is the most important element. Read carefully, my friend. The Love of God is not possible without the Fear of the Lord. Neither is wisdom, understanding, depth, or power. And we will not see revival, or a strong move of God without it.

Lord, raise us up to have the kind of power and authority in You that John had, that we may see the greatest revival of all time.

No Small Stir

And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. (Acts 19:23)

We read in Colossians that the Laodiceans were to read Paul's epistle to the Colossians. What an event for them to get a letter from Paul! You can almost feel the anticipation in the air. This was a church under persecution with an enormous job before them. The whole known world was lying in pagan idolatry and on their way to Hell, but the Christians knew they had the Truth, and they were excited!.

The name of Jesus was viewed as some new god that had come out of Judea which, in itself, would not have created much of a stir, but Jesus' followers wouldn't let well enough alone. They had to keep pressing their doctrine of salvation, repentance from dead works, adherence to the commandments of God (which most flesh does not enjoy), and this constant reproof that anybody who didn't go along with their ideas was going to a place of torment for eternity.

Now the idea of Hades was not new. Different shades of the concept had filtered down through the ages ever since Noah, but most often, it was mollified by some simple deeds you could do in the temple. You could light some candles, burn some incense, and mutter some repetitious chants over a string of beads. And in case that didn't work, there would always be a priest there who could intercede for you to the gods. Especially to some mother figure like Astarte, who would have compassion because she was a mother and would go talk to God for

you. (Wasn't that nice of her?)

Then, of course, there were always the statues of various gods that all had their own fields of specialty to which you could pray - travel, war, family, love, etc. As long as you showed up at the Temple, you were OK. Does this sound familiar?

Why did the Christians have to be so pushy? Just because everybody didn't believe the same way, did that mean everybody was going to hell? After all, they believed in god. As long as you didn't harm anyone, what was so bad about that? Why couldn't the Christians just leave everybody alone?

Persecution was rampant against that early church. It would have been so easy for them to adopt a policy of laissez-faire and be satisfied with just going to church, but there was a great commission hanging over them. They had to win the world for Christ, and so they plunged into the challenge. They knew, without a doubt, that they had the Truth and that if they didn't evangelize the world, multitudes of people would be lost forever. God's people have always grown under persecution and languished in times of peace and prosperity.

Is it so different now? Human nature has not changed. The fashions may change, but the basic nature of man will always exhibit itself in the same ways. There will always be those who are comfortable with a laissez-faire form of religion that makes allowances for the flesh and would rather not be bothered with something that calls them to a deeper walk in God. But then there are always those for whom this world is not worthy; those who need nourishment from the Throne of God; those who hunger for more than what can be seen with their

eyes. They feed off of Truth and the life-flowing Spirit of God. Nothing else will do. The great commission hangs over them.

There is a whole world out there that is lost and dying, and it's up to us to tell them before it's too late.

No wonder there was no small stir!

Call to Revival

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray... (2 Chronicles 7:14)

In the Book of Joel, which describes the spiritual conditions in these last days, the Lord first describes a scene of spiritual desolation quite similar to the famine for hearing the Word of God described in Amos 8:11. Jesus described the same, as did Paul, and many other prophets of God. We don't hear this preached in the churches very often, but it is certainly written throughout the Word of God.

Once the Lord sets the scene in Joel, He then calls for the people of God to cry out to Him with all their heart with weeping and fasting for an outpouring of His Spirit and for a restoration of that which we have lost spiritually. This is the blueprint from God to follow if we want to see a supernatural move of the Holy Spirit.

We first have to realize that we don't have a real outpouring before we can really call out to God to send one. We then have to want one with all our hearts, enough to pay the price. Revivals don't just happen; they don't fall out of the sky. Somebody has to be willing to go to the Throne with a repentant heart and cry out to God. He is looking for those who not only are cut to the heart for lost souls, but who also have enough faith to literally storm the Throne for them. You can't sow seed onto ground that has not been prepared first if you want to see a harvest

An old warrior in God once told me that the attitude God looks for is the one that will fight to the Throne of God and say, "I will not be denied! One of us

is going to move, and it's not going to be me!" That's the faith that moves mountains.

Allow me to make a challenge to those of you who really know God and want to see a revival. You say you want to see souls saved? You want to see a great and mighty move of God? It's time to fight for one. Gather the saints from every church to come and storm the Throne of God for an outpouring of the Holy Ghost, one that will rock the foundations of this ol' world.

I don't care what church you belong to, and neither does God. I'm not looking to start a church; I'm looking to see the ones we've got explode with the power of God. The Lord's waiting for those who have hearts that are willing to do whatever it takes in order to see this great promise of God be fulfilled, not somewhere else, but right in your community.

Are you tired of "church as usual"? C'mon, let's make a difference that will be written into all eternity. Something that we'll be talking about 10,000 years from now, that we were there when the Holy Ghost crashed down and changed the lives of countless thousands of souls.

The Coming Rain

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world. (Hebrews 11:7)

The Lord is always faithful to warn His people when judgment is about to fall. There is always time to get prepared to get to safety. Sometimes that means fleeing for your life, as with Lot; sometimes we get 100 years, as with Noah.

Judgments do not come as a surprise. Throughout history, you can see the pattern hold true. Sin and rebellion in a society always bring an apostasy to the churches. Once the church falls asleep, then judgment begins to fall. And yet, God still deals with us in those last minutes to repent. However, the false prosperity that usually precedes destruction seems to lull people into a mindset that things will just keep going on as usual and that there's no need to worry or fear.

The warnings that He gives through His prophets and servants are almost always ignored and mocked. Consider how foolish that little-known hairy man named Elijah seemed after he had walked through the lush, green, watered valleys of Israel to tell the king that it wouldn't rain until he said so. Three years later, however, no one was laughing.

The warnings always come in times of plenty. But once the judgments fall, the time for repentance is over. Once it began to rain, even Noah couldn't open the door.

Friend, the time of prosperity is about to come to

a close. We will see the fabric of our society and our false prosperity change dramatically for the worse. Judgment is going to fall.

Call me what you will, it is still coming. Consider our ways as a nation and as a society, and tell me if you think we can escape. Great societies of the past suffered terrible judgments and were guilty of far less than we. Is there any nation throughout time that ever escaped after murdering its own children? And yet, we have shed the innocent blood of 60 million babies. And that is only one of the multitudes of sins we are guilty of.

My greatest fear is that the people of God, who know the Truth, but who are lulled into an easy-going Gospel, will not hearken to the warnings of God all around them. If they do not move in the fear of the Lord to strengthen themselves in the Word and prayer, then they will not have the strength to stand in that hour of temptation that will come to try the whole world. They need to have the fire and the boldness of the Holy Ghost flowing through them now, not tomorrow.

Don't roll over and go back to sleep. It's about to rain.

Conflict

Warfare is something we don't mind reading about, but it is an uncomfortable way to lead our lives. Conflict, however, is one of the central themes of Christianity. God is always looking for someone through whom he may declare war on the enemy. He doesn't raise up Prayer Socializers. He raises up Prayer Warriors. The great men of God that we see throughout the Bible were warriors who marched into fierce conflict proclaiming victory and armed with nothing but a vision for God, faith in His power, and, for a sword, the Word of God.

Is this good for someone else, but not for each and every one of the rest of us? Is it up to someone else to storm the gates of Hell, while we sit back, comfortable with the thought that we go to church every Sunday and we're OK? Let someone else fight. We just want to relax and be raptured. Oh, we'll send them money, but will we actively enjoy the enemy?

I read that, after the invasion of Omaha Beach on D-Day, it was determined that one of the reasons that it was so bloody was that only one out of five soldiers had actually been able to fire their weapons. Firepower has got to be brought to bear if we expect to win. Are you firing the weapons that God has given you? Are you fighting as if your life depended on it?

When we buy into the ecumenical doctrines of compromise, we lower our weapons. When we allow the enemy to infiltrate our communities, our schools, our TV, and every other aspect of our society, we step down from the warrior's stand that we have been called to. Is it more important to be nice than to stand up

and fight for the righteousness of God?

Have we been so saturated with the “Love” gospel for the last 30 or so years that our churches are so afraid of offending someone and have loosened their grip on their weapons and will no longer fight? How has our attitude changed? And what kind of results have followed?

That which, at one time, was the dominion of God’s people is now enemy territory. Satan will not give it up easily. He will attack anyone who dares make a stand against him. It’s not an easy stand to make. There is a price to pay that is much higher than what it takes to get up and go to church on Sunday. But either we will put on the armor of God and fight, or we will go down in defeat. There is no comfortable middle ground.

An “easy” Gospel is just that. Easy. But there’s no easy way out of this battle. Either we will stand for the honor of God, or we will ultimately succumb.

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. (Revelations 3:10)

Conspiracy

There are more views of world history than the average guy can keep up with. It seems like everyone has a different perspective. Alongside traditional historical viewpoints is the conspiracy theory of world history. This viewpoint, in essence, states that a power elite devises a long-running plan to bring the entire world into the unified submission of a feudal type of society. The power elite, of course, will be the Lords, Captains, and Kings. This fascinating topic has been the subject of numerous books, political groups, talk-show radio, and uncounted grass-roots organizations.

Unfortunately, there is a certain amount of disagreement on the particulars of how, why, and when the world will succumb to this New World Order. After a while, you hear so many different takes on the subject that the average American doesn't know what to believe. Or whether to believe anything at all.

Wouldn't it be nice if you could just roll over, and all this stuff would just go away? Let everybody else get all excited. Please, just let me go to work, raise my family, go to church on Sunday, and live a normal decent life. What's wrong with that? Does everybody have to march down Main St. waving the flag and shouting slogans?

And what if it is all true? Just what is the average guy supposed to do? Do we all jump into political action groups? Or, do we start the 2nd American Revolution? Are we really going to lose all our freedoms? Or is that just a bunch of babble from some frustrated armchair warriors who read Tom Clancy books?

Have I struck a chord with most of you out there?

About now, you're probably wondering which side I'm on. Let me give you a hint. Skip to the verse at the bottom.

Regardless of how you stand on political issues, only the Word of God is sure. The Bible shows that we are most definitely moving into a one-world government and religion, but the Bible shows the source as being different than the political/financial entities that are usually cited. The Mother of every abomination on earth, and the source of all this wickedness, is spiritual in nature.

You may resist, and you should, but you will never win spiritual warfare with carnal weapons. We need a Holy Ghost Revival to bring people into a walk in the Spirit of the Lord. Only then will we be able to resist and withstand the demonic onslaught that is about to sweep the world.

It's more than just going to church on Sunday, or just living a good life. Our very survival depends on it.

Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (Ephesians 6:11-13)

A Broken Spirit

A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones. Proverbs 17:22

Remember the woman of Canaan in Matthew 15 who cried to Jesus to heal her daughter? She cried and cried unto him until the disciples begged Him to send her away. He answered that He was not sent to the Gentiles, and her desperate answer was that the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their masters' table. That got His attention, and He proclaimed how great her faith was.

Another story: A brother I know, while traveling on an airplane, was subjected to one of the other passengers continually taking the Lord's name in vain. When he had finally had enough, he approached the man and said, "Praise the Lord! I am so glad to hear that you're saved!" To which the puzzled man replied that he wasn't a Christian at all. The brother responded with, "Oh, but yes. The Bible says that whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. And you've been calling on His name this whole flight!"

It's so easy to say that we're a Christian and our spiritual life is covered. Everything is going just fine. We have some kind of a measure of faith in God, and as long as we maintain that status quo, life is good. We are saturated with messages of prosperity, peace, and good things to those who profess Jesus Christ. But what happens when the sky blackens, the storms come, and your tranquil life is blown away? How do you come to grips with the adversity that life sometimes hands us? Does your faith still apply? Did God just dump you?

What happened to all the messages you heard that told you that all you had to do was call, and He would answer with a snap of your fingers?

Life is good, but there comes a time when we are brought to the reality of the fact that we are still just flesh. You cry out, but there's no answer. You cry out some more, but nothing but stillness. Where's God? And why doesn't He jump to our plight? What's going on?

As easy as it is to proclaim the goodness of God when all is well, we tend to forget that this life is not reality and that God is not something to store away in a box until Sunday. Sometimes prayer is easy. But there are those times when you absolutely have to have an answer from God. One fellow told me that if God answered our prayers right away, then we wouldn't realize how much we need Him.

We can send up token prayers and tell ourselves that we've done what the Bible says to do, but there is a depth of soul that He wants to bring us into where our spirits are broken, and our bones are dried out -- a place where we finally give up and surrender to Him. It's a point of desperate, broken prayer.

There is a point when a desperate heart will reach beyond everything that can be seen, and grasp hold of His garment for a miracle. That's the point that He was trying to get you to all along.

That's when faith takes hold, and great and mighty moves of God are birthed.

Rachael's Cry

Give me children or else I die. (Genesis 30:1)

Rachael, like Hannah, couldn't stand the fact that she was barren. Their cry should be the cry of every born-again Christian today. How can we stand to be barren when the Lord has called us to bear forth much fruit?

First, we have to realize what we don't have before we can come to the point of Rachael's cry. Churches today do a good job of keeping the status quo and maintaining a place for those who are already saved to gather together to worship, but where are the great moves of God where thousands of souls throng to the altar for salvation? Where are the great healing ministries where the sick and afflicted came in great numbers to receive the great manifestation of the healing power of God?

It's not enough just to have knowledge. Knowledge by itself "puffeth up" (1 Cor. 8:1). Remember that there were two trees in the Garden. If all you are interested in is analyzing the Word of God and figuring out prophecy, then you're barking up the wrong tree. The Word of God has to be received, and prophecy has to be revealed. You can know all kinds of theology and doctrine and not ever have revival or bear forth fruit.

Revival doesn't come from learning it in a Bible College study course. If that were the case, then with all the thousands of graduates every year from these Bible Colleges, you'd think we'd have revival sweeping the land. But we don't. We have "church as usual."

Revival does not come cheap. There has to be such

a heart-felt desire for the lost that we become willing to pay whatever price is necessary. If you don't have that deep overwhelming burden, you won't persevere in fasting and prayer all the way to victory. You won't storm your way to the Throne of God to claim an answer no matter what. You have to demand an answer from God and not take "no" for an answer. You have to have the desperation of Rachael's cry.

Until the Lord starts to prepare people's hearts, all the works in the world will do little good. People have to have a hunger built in their hearts before they will receive the Truth. Only the Lord can do that. But it's up to us to pray it in. Revival doesn't just fall out of the sky to a people who do not care enough to pray.

What if nobody answers the call to pray? Then the Lord will give us a certain space of time before He passes on to someone else. And we will stand there without oil in our lamps thinking that He will know us because we've prophesied in His name. But He will look us dead in the face and declare that He never knew us.

Ahhhhh, but for those who will, there are those great open arms, that wonderful smile, and that "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

This is our time. Let's not let it pass us by.

Excuses

There's an old saying that an excuse is just an excuse is just an excuse. It's amazing how many excuses we can come up with to justify doing the things we want to do and to slide around the things that we know we should do.

When we look over all the different religions we have, and even within those religions, all the varying doctrines, one can't help wondering which is the right way. So we pick one that suits us the best, and we pursue that direction. Who can convince us that we're wrong? After all, isn't one religion as good as another? Aren't we supposed to be tolerant of one another?

That kind of thinking can ultimately get us into a lot of trouble. Being comfortable doesn't necessarily mean being right, but it sure is the path of least resistance. The problem is that we will all stand in judgment before the same God, with whom there is only one way and one Truth. The trick is to seek that one way that He dictates and not allow ourselves to be persuaded to follow a path that is more in tune with the way we would like just because it sounds good.

We're told that strict adherence to His Word will tell us the right way. But how many of us will quote some well-worn phrases that we've heard from somebody else to justify what we want to hear?

The Bible says that the Spirit of God bears witness to the Truth. Does that mean that every time we feel good at church, we're OK?

Is that all it takes to be right with God? Can we

use that as an excuse at the Judgement Bar? Doesn't it take a little more than just being satisfied with what has the appearance of a form of godliness? Proverbs says that they that seek the Lord understand all things. Perhaps there needs to be a desire to seek a little deeper than surface "religiousness" to really discover the ways of God. Perhaps it's all a test to see if we really have a heart that cries out to God for more than "church as usual." Maybe we need to seek Him with our whole heart. As it is written, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, the honor of kings is to search out a matter." Hmmmm. That puts a little different perspective on it, doesn't it.

Here's the kicker. The Word of God refers to a time coming soon when there will be a one-world religion. There is an hour of temptation coming that will try the whole world. (Rev. 3:10) Will we go along with the flow because it is easier and much more tolerant? Or will we settle it in our hearts to find that one true way in God and to make our stand with the righteous, no matter what the cost?

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. (Matthew 7:13,14)

A Call to Arms

And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armor, Come, and lit us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few. (1 Samuel 14:6)

In these chapters, we see the people of God hiding in rocks and dens from what seemed to be an overwhelming situation. The enemy had amassed himself with thousands of warriors to destroy the church of God, but there were a couple of men who not only believed God, but also were willing to take the battle to the enemy and trust God for the outcome. It took more than espousing a good religion; it took a spirit of war in their souls and a fire in their hearts to fight for the honor of God.

We stand here in these last days in a similar situation. We see the Church relegated to a position of maintaining the status quo but not on fire enough to stand up and fight. We have heard of great moves of God in the past, but are we willing to stand in the gap and clamor up the rocks to battle for a revival in our church here and now? Are we willing to pay the price, whatever the cost? If not, then we are dying on the Vine.

The Lord is a mighty man of war, and we need strong men of God that are invested in power, strength, and authority to lead the charge. We don't need nice preachers delivering nice messages to nice people so we can have a lot of nice churches. The Word of God is full of warnings of the encroaching power of darkness to take over this world and destroy the Church. Where are the

Jonathan's, the David's, the fiery prophets, the real strong men and women of God that we have read about who are willing to resist unto blood?

To bring about a really powerful move of God that will send the enemy running, it takes a people who are willing to fight for the honor of God, who will storm the Throne of God and not retreat. The battle may be the Lord's, but He requires some mighty men and women of God to take up the battle. He will not send a revival to a people who don't care enough to stand up and fight for one. There is a call to arms, but how many are ready to answer the call?

It all starts with prayer. That's where the battle is won or lost. And not just a simple prayer or two, but a desperate, strong, prevailing prayer that is dedicated to holding up the Blood-Stained Banner and claiming the victory that is so desperately needed in these last days. Remember, it's not the hearers that are just before God. It's the doers.

Somebody's got to get on their knees.

Dead Trees

This morning, I looked out over my yard and considered the great big Weeping Willow out there. It had suffered terribly from last summer. It reminded me of the first chapter in the Book of Joel. What the drought didn't wither, the grasshoppers had finished off. Whole limbs stood out from the ground up to 30 feet high that were just about dead, brown, and dry. Here and there were a few new outcroppings of growth. A few leaves here, a few leaves there.

I stood looking at the mass of dead branches, figuring out which limbs I was going to have to cut down and which could be spared. I'm told that you should cut major limbs only at certain times; otherwise, you'll hurt the whole tree. But they've got to come down eventually. If they don't, they will sap the tree of its strength and potency. All that dead weight will keep the tree from the beauty and health of vibrant growth.

How much like the Lord with His church. The dead branches are allowed to hang in there for a while in hopes that they will sprout some new life and bear fruit. However, if they do not come back to life, they've got to be cut down, or they will sap the entire Body of its strength.

Souls are not drawn to dead churches any more than we are drawn to dead trees. The husbandman would not be worthy of his hire if he allowed them to remain unpruned. No matter how nice or how easy it would be to just leave them alone, the ax has to be laid to the root of the tree if it does not bear forth good fruit. And where do they throw the dead branches? Into the fire.

The Lord always raises up vinekeepers to work His garden, and they are responsible for making sure the vines produce good fruit. Theirs is a thankless job – nobody enjoys being told that they are dead – but in the end, the plant will prosper and grow. To not proclaim the call to righteousness and Holy Ghost conviction would make them derelict in their duty and allow the tree to die. There are those who are dying to see a Holy Ghost revival that will set the church on fire, and there are those who are content with the status quo and would rather be left alone with their comfortable churches. We choose our own destiny.

Jesus told his disciples that they were ordained and chosen, that they should go and bring forth fruit, and that their fruit should remain (John 15:16). In other words, the whole reason you got saved was to go and tell others the Truth so that they also could have Life.

But there has to be an excitement alive in the church to produce new growth and vibrancy. The church has to be on fire! You know you're growing, not when you feel good at church, but when there is a constant flow of brand-new lost souls coming in to get saved. But if there's no moving of the Spirit to bring in new souls to Life, then the sap is not flowing. And if the sap is not flowing through you, then you're just a dead branch waving in the wind. And a branch that doesn't bring forth good fruit is...well..., it's dead.

And you know what happens to dead branches.

Give a Portion to Seven

*Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.
Ecclesiastes 11:2:*

Now here's a thought for you. What if everything the doomsayers are saying comes to pass, and economic chaos is coming, and the world economy is going to crash? You know, it just might be that it won't be a computer problem, but more of an artificially induced situation that we bring upon ourselves. After all, the much-touted interdependence of a global economy doesn't seem to be working very well. We see other economies failing badly. Our multi-national corporations are scrambling for mergers that many say often result in failure. Our government's fiscal spending and debt are not exactly harbingers of hope and promise. And there are many economic gurus predicting a recession. Shall I go on?

If you knew for sure that you only had a couple of years of plenty left, what would you do with your resources today? Pharaoh was smart enough to listen to Joseph. How many warnings today have we had from men of God that a dark time is coming soon?

Find soul-winning works of God that you know are bearing forth good fruit and sow mercy. Support them with everything you've got. Do all you can to help them prosper so they can get the Gospel out to lost souls while there's still time. Give a portion to seven and also eight. But be a good steward with your money, and be careful of mega-ministries that end every broadcast begging for

money. Often, the desire for a bigger and bigger ministry can be a very subtle seduction that is not of the Lord. Don't be fooled by something just because it looks good and sounds holy. The Bible says that you'll never see the righteous begging bread.

We can store up canned goods and ammunition in little cabins in the woods, or we can sow into the one sure-fire thing that will see us through in a time of great need. If there was ever a time to use our resources to sow mercy, it's now. We may not have that opportunity later.

And later is when we will so desperately need to reap that mercy that we have stored up.

Gold and Silver

I've heard that for a mere thousand dollars or so, you can buy enough food to feed a large family for a year and so avoid a coming economic collapse. Wow! What a deal! Of course, the next question is, when you've got your cabin in the woods all stocked up, along with the ammunition to protect it, what do you do with your money?

Well, some of the same opportunists that have figured out how to bilk you for food and water have that all figured out for you also. Buy gold coins. Seems simple to me. After everyone pulls all their savings out of the banks to buy gold coins and the banks fail, then we'll all be covered. We've got gold. You can't eat it, but we're told that it is historically the most stable currency in history and that not only will it retain its value, but it will be even more valuable. How could we ever pass up such an opportunity?

What are we thinking about here, folks? Are we going to create our own hysteria? Now, I'm not in any way against storing up for a possible bad time to come. The Bible says to look to the ant. Even the Boy Scouts' motto is to "be prepared." But to what do we trust in the coming time of trouble?

Did you know that the Bible predicted that "They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed: their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord ... it is the stumblingblock of their iniquity." (Ezekiel. 7:19) Is this that "sieve of vanity" that the Lord will sift the nations with?

Perhaps our preparation should have more to do

with our souls. What good will it do to have bread to eat when there's a famine in the land for hearing the Word of God (Amos 8:15)? Many of us are looking to the imminent return of the Lord, but I have heard so many different scenarios of how the events will unfold with so many different timetables that I've lost track. But the question I have is, where will we be standing spiritually when it comes?

Instead of using this time as a gimmick to make money, we should be looking at this upcoming time as the greatest opportunity we've ever had to witness to the lost.

In order to do that, however, you yourself have to be in the Spirit of the Lord, or it just won't work. If you haven't prepared yourself to walk in the depths of the Spirit of the Lord, you're not going to scare the fleas off a dog. If you aren't saturated with the Word of God, you won't have the answers of Life to give to the hungry. And if your church isn't on-fire with an outpouring of the Holy Ghost, all they'll see in you is another gimmick, another wild scheme, some more wisdom of words. What they need to see in our churches is the demonstration of the Spirit and power of God. If we haven't got it, let's get it. Let's prepare our hearts and strengthen ourselves in God that we may have to give in the time of need.

Timothy tells us to lay up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that you may lay hold on eternal life.

Amen. Couldn't have said it better.

A Green Tree

For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? (Luke 23:31)

I've been doing some reading on what it was like in Germany during the years leading up to the Third Reich. There have been plenty of books written on why the German people allowed themselves to be taken over by the Nazis, but one of the things I've noticed is that most ordinary people did not realize what was really coming until it was too late. They somehow felt that it would never really happen to them. Once the reign of terror was in place, however, they were trapped.

The Nazis were a minority in the beginning but were so well financed that they were able to overwhelm their opposition. They made it look like their ascension was inevitable, and it was useless to resist.

Certainly, there were other factors involved in their takeover of power. One of which, of course, was that the powers of Satan were marshaled behind this thing. So much so that many Christians looked at this as the establishment of the Anti-Christ.

This same scenario has worked itself out many other times throughout history. Ordinary people never think it can happen to them. We tend to feel that, although it has happened repeatedly in the past, we are more civilized, times have changed, and it could never happen here. We let our guard down and open a door for Satan to get in.

I am not as politically motivated as others are, but

I see the obvious connections. I look to the Word of God and see some woeful dark times coming upon the face of the earth. Do we think, as others have, that it could never happen to us? And yet, a quick read of Daniel and Revelations, to mention just two, shows that it shall. Like the people in Jeremiah's time, do we think that we shall be delivered out of it all because God would never let that happen to us?

Many think we'll be raptured out of all this, but Scripture does not bear this out. Although we could argue, fuss, and debate this for hours, the point is that unless the people of God prepare themselves in the Lord, we will be in for some ugly surprises.

As Keith Greene once said, going to church does not make you any more of a Christian than going to McDonald's makes you a hamburger. Finding a place of depth in God is where your strength comes from. The food you need to stockpile is in the Word of God. The ammunition and weapons we need come from taking a stand for the Gospel and winning lost souls to Christ. The place of refuge we need to seek for can only be found in the depth of the Spirit of God through fasting and prayer.

It has been said that the Christian you are today will be the one you are tomorrow. Now is the time to strengthen ourselves in the Lord. The Bible says there will be an hour of temptation that will come to try the whole world (Rev. 3:10). Will you be ready, strong, and able to make a stand at that time? Are you making one today? Forget any times of coming persecution. If you're in the Spirit of the Lord, it won't matter.

And conversely, if you're not in the Spirit of the Lord, it won't matter either.

The Precious Ointment

Judas was offended when the woman anointed Jesus with costly spikenard because true worship did not abide in Judas' heart. He looked at Jesus as a leader –even the greatest of leaders and the only hope Israel had for deliverance – but Jesus wasn't the God of his heart.

Judas would have probably died for him, but it would have been for a carnal dedication that he had. He would have surrendered his life, but not his soul. Pure and holy worship could not have found fertile ground in his heart, for Judas' only true god was himself. Such worship, as to pour upon Jesus that precious ointment, without the least thought of its costliness was too much for him. There was a wall around his heart that such worship could not penetrate. He rebelled at the idea of giving up the sovereignty of his soul, and so, for thirty pieces of silver, he fell to eternal damnation.

So often, it is with us. To make Jesus the God of our heart is so often at the tip of our tongue, and we recite it as a schoolboy recites his lessons. We walk with the Lord for years and know that He is God but never really surrender the innermost parts of our hearts.

The children of Israel saw manna fall every morning of their lives but did not eat it as food that had been handed to them from the very Throne of God. Their lives were measured in carnal terms, and their worship of God was conducted as by the precepts of men. Their humility was in reaction to the terrible judgments set before them, not as their father Abraham, who knew from his heart that he was, in reality, nothing but dust and ashes.

Our humility, our fear of God, our perspective of our own place in the universe, and our love and worship of God must come from the depths of our hearts. If we shut up our hearts and build a wall around it to reserve it for only ourselves, if we do not give it all up and surrender to God, then it becomes our tomb -- lifeless, dead, and cold as the grave.

Out of the heart of man come the issues of life. (Proverbs 4:23) True worship is that total surrender of what we hold most dear - that sweet surrender of our heart and our soul, that we may be found of Him in true righteousness, having our armor on and our wedding garments spotless, that we may find a place at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

At that point, our lives become consecrated to Him. We think, eat, and breathe with Him always sitting upon the Throne of our hearts. He becomes our everything, our whole reason for existence, and without Him, we would be nothing. The Bible says to commit our works unto the Lord, and our thoughts shall be established. (Proverbs 16:3) "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." (Isaiah 26:3) He becomes the Lord of our life, and nothing else matters.

If you have never had that life-giving experience and are wondering just what it is that can absorb someone so completely in the Lord, perhaps you are missing something in your life that is so powerful that you would never be the same again. Something that, in the depths of your soul, you have been searching for all your life.

So many of us have come from the depths of sin, not ever thinking that Jesus was the answer, but have

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

found it at the foot of the Cross. Maybe this is your chance to come out from under the curses of this life and try God.

Forsake the foolish and live. (Proverbs 9:6)

There's life in Jesus Christ.

The Kingdom of God with Power

And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. (Mark 9:1)

I used to ponder this scripture, wondering if He was talking about the resurrection, or the Ascension, or the outpouring at Pentecost. Certainly, it wasn't His final return as King of Kings because everybody that was there is dead. But as I have come to understand more and more of the true calling of the sufferings of Christ, I have realized that it was on the Cross that the Kingdom of God with power was really manifested. That's where the Power of God claimed the victory over sin; that's where Satan's back was broken. It was the Blood, the Blood, the Blood that won the battle for men's souls. The price for that victory was the life of the Son of God.

How many at that time understood? Even His followers were clueless, but at least they knew enough to wait. It must have been a hard test of faith for them. Those that tenaciously hung on to the faith that had been instilled in them, in spite of how things seemed, and believed because they knew, absolutely knew, that Jesus was the Son of God, they were rewarded with the glory.

But what about the rest of Israel? I have always believed that Israel knew the advent of the Messiah was nigh. The prophecy in Daniel had pinpointed the actual day of the triumphant entry into Jerusalem. After 500 years of oppression, Israel was ready. They were starving for God. Israel was a spiritual desert. The prophets were

long gone, there was no moving of the Spirit of God, and the souls of Israel were dead, dry, and empty. The crowds flocked to Him from everywhere.

Yes, it was time, but Daniel had told of the coming of “Messiah the Prince,” and that’s who the religious leaders were looking for. They were expecting the great Prince, the Big Kahuna, the Boss of Bosses, the Big Man, the Big Shot, a Somebody. But instead, they got a nobody from Galilee. “Search and look,” they said. “No prophet arises out of Galilee.” Who was this self-proclaimed heretic? A carpenter! Without any training or credentials or degrees? Coming out of nowhere? Israel was full of religious splinter groups at that time, and to their theologically trained minds, this was just another crackpot. Were they going to submit to him? I don’t think so! As a matter of fact, they thought it was their duty to expose him as a heretic. They missed the whole point, didn’t they? Very much like today.

The common people, however, had no such problems. They recognized the power of God and could have cared less about pedigrees. They just wanted to see God. They weren’t looking for some great conqueror on a white charger. It was the power of God that they wanted in their lives, and this man not only had the power to heal and raise the dead, He had the words of Life. And it was His blood that paid the price for the salvation of their souls.

When did the Kingdom of God come with power? Not on some conquering white charger, but on the Cross. And where do we find the Kingdom of God with power in our lives? Not in some huge, fancy “feel good” ministry preaching smooth messages of peace and

prosperity, but on our faces before God at the Cross.

It's not our "crown" He asks us to pick up, but our "cross."

The Beauty of Ruth

“...And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down.” (Ruth 3:7)

What a picture of humility Ruth was! The Book of Ruth is the story of God’s dispensation to the Gentiles, and through them, of His overall plan of salvation. Just as the Lord uses the image of a woman as His analogy for the Church, so we see in Ruth a picture of the perfect Christian church.

Here we see a Gentile who has left her people and her gods to follow her Jewish mother-in-law back into Israel. Willing to work in the harvest fields, gleaning amongst the sheaves for souls, and asking nothing for herself in return, she presents to us a picture of purity, humility, and service. But there is something here that goes beyond that.

Who cannot fall in love with this woman? There is a beauty in her that comes through the pages, something beyond the actual text that gives you a feel for this woman’s heart and the purity of her soul. She is not just the picture of a perfect woman; she shows the very essence of Christ in an image of the Christian church.

God loved Ruth so much that He did something for her that He had not done for anyone else. As a Moabite woman, Ruth’s seed was not allowed into the congregation of the Lord for ten generations (Deut. 23:3), but this woman captured God’s heart so much that He broke His own rules for her. In just a few generations, out

of her seed came forth the greatest king that Israel would ever have, and later down the genealogical trail, God's own Son. This is the same love that God extends to His Bride, the Church, for which Ruth is an analogy.

Here is a woman who was not only willing to give up her own personal life and was willing to serve in the harvest fields, but she also went so far as to lay her life down at the feet of her master. She gave her all in unselfish service to the Lord. She was "charity" incarnate - the giving of oneself, out of love, to the service of God and the winning of souls.

In laying her life down in perfect, selfless humility, she made possible the great redemptive Plan of God. What a sense of great celebration we see as the story comes to an end! As Naomi holds her grandson, we feel the wonderful resolution to all that this old Jewish woman has gone through, a harbinger of the final reconciliation of God's chosen people. God had brought Israel back to Himself through Ruth. Redemption, restoration, and rejoicing! What a love story!

One day, the real story, of which Ruth was only a reflection, will finally play itself out in the Kingdom of Heaven. Let us all strive to see in our own hearts and lives the innocent beauty of this young woman so that we also may be able to partake in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. What a celebration that will be!

Regardless of what the world has to offer, that is one party I don't want to miss.

Just the Time for a Prophet

And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. (1 Kings 17:1)

And just when things were getting comfortable!

Everything was going so well. Why does the Lord always seem to send someone to upset the applecart just when we have gotten our lives organized and we don't have to strive as hard anymore? We work hard at packaging up our religion so that it will roll along on automatic. All the hard stuff has been accomplished; all the persecution has been overcome; all the work has been done to get us to this place of security. And now that we have "arrived," we should be able to take it easy for a while.

A friend of mine commented once that people love religion. Why? Because it is so easy! We get to a point where all the hard work is done, and we can rely on the system to make all the decisions now. All we have to do is go to church and be a member in good standing. We do the good works, the canned food drives, and the basket socials. We're covered. We can relax and be raptured. But there is no heart-rending cry to God.

These are the times when the Lord raises up prophets to turn our complacency upside down. As one friend said, they come to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. The prophet, as Leonard Ravenhill once said, "is a man who is rejected by other men, even other

good men, because they consider him too austere, too severely committed, too negative and unsociable.” They never bring forth the message that we want to hear; only the message that we need to hear. That characteristic is the thing that keeps them from being popular – at least in their lifetime. But that is the thing that makes them popular with God.

Men who fear God fear nothing else. People who are only concerned with what the Lord thinks of them are not concerned with what the world thinks. They can't. They are under an edict from God to tell people the Truth, declare unto Israel their sin, and bring them back to repentance.

The Lord rarely uses someone who is well known and has national prominence. You'd think that if He did, then people would stand up and take notice. But the Lord raises prophets out of nowhere so that you will listen to the message, not the messenger.

If there was ever a time we needed one of those old-fashioned prophets of God, it is now. It hasn't rained in a while, and we need an outpouring. Before it rains, however, we, as the people of God, have got to come to that place of repentance before Him and cry out for revival. We need one badly.

This would be just the time for the Lord to send a prophet.

Samson's Hair

Did you ever feel like Samson without his hair? As the story goes, Samson was one of the great heroes of the Bible but fell for the seduction of Delilah. His power and strength were legendary. As a Nazarite from birth, he drank no wine nor cut his hair as a vow unto God to remain pure. God gave him great power because of his faithfulness to this consecration, but when he reached the height of his power, he began to lose his focus. He figured he had nothing to worry about and could relax. He took his salvation for granted and let down his guard. Once the slide began, it didn't stop until he ended up blind, shackled to a grindstone, and shorn of his hair, his power, and his place in God.

So it is with us. God requires from us a consecrated walk, a separation from the wine that the world has to offer. Samson's strength was in his hair, just as our strength is in our consecrated walk with God. If in the fullness of our sufficiency, we let down our defenses and take for granted the call that God has on our lives, we can lose our focus and readily slide into the seductions of the world. Before we realize what has happened, we become cut off from the power of God. Blind, weak, and shackled to a grindstone, we can find ourselves without any hope or purpose in this life -- going around and around in a never-ending grind.

You cannot be a testimony for God, neither can you keep His commandments, nor can you ever hope to accomplish anything in God without His power in your life. Flesh can never overcome the spiritual battles it faces in this life. You have to have the power of God in order to

stand. There is a price to be paid for that power, however. It starts on your knees in repentance before a holy God, and it stands with a commitment to consecrate yourself to the service of the Lord. It is fed by absorbing the Word of God, and fueled by deep prevailing prayer. Forget that, and you forget your power in God.

Tales will be told, and songs will be sung someday of the great battles of this life. The heroes that will be remembered will be those who locked into the power of God through fasting and prayer, stood for the righteousness of God, refused to relax with an easy-going Gospel, and slide into the bondage of sin.

Life is full of choices, and it is so easy to be seduced from our original path. Only when we keep our minds and hearts stayed upon the Lord will we retain the power to see through the deception of that seduction.

Remember Lot's wife. (Luke 17:32)

Pecan Pie

Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. (Daniel 3:28)

Those three Hebrew children feared God more than they feared King Nebuchadnezzar and were more concerned about burning in hell than in that furnace. They trusted that God would deliver them, but even if He didn't, they were not going to compromise with a worldly religion, even if it meant their lives. They were willing to yield their bodies to pay whatever price they had to.

What did they have that gave them that kind of guts in God? What was it that persuaded them that what they had was better than whatever the world had to offer? Throughout time, men and women have been willing to sacrifice it all to stand and fight for the honor of God because they had gotten a taste of the real thing and would not compromise for the cheap imitation that the world and its social religion had to offer.

It's kinda like pecan pie. Did you ever sink your teeth into Grandma's home-baked pie and feel like you could just fall into it? She'd spend hours on the crust, cooking up the pecans, adding that special touch to make it come out just right. And she'd serve it free, with all the love in the world.

And then you stop by 7-11, and you see these little pecan pies for 49¢. It's got real pretty packaging, great

marketing and presentation. And convenient? Wow. All packaged up and ready to go. How easy! And they're everywhere! Seems like you can get this pre-packaged pecan pie just about anywhere you go. And you know they've spent millions to figure out how to cook these things. And they have educated men and women with certificates and degrees that show smart they are and how well they can cook up these pies. And tons of equipment to work with!

How on earth did Grandma ever think she could cook up something as good as these big-time, smooth organizations?

Well, you know what, friend? It just ain't the same, is it? And that's exactly what many of these big-time churches of today are like. But once you've had a taste of the real thing, nothing else will do, and if your heart is set on the Truth, you will make that stand.

Are you hungry, but you want to taste the real thing, not the same old stuff you getting from "church as usual"? There is a real thing that can satiate the desperate hunger in your soul. And it's free. Reach out and call for it. Not only is it already bought and paid for, but man, does it taste good!

How good is Grandma's pie? Man, it's to die for!

Others

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. (Luke 6:38)

Others -- the very essence of Christianity. Myself -- the essence of human nature. Resolving the conflict between the two is the biggest challenge we are faced with in our walk with God.

Everything Christ did was for lost souls. He was Charity incarnate. He also commanded us to walk the same walk if we wanted to follow Him into Eternity, but how many of us really do? Our focus is so often on our own Christian walk, our own needs and requests, and what we want to be as a Christian, and what God will do for us. Even our altar calls, instead of being for the lost, are for Christians to come up and pray for their needs. Our focus has shifted, and it is a small wonder that there is no Holy Ghost revival in the churches today.

We all have needs and problems. We will never get away from that. But, if you ever want to get past your problems, and move on to victory in your life, the trick is to turn your focus on others and take it off yourself. And really! If you think you've got problems, how about the lost, who are on their way to spend forever and ever and ever burning in the pits of Hell? They will never get out - - ever. They have problems! Are you still worried about the pain in your foot? or you need a job? or you don't feel good? Or your husband isn't good to you? Or you want

to be seen, or taught, or given, or cared for, or blessed, or paid attention to, or loved, or what? Me, me, me, me, me.

It always boils down to the same basic fundamental issue. Take care of others, and somehow, miraculously, God will take care of you. Focus on your own problems and needs, and you will always seem to have them. It's in the actual process of focusing on others that the solution to your own problems resides.

Is that too simple for you? Funny, isn't it, how the deep things of God always seem to be so simple, but the intelligent ways of Man are always so complicated.

Charity never faileth (1st Corinthians 13:8)

Do You Get an Answering Machine When You Pray?

Ever wonder how in the world the Lord can really hear and pay attention to you when you pray? Let's face it. He has got to be pretty busy. He has to pay attention to billions of people, what they do, what they are saying, even what they're thinking. On top of that, He writes all this stuff down in a Book, and He can't make any mistakes— people's souls depend on its absolute accuracy! If that's not enough, He has to be mindful of the entire universe. The rivers, the seasons, the wind and the weather, the animals and plant life, and even the stars and galaxies are dependent upon His Word to be held together in order. And you mean to tell me that He not only knows when a sparrow falls to the ground, but He actually numbers the hairs of your head? One, two, three, four, five, six, seven ... We're talking busy here!

Is it a small wonder, then, that so many of us don't expect a personal answer each and every time we go to pray? When you pray, do you get a personal response, or do you get an answering machine?

“Thank you for praying. I'm away from the prayer line right now and am either answering another prayer, or not at home right now. Please leave your prayer at the sound of the beep, or press 0 to talk with one of the angels ... Oh, and have a nice day!”

Do you pray with the attitude that you will just leave a message, and somehow, when God gets around to checking His messages, He'll handle your request? After all, He is pretty busy, and we do have to cut Him a little

slack.

Or do you pray expecting an answer? When you call, do you ring the phone until you get an answer? When you go to visit, do you hang on that doorbell until He answers the door? You know He's at home. Answer the phone! Open the door! You didn't come just to hear the cute little sound of the bell. You need an answer! Right here, right now!

We've got a contract with God that is written in Blood, and sealed with the Holy Ghost. That contract gives us rights to the Throne of God. God is a Jew; He makes deals, and that's part of the deal! I've got it in writing. I am not going to be satisfied with some dumb answering machine, or some angel for a secretary, or some saint. I want the real thing, and I'm stubborn enough to hang in there until I get it. So was the guy in Luke 11 who harangued his neighbor with his importunity until he got what he wanted.

We need powerful prayer warriors who know how to get answers from God. If there was ever a time the people of God needed to stand strong, it is now in these last days. Each and every one of us need to believe God for a personal answer when we contend before God with effective, prevailing prayers. That's where you get your strength. If we don't learn to pray like that, our souls will become weak and insipid with a lack of faith and will eventually fall prey to the storms of Satan.

Elias was a man of like passions as we, and he stopped up the heavens from rain through prayer, and then he prayed again, and it rained. That's what I call knowing how to get an answer from God!

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*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man
availeth much. (James 5:16)*

The Grasshopper and the Ants

Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabbath. (James 5:4)

The cold grip of the last days is steadily closing upon us. While many sing and rejoice for the advent of the coming of the Lord, others look to the cold reality of the dark times ahead. The warnings that are in the Word of God are stiff, if we care to search them out, but a more carefree Gospel seems to be the one that is preferred. I look for messages of repentance, Holy Ghost conviction, and the fear of the Lord, but behold, I see singing and dancing, love and permissiveness, peace and safety. We see what we want, don't we, and explain away the rest.

So many of the huge international ministries and denominations have spread themselves out like a green bay tree, but they have only produced religions, not revivals. They are very good at consoling us that we are all children of God and have little to worry about, but they shy away from bringing us to the heart-felt conviction that leads to broken-hearted repentance. They are professionals at fraud and have held back the end-time harvest. And clouds without rain. Is it a small wonder that there are so many souls that are hungry for something more from God?

If we believe our church bulletins, everything seems to be so wonderful here in our hometown congregations. Everything is just going great! If we

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believe our Bibles, we see spiritual famine and a great falling away, especially in these last days. One is comfortable; one is not. The real question, therefore, is which will we choose to believe?

There is going to be a one-world church. Arrangements are already being made, and the church world is pressing into it. It will be a very nice church where everybody will be able to worship together in peace and harmony. There will be no room for harsh, hateful messages or denominational squabbles. Why, even the Buddhists, Moslems, and Hindus will be part of it. Anyone who really believes in their heart of their own form of God will be welcome.

I have been accused at times of being unmerciful, unloving, and heavy-handed. Why buck the flow? Why preach such a "hard" Gospel? Why not take it easy and just preach the love of Jesus? Peace and safety. Prosperity and blessings! You know what? That sounds just like the story of the Grasshopper and the Ants. No matter how we package it, however, messages that are not tempered with the Fear of the Lord will only lead us into that comfortable "church as usual" so that we can relax and be raptured. Tell me now, is that Love? Or is Love telling someone the Truth?

Winter is coming, regardless of what we choose to believe, but the end of this story will not be quite so nice as the one in the fairy tale. You must make a choice.

Avatars

It amazes me how many self-proclaimed prophets there are out there today. We used to coin the term “avatars of God” back in the ‘60s and ‘70s for people who thought they received special messages from heaven to give to the rest of us. They expected people to receive these words at their specially anointed hands just as if they had come from God himself.

I just came back from visiting someone who, initially, seemed to be filled with the excitement for the Lord and had established a place that he had said was doing wonderfully. Closer inspection, however, revealed something quite different. He was just another one of these “avatars” with a special message that no one had ever heard before. And woe unto us if we did not receive it with fear! It scared me all right - enough to run out of there as fast as my legs could carry me.

How many times has the Word of God warned us of false leaders and false prophets that would raise themselves up in these last tumultuous days to gather people around them to hear some new message that they had received from God? They sound exciting, but although they pronounce that they, for some reason, are the only ones that have this new revelation from God, it’s just the same old story. They set themselves up as intermediaries between God and us to tell us some new doctrine that God has whispered in their ear, and admonish us that if we don’t follow them, we will be lost. Where does the Bible tell us that God will ever raise up some man to receive great new revelations from God that no one has heard before? There is no such gospel.

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God raises up servants, not Avatars. The ones that the Lord does raise up to lead His people are tried and tested servants of God that will only bring forth that which is already written in the Word of God, not some “new” thing to excite our imaginations. He says to “ask for the **old paths**, where is the good way” and commands us to test the spirits with the tried and true Word of God.

There’s a pile of them out there, and the number of them is growing. Be very careful. The New Age gospels, the New Apostolic Reformation, and the new global mentality of a “New World Order” certainly excite the religious imagination -- and we do have a tendency to choose our deceptions -- but it’s the simplicity of the Gospel that wins men’s souls. If there was ever a time to walk circumspectly, it is now.

Stick to the basics. You can’t go wrong with the basics. I don’t care how good these “Avatars from God” sound. Nothing sounds as good as the Truth.

Delusions

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. (Hebrews 6:4-6)

Yikes! Ever wonder about that scripture? That's pretty stiff. We usually hear about how loving God is and how He will always forgive us, and we have a tendency to build that idea into our personal theology, but there is a certain line that we can cross over from which there is no coming back. And this is not the only scripture that alludes to that, either.

But how does one get to such a drastic point? How could this happen to somebody? How does someone get so far from the simplicity of the Gospel to allow themselves to fall so deeply into the chains of sin? Especially when they know better. It doesn't happen overnight. It's here a little, there a little. Ignore a little conviction from the Lord here and there, and it is not long before they allow themselves to lean more into what they really want to believe in their heart.

My Bible says that the heart of man is desperately wicked and deceitful above all things. We are supposed to trust in the Word of God, not our hearts. The thing is, everybody has a little different take on the Bible. It's often not a matter of what we read but a matter of what we want

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to believe. The flesh tends to choose its own delusions. Faith, however, comes by hearing the Word of God. That's hearing, as in, having your ears open to hear the Truth.

It's a fierce war out there - a spiritual war. Over a period of time, if we do not have ears that will hearken to the Word of God, we can fall into that deceptive, smooth doctrine that will tell us all the things that our flesh wants to hear. In the depths of our souls, we may be able to detect the ring of Truth, but if we are not careful, we can ignore it so we can believe something else that is more palatable to our personal tastes. We end up, as it says in 2 Timothy 4:3, heaping up teachers to ourselves, having itching ears. Keep sliding in that direction, and there comes a point when you just totally give yourself over to your delusion, and that is when you cross that line.

Now you know why I make such a strong stand for the importance of the chilling fear of the Lord. You can also see why the enemy of our souls has done his best to extract that message out of the pulpits for the last couple of generations. Or at least water it down as much as he can. He is pretty slick. Satan knows that when you leave the fear of the Lord, you will forget your reading, prayer, and fasting. When you forget your reading and praying, you lose your power in God. It is not by your power or might but by the Spirit of the Lord that we are able to overcome.

It's a simple formula. There's no magic to it. You don't choose to go to hell. Either you choose your own deceptions, or you choose to crucify that old flesh and submit to the Word of God.

Key of Knowledge

Woe unto you, lawyers! For ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered. (Luke 11:52)

What is the “key of Knowledge”? Consider who Jesus was talking to here for a moment. These were religious notables of the day who had devoted their entire lives to the pursuit of knowledge. They spent all their efforts studying every turn of Scripture. They memorized theological dissertations from their “Sages” so they would have all the answers. They looked at every scripture with a scholastic microscope. Today, these would be the Ph.D.’s, professors, and Pastors. And yet, the Lord said they had taken away the key. They had missed the whole point.

What is it that they missed? They knew the Book but had missed the Author. The Bible, in itself, is just print on paper. It can only lead you to God and to repentance, but it is dead without the Spirit of the Lord. The “letter killeth” said the most learned of all the Apostles. It is the Spirit that giveth life. You can know the Bible backward and forward, but you’ll never know what it says if you don’t know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. You see, Jesus Christ is the Word of God. Literally.

The Bible was written in the Spirit of the Lord, and in order to receive it, you have to have the Spirit of the Lord. Corinthians says that the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. The key of knowledge is not the Bible – it is the Word of God. The

difference is the same difference that there is between the two trees in the Garden of Eden.

The same difference applies to religion and salvation. Are you a good Christian? Do you go to church? Sing Gospel songs? Lead a basically good life? Try to do the things that are right? Wonderful. But are you walking in the life-giving Spirit of the Lord? Can you feel the Spirit of God working in your life, shining a bright light wherever you go? Can you actually feel it? When you pray, do you give God a few spare minutes of your time, or do you contend before the Throne of Grace until you break through and feel the Spirit of God pour out all over you? When you read, do you read your chapter a day, or do you saturate yourself with His Word? There is a difference, and it could mean the difference between Heaven and Hell for you.

Those lawyers hindered others from entering in because they had a "form of godliness." People saw that, and it looked good to the carnal eye, but it "denied the power thereof." Books, tapes, and videos may seem like an easy way to learn about God, but there is no substitute for that deep prevailing prayer life and for engraving the Word in your hearts so that you feed from the very hand of God.

If we allow ourselves to be satisfied with an easy, shallow Gospel, we will be left without the depth and power of God. We can easily deceive ourselves into thinking that we are "OK" - and maybe we are...for now - but if we rob ourselves of the opportunity to seek the face of God, we will find ourselves short of that which we will so desperately need when we face that "hour of temptation" that will come. And then it will be too late to

go looking for oil for your lamps.

The key of knowledge is to have the Spirit of Jesus Christ in our hearts and in our lives so that we may unlock the power that is in His Word.

If you are a Christian, but you don't feel like you've got that kind of a deep walk in the Spirit where the power of God is flowing in your life, and you sincerely want more, there's one simple answer. Make an altar before God and seek His face with heart-felt repentance until you feel the Lord pour out His Spirit on you. Then stay there. He will unlock for you the deep mysteries of knowledge and light you up with the fire off the altar. It will change your life -- and you will change the lives of others.

Then, and only then, will you understand the difference.

School Prayer

There has been quite an uproar over the ruling to remove prayer from our High School football games. I have heard comments on what the superintendent should have done, but it strikes me that they are asking him to fight their battles for them instead of standing up themselves. This is a tough battle and has to be fought by the community as a whole, not by one man. If you really want to win this battle, then we will have to stand up and fight as a community, and “damn the torpedoes”.

Is it possible, however, that we are not focusing on the very heart of the issue that is at stake here? Although school prayer is most certainly a deterrent to some of the more wicked elements of society, shouldn't the real focus be on winning the souls of these young people? How many of us have tried to reach these kids with the Gospel? Maybe what so many of them really need is a church that is really on fire. Many of the churches in this town were founded in the fires of revival, but sadly, too many of them have become little more than a nice place to go on Sunday. Focus on a revival to win souls, and you won't have to worry about what the ACLU and our liberal courts say.

Not long ago, I wrote a column on *Détente*. It's a French word that means “slackened bowstrings.” Now *détente* may seem good when you're facing world annihilation from nuclear weapons but has never been a preferable position to take in warfare.

There are four positions in war: offense, defense, *détente*, and desertion. The only position worth taking is the offense. Take up the defense, and you'll end up losing.

Succumb to détente, and you'll be back at war soon, but this time you'll be at a decided disadvantage. Desert and you deserve to be shot.

We need to be aware that we are in the fiercest war of all time. The stakes are not for political or philosophical gain; it's for the eternal souls of mankind. There is no discharge in this war. Not until the end of time. Our enemy is cunning and sly, vicious and cold-blooded, patient and unrelenting. The only compromise he will work with us is one that will end up in his favor. And yet, just like in real war, we get tired with the struggle. The next generation after Joshua became tired of war and worked out a detente with the peoples of the land. It was their utter downfall years later.

If we slacken our bowstrings, we will soon end up on the defense, fighting a desperate uphill battle for our survival. That's how we ended up with secular humanism in our schools, the preeminence of evolution, abortion, and forced acceptance of homosexuality. We relaxed and loosened up our armor. We accepted a more easy-going, socially acceptable Gospel to take over and an easier set of rules to live our lives by. It's just human nature to want to relax.

Paul never relaxed. His warnings were always to strengthen our battle armor and stand strong. He didn't "smile a good smile." He "fought a good fight." He didn't work out compromises for the sake of religious unity. He knew the devil and knew you could give no place at all to him. If you let down your guard, Satan will eat your lunch and pop your bag!

You know what I'd like to see more than anything else? I'd like to see the old-fashioned warriors of God

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stand up and raise the Blood-Stained Banner with the war cry of those who will never give in, never give up, and never accept compromise. To do anything less in this last hour would be to let down the saints that have gone on before us and who have handed us the baton in this relay race. This is the last stretch in this great battle for men's souls. Now is the time to carry on the battle to the finish line and claim the victory that is ours.

Putting a Band-Aid on a solitary issue will not win this war. The price of commitment to the cause of Christ is high, and we cannot be satisfied with something less than total victory.

Bethel

Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there. (Genesis. 35:1)

Well over 20 years had passed here since a skinny kid had cheated his brother out of his birthright and had thought he could purchase the calling and blessing of God with a bowl of porridge. He knows better now. He has gone through 20 years of bone-drying and spirit-breaking in the backside of the desert. Jacob is no longer the Jacob who thought he could con his brother, his father, and his God. He always knew he was called of God, and his heart has always been drawn by something higher than what his mundane life had to offer, but now he knows that the calling in God does not come cheaply.

After all this time, there is one more test. He meets and contends all night long with the angel, the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He is no longer the skinny kid that thought he could buy a place in God with a lousy bowl of porridge. He is committed to total victory regardless of the cost. He sinks his hands into the Lord and will not let go until the Lord gives in first. The Lord has put Jacob in a situation where he has no choice. Jacob must get an answer from God, and he is willing to fight for it until the light breaks into day.

A promise is made of a change from Jacob to Israel, but the actual conversion is not yet. Jacob still has a lot of Jacob in him. Jacob, at this point, is still Jacob. Even after the Lord himself tells him to return to his father's house, he finds himself terrified at the news of the approach of Esau, his brother, with 400 armed men. In fear of his brother's lingering revenge, he starts

manipulating things to find his best advantage. This is typical "Jacob" stuff -- manipulating, conniving, and maneuvering for personal advantage.

The two brothers meet, peace is made, everybody's happy, and Jacob is on his way home. End of story? Not hardly. The Lord speaks to Jacob one more time. "Go up to Bethel." This is where he had seen the Lord on his way 20 years ago and had made a covenant with God. He must go back to Bethel and reestablish his covenant before he can receive the long-awaited blessing he has sought for all his life.

But first, he must put away all the little gods in his life, clean up his life and change his garments to garments of righteousness before he can enter this holy place with God. What does Jacob do? Instead of destroying these things, he hides them under a tree. There is still a little bit of Jacob inside him that makes provision just in case he wants to go back to those little sins.

At Bethel, he raises up the same stones one more time as an altar to God and receives the blessing and the covenant with God. He is no longer Jacob. He is changed. He is Israel. But there is one more thing that God has to do. He takes away Rachel, Jacob's love of his life. All that Jacob has left is God. Finally.

Quite a story, isn't it? But do we not see this played out in our own lives? A simple prayer at the altar is not enough to bring you to Bethel. To think that all you need to do is pray a simple prayer of salvation is like thinking that you can buy the blessing of God with a bowl of porridge. No, there is quite a walk before you to dry out your spirit and break the "you" that is in you. Before you can get through the obstacle that stands between you

and your vision in God, you must be brought to that point of desperate prayer where your only reliance is upon God, and you are willing to wrestle and contend with God until you get the answer. You have to want it that much. Anything less will not bring you to victory.

Ahhh. And then there are those little gods you hang onto. You cannot come to Bethel until you get rid of them.

Does your heart yearn for something more than “church as usual”? Is there a vision in your heart that calls to you to a place in God? Friend, there is a Bethel for you. But you will not get to it with just a simple prayer at the altar.

The road to Bethel lies before you.

Microwave Faith

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. (Hebrews 11:1,2)

Have you ever had someone passing by you at a time of trouble admonish you with a flippant, "Oh, just have faith!" As if it was that easy! Sometimes you get the picture that having faith is as easy as flipping a switch.

The above scriptures are not to be taken lightly. They are followed by what is called the great honor roll of God - men and women who had such great faith that they were willing to accomplish the extraordinary, suffer the inconceivable, and receive the unimaginable. They were able to see far off to something beyond this world, receive the answer, and pay the price to reach it. Faith, although simple in its approach to God, is not at all simple in its development in a man's heart.

There is no quick formula for turning on faith. No, there has to be a heart that is willing, not just to believe, but to diligently seek God. A heart that is bound to this world cannot seek that which is in the other. In such a heart, the flame of a desire to serve the Lord is either gone out or is no more than a lump of smoldering coal. And it takes a strong desire to wade through carnal mindedness to grasp onto the pillars of faith that enable us to overcome. If you don't really want spiritual things, you won't hang on to faith long enough to get them. Faith ignores the price that has to be paid and receives, with patience, the answer.

Faith is not all that quick 'n easy. It's not a

microwavable 3-minute snack. Neither is prayer. To think that a moment of silence amongst our peers and friends counts as a great moment of victory in our lives is terribly shortsighted. Have we now done our duty, and can we go home now? Can we buy a victory in God with a bowl of porridge? Is it that simple?

I'm afraid not. You see, if you are not willing to pay the price to seek the face of God every day, a short microwave prayer will not be very effective. We need to be pressed to take a stand for the Gospel we profess by actually witnessing to all those young souls that are there in the stands and on the field. How much good will we do with a 3-minute prayer if that is where we stop? Victory does not come that cheap. War is fought in a long series of fierce battles, and spiritual war is waged in constant prevailing prayer on your knees before God. To commit yourself to anything less is to be satisfied with something less than total victory. In other words, you know better; you just don't want it that bad.

Those who know what faith is, know what prayer really means. Victory requires a burning fire in your heart that is fanned by deep, prevailing prayer and a total commitment to fight to the end. But if you are not willing to witness to those souls, don't think that a little microwave prayer will get you off the hook. There's more to Christianity than that.

You don't get on the honor roll by flipping on switches.

12 Year Old Girl

Here's a little prayer that was written by a 12-year-old girl in Boston that was passed on to me. I thought it was pretty timely for us.

*Now I sit me down in school
Where praying is against the rule.
For this great nation under God
Finds mention of Him very odd.
If Scripture now the class recites
It violates the Bill of Rights.
Anytime my head I bow
Becomes a federal matter now.
The law is specific; the law is precise.
Praying out loud is no longer nice.*

*Praying aloud in a public hall
Upsets those who believe in nothing at all.
In silence alone we can meditate
And if God should get the credit-great!
They are bringing their guns;
I don't dare bring my Bible,
To do so, might make me liable.
So, now Oh Lord, this plea I make;
Should I be shot in school,
My soul please take.*

How in the world can we not be ashamed? We have not taken the stand for God that we should have been taking all these years. We have allowed that which was established as a great nation founded on the Gospel to slip from our grasp. How have we allowed it to get so bad that it would invoke a plea such as this from a little

12-year-old schoolgirl?

Is it just a simple matter of whether or not we pray out loud at a football game? Or does it strike deeper into the lives we have led as “church Christians”? If our churches had been “on fire” as the Lord has commanded us to be, wouldn’t there have been a far greater testimony to the world? What has happened to us? Where are the Billy Sundays and the Jonathan Edward’s that America has seen in the past that invoked revival in the land and set America ablaze?

We are living in the time that the Lord speaks of as “a great falling away,” or, in the Greek, as the Great Apostasy. Amos predicted that in the last days, there would be a famine in the land for hearing the Word of God. I am told that the reason our pulpits have smoothed out their messages into a more acceptable social gospel these days is because our preachers believe that the old “hellfire and brimstone” messages only offend people. Even Hollywood has gotten into the act by downplaying on-fire Holy Ghost preachers as being “crazies.” If you will remember back to the Brush Arbor days, however, those messages brought thousands to their knees in repentance and literally changed the fabric of our society. Now, we have preachers that give us messages of “peace and love and prosperity” with no guts and no fire.

The results have been predictable.

*Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies...
(Psalms 8:2)*

Laodicea

“I have need of nothing;” - the church of the Laodiceans

Frank Bartleman, an early leader of the Pentecostal movement at the Azusa Street Revival, once said, “A revival almost always begins among the laity. The ecclesiastical leaders seldom welcome reformation. History repeats itself. The present leaders are too comfortably situated as a rule to desire innovation that might require sacrifice on their part. And God’s fire only falls on sacrifice. An empty altar receives no fire!”

Is it any different today? Do any of us look back to the times when our churches were aflame with the outpourings of the Holy Ghost and our “normal” church life was full of nights of prayer and the resulting manifestations of signs and wonders, supernatural healings, and gifts of the Spirit? Can we look back to a time when meetings lasted for hours, and the congregations were so filled with the glory of God that no one bothered watching the clock? What happened to our concept of “church”?

I have listened, more times than I can count, to people who have asked me what church they could go to feel that kind of anointed power. Where can they go to get fed? They are starving for something more in God and can’t find it where they are now. And yet there was a time, generations ago, when their church was on fire for God. Now, however, our church leaders give us excuses, or worse, we are told about some program that the church is going to buy that will help us gain the “unchurched.”

Here's a clue. There will be no outpouring from God that will come from some sophisticated, theologically correct program that is plucked from the Tree of Knowledge. Revival has to burn in our hearts before it can ever flow in our churches, and only deep, prevailing prayer will set those hearts aflame for something more in God than "church as usual".

Do you throw yourself down before the Throne of God, broken-hearted for the lost and for the church that no longer feels the need for a revival? Are you grasping the horns of the altar with the determination of Rachael's cry, "Give me souls lest I die?" Are you willing to storm the Throne of God with all boldness, demanding a move from God? Does your heart cry out to the point that you are determined to plant yourself before Him and refuse to take "no" for an answer? Or are you like the church of the Laodiceans - satisfied with their church, lukewarm and comfortable.

The Lord will give the churches a certain space of time to repent ... and then He will raise up stones in their place. Just like He always does.

Halloween

Are you getting ready for the next holiday? Halloween is almost here! What a fun time for everyone! This is one of the biggest retail splurges of the year, second only to Christmas. Jack O' Lanterns, witches, black cats, and skeletons are prolific everywhere you go. Black and orange color the season. Of course, there are a few places, mostly conservative churches, that replace it with "Fall Festivals", but those are merely a reaction to the main thrust of the season. Halloween is everywhere.

Funny, isn't it, how many holidays have changed from their original beginnings, and yet Halloween has not. Do you remember Thanksgiving? It used to be a day set aside to thank God for all that He had done for us. Now it's Turkey Day and a starting gate for Christmas shopping, which is another fun time. Santa, elves, and flying reindeer; Christmas trees, glitter, and lots of "gimme" presents. It used to be a day to celebrate the birth of a Savior, whose name you are not allowed to mention in too many public places lest you incur the wrath of the ACLU. We now have "Seasons Greetings" and "Happy Holidays" so that we don't offend anyone who doesn't subscribe to all that old, archaic stuff.

Oh, and let's not forget Easter while we are at it. We color eggs, exalt bunnies, and wear outlandish hats, just like they did in the old worship of Astarte, whose high day was about the same time as Passover. What a coincidence. But hey, let's not get tacky about it. It's just a fun time for the kids, isn't it?

Halloween, however, has been able to retain the same centuries-old traditions that were handed down to

us from the Druids. They were the ones that started the door-knocking for food and presents (some of which were rather grisly) on Oct 31, just before All Souls Day. Trick or treat! And Jack (or Jock)? He was the demonic spirit that was trapped in the turnip with the candle and the cutout face. In America, we've turned to pumpkins, but the idea is the same. In those days, it was believed that all the demonic spirits, witches, and spirits of the dead arose for a satanic celebration, while all the "good" people locked themselves inside with plenty of treats for the Druids. Lit high into the night were the "bone-fires" with the sacrifices of animals and, yes, young virgins (after they'd been ravished, of course).

But shucks, it's all in good fun, isn't it? It's gonna be one helluva night!

Trick or Treat!

23rd Channel

As I was driving into the city one evening, I could see all the lights from the homes spread out before me. Dinner was over, and most people were settling in for the evening. It struck me that, right now, millions were sitting down in front of their one-eyed god to be mesmerized for the next few hours – kind of a scary thought.

I don't know how many of them had that drop-jawed starry-eyed gaze at that point, but I'm sure they were absorbed with their programs. The thought struck me that if I ever wanted to control the minds of a society, that's where I'd focus my efforts

I picked up this little poem from somewhere and thought I'd pass it along:

*The TV is my shepherd, I shall not want
It makes me lie down on the sofa
It leads me away from success, it destroys my soul
It leads me in the path of sex and violence of the sponsor's
sake
Yea, though I walk through the shadow of my Christian
responsibility
There will be no interruption, for the TV is with me
Its cable and remote control, they comfort me
It prepares a commercial for me in the presence of my Lord
And anoints my head in consumerism, my coveting runneth
over
Surely laziness and ignorance shall follow me all the days of
my life
And I shall dwell in the house watching TV forever*

*Little children, keep yourselves from idols. (1John
5:21)*

Sudden Death

It seems we hear of death all around us these days. I'm not sure if the instant nature of the media brings so much of it to our attention, or is it just getting worse out there? I just read in the paper of the shooting in a small town nearby. Come to find out that one of the people who got shot is someone I knew about 25 years ago in Los Angeles.

Back then, I was taking care of the school kids that attended our church. They suffered a lot of trouble from the other kids back in those days because of their strong faith in God and the stand that they took for the Gospel. Rick was one of those kids. I still remember how they found strength from each other to stand as Christians. They knew their salvation was real and were determined not to let anything or anyone discourage them.

Well, time passes. Rick was just one of the thousands of faces that went through that church back in the '70s, and I lost track of him. I had just recently heard that he has been right here in the county I live in all along, but I was not able to contact him. When I opened the Sunday morning paper, however, I knew before I read the first line in the article that Rick was one of the ones that got shot. I just knew it, and sure enough, it was true.

Rick faced sudden death and is lucky to have survived. The question is, was he ready to meet God?

How sudden the specter of death can be. To open a door and face someone with a rifle who swears he will kill you or to be singing songs in a church when a madman bursts in with an automatic rifle is not something that we think will ever happen to us. It always happens to the other guy. The same goes for car accidents

and cancer. There are people on morgue slabs right now that still have shopping lists in their pockets. They didn't think it would happen to them, either. But it did.

Death is not the closing of a curtain but the opening up of one. The Book of Psalms says that we live our lives as a tale that is told. Suddenly, it is over, and we are standing before God. The question is not whether we led a full life or not, but were we ready to meet God. We don't pick the time. He does. Jesus said our time is always ready. The trick is to be enough in the Spirit of the Lord so we can hear His warning.

What about you? Had it been you instead of Rick, or those kids at Wedgewood, or at Columbine, would you have been leading your life in the Spirit of the Lord, washed in the Blood of Jesus Christ? Or are you trusting in church attendance to get you through? Or do you think you still have some time left to get right with God when you get around to it?

One of these days, it won't be someone else. It will be you.

God Never Gets Angry

The other day, I talked to a young woman who was a faithful churchgoer about the Lord. She explained in gushing terms how much she believed in the overwhelming love of Jesus. Now, that's pretty hard to argue with.

For the life of me, I have never been able to understand how God, in all His majesty, was willing to come down to this earth and transform Himself into human flesh, just a piece of dirt, for us. You know, it's not like we've been good boys and girls and deserved it. After all, it got so bad once that He destroyed every living, breathing thing except for a small handful. You would have thought that they got the message, but within a few generations, they were back at it again, and this time with a vengeance. Human flesh just loves to wallow in sin.

So he sent messenger after messenger -- powerful men of God who had an incredible, powerful witness in word, in signs, and in wonders, but we still don't get it. We kill the prophets to get them out of the way and wonder why we're under the curses of God.

God finally sends His only begotten Son. Jesus has the most powerful testimony of all, and I dare say that everybody knew who He was. Some hung onto every word as if their life depended on it. Others tried to make excuses to find some way around the righteousness of God. Still others hated Him so much that the only way they could shut Him up was to kill Him, and they picked a slow torture to do it. That's how much flesh hates God when it gives itself over to sin and pride.

But get this! He knew all along that He would go

to the Cross. Amazing! What's more, that was the original plan from way back in the Garden of Eden! I don't get it. How could God care that much for a bunch of rebellious mud pies that will not do what they were supposed to? When we make something that doesn't work, don't we just throw it in the trash and start over?

But, I do know this – there are those who love God and His righteousness so much that they would do anything to serve him. Anything. I guess those are the ones that Heaven is reserved for. And the others? Back to Plan A for them. (Or is that Plan H?)

Okay. So God loves us more than we can understand. I understand. But then this young woman rambles on about how Jesus and God never get angry. They always did everything with so much love and gentleness.

About now, I'm scratching my head, wondering which Bible she's reading out of. Is this the Disney version? I know we've got some real smooth versions out there that water down a lot of stuff, but "God never gets angry"? The old King James says that He is angry with the wicked every day! I mean, after all, Jesus whipped them out of the Temple!

When we rely on our own perceptions to define how we want the personality of God to be, we will end up running completely contrary to the simple precepts in the Word of God. Our desire to create a God in our own image comes from our unwillingness to give up the desires of the flesh. If we can just design a Gospel that will, in some way, excuse sin, then we can escape having to repent. The obvious line that has worked ever since Satan tried it on Eve is that God loves us so much that we shall not surely

die.

Cool idea! Now, if we can design a religion around that idea, we can out-manuever the call to holiness, without which (my Bible says) no man shall see the Lord. How about if all we have to do is count a few beads, light some candles, and mutter some repetitious prayers. No, no! I got it! This one is even better! We tell people that all they have to do is say a prayer one time in their lives, and they will never have to worry about it again. You say no one will believe it. I'm telling you, it will work. It worked for Eve, and it will work for all those who would rather believe in a God that thinks as they do than like what He says. "God loves us so much that He never gets angry."

Great religion to live by, but I sure don't want to die by it.

Religious Intolerance

I heard on the BBC that the Southern Baptists had produced a book of prayers directed at the high holy day of Hinduism that was coming up. The prayers are directed to Baptists to pray for the conversion of the Indian people who are, as the booklet says, “Lost in the darkness of Hinduism”. Pretty standard stuff, I’d say.

But the hue and cry were that this was an extreme show of religious intolerance. One announcer went so far as to say that Jesus taught us to “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” In essence, they are calling for all religions to believe in each other so that we can all cohabitate in a “one world religion.” But the Baptists were accused of being hateful and insulting. Shame on you Baptists! Aren’t we all supposed to love one another?

However, if I were lost in Hinduism, I’d sure want somebody praying for me. Who wants to wake up in Eternity to find out you’re going to Hell? What Jesus was really saying here was to have the guts to tell them the Truth. And the Truth, the Bible says, is an offense to the unsaved. Why is that?

Christianity is an exclusive faith. There is only one way to Heaven, and that is through Jesus Christ. Either that is the truth, or Jesus Christ was the biggest liar that ever lived. I know that when I felt the Spirit of God save my soul, there was absolutely no question that it was the only Truth on the face of the earth. Hinduism, however, is a bloodless cult that believes that there is a “many twined rope to heaven”, and many of the “New Age” philosophies that have entered into our society today are

based on these mystical religions.

Watch carefully as the groundswell of modern theological thought moves in this direction of one-worldism. Even supposed Christian leaders are leaning in this direction. In a radio interview back in the '90s, Billy Graham and Robert Schuler gave their support to other religions outside Christianity. (I didn't believe it either. I had to get a copy of the transcript.) To take a strong stand for the Gospel will someday be against the law and labeled as a "hate crime of intolerance."

You can be hated for lots of things. Just believing in Jesus Christ will not bring the persecution the Bible warns of to "every man that walks godly in Christ Jesus." When you stand up and preach the Gospel to the lost and call for repentance from sin -- repentance, godly sorrow, and holiness instead of a tolerance for differences of opinion or lifestyle—you will see persecution arise. If John the Baptist had just kept his mouth shut, he would have never had his head cut off!

And what does the Bible say?

"...yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." (John 16:2)

When I see the mainstream media trying to use quotes from the Bible, of all things, to justify demonic cults and move us into a one-world religion, then I figure that that time is coming soon. Figure out which side you are on, and get ready to make a stand.

Foolish

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1st Corinthians 1:21)

It was once told me that human beings are the most adaptable creatures on the face of the Earth. No matter how daunting the situation, we are not only able to survive, but to triumph. Is it a small wonder, then, that we think so well of ourselves? We are, after all, God's finest creation.

Secular humanism, as I have been told, is that same old theme of looking at man as the source and focus of our reality. We see this in the temptation of Eve, the Tower of Babel, the advent of evolution, and the rejection of Christ. As Peter tells us, flesh despises government (2 Peter 2:10). We would aspire to be as God, but without His righteousness and holiness.

The essence of Christianity, however, points us in the opposite direction. We must humble ourselves to be exalted; we must crucify our flesh in order to walk in the Spirit; we must accept the sufferings of the Cross in order to claim victory in Jesus; we must be servants in order to reign with Christ forever.

The focus of Christianity is to deny our flesh and humanity, not to exalt it. This is the wisdom of God, certainly not the wisdom of this world. To the wisdom of this world, this seems foolish, and yet it is the way God has chosen to enter Eternity.

You may ask, "Why has He made it so hard?" He

didn't. We, as human flesh, just don't want to submit. The precepts of His Word, the realities of Judgment, the steps to Salvation, and the proofs of the validity of His Word are all laid out for us, simple and clear. As you study His Word, all this becomes clearer and clearer, yet you see so many who refuse to do things God's way. The consequences are sharp and clear, but many just do not want to consider them. The prophecies of where our world is heading are distinct, and yet people run headlong straight into the arms of a one-world religion and government, another Tower of Babel, even while they tell one another that "Jesus loves you."

And you wonder why do they not understand? Why do they think that it is all foolishness? It's simple. They don't want to believe it. People are going to believe what they want to believe, in spite of the facts, and they will use the Bible to justify themselves. They will close their eyes and stop their ears to the Truth if it is not what they want to hear.

Seek for a desire for Truth and the righteousness of God, and realize that it will always be contrary and foolish to this world. It will never be popular, and if you preach it the way you are supposed to, neither will you.

But it won't be foolish 10,000 years from now.

Human Nature

As a kid in college back in the '60s, I remember listening to a rally by the SDS that was all fired up against the government. At the time, it was really the thing to be for a revolution. One rabble-rouser after another would get up behind the microphone and scream and yell louder than the last guy. I never heard a clear message, just a bunch of emotionally charged posturing that was designed to whip the crowd into a frenzy.

Finally, some kid got up and delivered what I thought to be a clear, thoughtful defense for the opposition. But reason did not win out that day. The boo's and threats leveled at him were frightening. Human nature is too often ruled by emotion rather than careful thought. We hear what we want to hear, and we tend to believe what we want to believe.

The other extreme is not much better. When we analyze things down to the molecular level, we lose sight of the true picture. Our focus becomes pinpointed on meaningless details rather than the bigger purpose.

So it is with Christianity. It's like being in a sailboat at sea. Only the wind of God's Spirit will drive you to where you want to get to, but you can't just sit there and do nothing. You've got to at least raise the sail! On the other hand, if you try and break out the oars to do it yourself, you won't get very far.

When we are comfortable with something, we find it so easy to slide into an easy acceptance of it, and there is little reason to pursue it any further. This makes for a really nice "church on Sunday" mentality. We tend to resist anything that would suggest change, especially if it

rocks the comfortable boat that we are drifting in.

On the other hand, there are so many scholars that pursue theological philosophy to the point that the very essence of Christianity is overlooked. They clamber up the Tree of the Knowledge of Good (and Evil), looking for fruit that will make them wise, and ignore the warning that “knowledge puffeth up; but charity edifieth.” There won’t be an exam at the Judgment Bar of God on how much you know – just on how much you have done (Matt. 16:27).

I see in the Scriptures that Jesus Christ made a strong stand against both of these mentalities. He left us a pretty clear testimony for us to follow– and they crucified Him for it.

Let us be careful not to seek after philosophy, or religion, or books, or how we want things to be, but to seek the face of God to walk in His Spirit and to follow Him. He is the Door, and His Word is a lamp unto our feet. There is no other way.

Desire

Last night, I got an email from a girl on the West Coast who has had a rough time lately and who needs something from the Lord to revitalize and encourage her. She wrote that she just couldn't "feel" it anymore, and, after what she's been through lately, she says she needs to feel something!

She is closer to the truth than she realizes. You really do have to feel it. There has to be something that energizes you and drives you into the Lord. It's not a matter of how much you know. You can know everything there is and yet miss the essence of Christianity. There has to be something that drives you, a fire in your heart, to make you reach past the flesh and to want to do the things that will bring you into a closer walk in God.

The easy answer has to do with how much you read His Word and pray. It is no secret that the more you read and pray, the more you want to read and pray. If you forget your reading and prayer, you will have less and less desire to get back to it, and you can forget your power in God. When you get to the point that you just don't "feel" it anymore, it is time to cry out to God to fire you up. Pray that He will drive into the depths of your heart an overwhelming desire to devour His Word and an incredible thirst to be saturated in prayer. If your heart really wants God, you will find a way. If not, you will find an excuse.

Often in our Christian walk, we go through what is called a "Faith Walk". Those are the times when God seems a million miles away, and the vibrancy of your walk in God seems dead and flat. We all go through it. It

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

is designed to strengthen you and deepen your resolve as you grasp on tighter to the hem of His garment. And then, when He brings you out again, you are so much more lifted up than before.

You may be going through one of those Faith Walks, but then again, you may be just sliding away from the life-giving source of power that is found only in His Word and in deep prevailing prayer. Never forget that all is in vain if we forget our reading and prayer. He makes it so simple: read and pray. Anyone who will follow His simple instructions can have a deep walk in the power of God if they are willing to pay that price. But how few of us offer more than a token to this. And then we wonder where the promises are of an outpouring of the Holy Ghost when we need it.

Do you want your church to be fired up with the power, the authority, the excitement of the Holy Ghost, and with that special something shining out of you like a bright light? It takes a depth of strong prayer and reading the Word-- hours and hours every day. It is a high price that most people are not willing to pay. But if you want the power of the Living God to be bubbling out of you everywhere you go, so that people can feel the power of the Holy Ghost when you open your mouth, so that you are dripping with the Spirit of the Lord, then that is the price you have to pay to get it.

That's the kind of warriors that Holy Ghost Revivals are poured out upon. That's the kind of ministry that draws people to salvation by the thousands because the electrifying excitement of the power of God is all over them. Anything short of that may be OK, but they're just not smokin' with the Power.

Anybody can have it -- you just have to be willing to pay the price to get it. Pray that God will give you that overwhelming desire for it so that you will be driven to pay whatever price is necessary. You have to want to "feel" it; otherwise, all you've got is religion.

And religion doesn't save souls.

Ol'King Asa

And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians. (2nd Chronicles 16:12)

What happened to ol' King Asa? The Bible says that he started out being a pretty good king. He tore into all the idol worshippers, established the Word of God in Judah, and did a lot of good works. He even deposed his own mother from being queen because she had a secret idol. This guy was really on fire for God!

Then there was the time that one million Ethiopians came up against him. A million armed men! And Asa saw the miraculous deliverance of God when the Lord utterly defeated them. This was no small miracle. The Lord stood strong for Asa because he trusted God with his whole heart.

But what happened after the years rolled by? Was it a matter that it is easier to trust God for the big things that we face than for the little ones? Or was it that Life just has a way of dulling our spiritual awareness? Maybe life just got nice and easy for Asa, and after a while, the realization of how much he needed the Lord in his life got away from him. Either way, Asa forgot to trust God.

Faith is something that has to be enabled in our lives. It is not a matter of having seen and believed and filed away in the back of our minds. Faith has to be maintained and kept sharp if we are to maintain our place in God. It is not a mental exercise in knowing God exists. It is the very substance of the presence of God in our lives.

Faith only manifests itself when we walk in the depth of the Spirit of God.

You can go into your prayer room, lift your hands to God, and call out for all sorts of things, but if you have not been building yourself up on that most holy faith, you may find your prayers bouncing off the ceiling. Where did the men in the Bible get the kind of faith to stop the Sun, shut up the heavens from rain, and call down fire from heaven? To call out to God for the great things or to simply deliver you from the little things of life, you have to have placed yourself in a position where you know that God will hear you and answer you. Not simply because you know He is there, but because you have kept His Word.

Faith comes from hearing the Word of God. When you take His Word to heart, it spurs you into action to do the works of God. Remember now, faith without works is dead. That's not legalism; that's faith. When you exercise the faith you received, it brings you to a place where you can have that holy boldness to storm the Throne of God for a move in your life. You enable faith by exercising the faith you have received from His Word.

But sometimes, life has a way of lulling you away from that, and when it does, you forget your power in God. That's what happened to ol' king Asa. As we celebrate Thanksgiving, let us not allow the fullness of our sufficiency to cause us to forget how much we need Him and how much we need to remain thankful for what He has done, and can still do, in our lives.

Poor Rhoda

And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. (Acts 12:13, 14)

Poor Rhoda. I wonder if she will ever live it down that she left Peter standing at the door knocking. Have you ever thought about that? When you make it to heaven and meet her, will it be on the tip of your tongue, "Oh, you're the girl that forgot to let Peter in!" The others that were there were just as bad. They didn't believe it either. What on earth were they praying about all night, if they were in disbelief that their prayers were answered? At least, she answered the door.

Isn't that very much like us? We pray because we are supposed to and tell ourselves that we believe that God hears our prayers. "Sometimes He answers them, and sometimes He doesn't. Oh well. On to the next request." Is that Faith?

Faith cannot be turned on like a light switch. We can't convince ourselves to believe just because we're supposed to. Faith has to be enabled - or a better word would be "empowered."

It is true that faith comes by hearing, but our ears must be opened and turned to the Truth in order to hear. If we turn our ears from the Truth to listen only to what we want to hear, then we harden our hearts to the real Truth of God's Word. Faith will find no fertile ground to grow in a heart that has been hardened to Holy Ghost

conviction.

It takes power in God to receive the faith to move mountains. There's a price to pay for the kind of power that brings us into a deep walk in the Spirit. It isn't cheap. But then, neither was the price that Jesus paid to open the door to us so we could enter into that kind of walk with God. You have rights to the Throne of God because you have kept His Word and have gained power in Him through the Blood of Jesus Christ and your faithfulness.

Walk in His Word. Seek the face of God. Separate yourself from the things of this world. When He becomes the passion of your life, your heart, and your soul, then you will enter into that place in God where your faith is empowered to 'ask what you will' and know He will answer. That's when you've got the holy boldness, like Elijah, to storm the Throne of God to stop the heavens from raining. And that's how you get the faith to cry out to God to send the rain, the latter rain, and give us the greatest revival of all time.

Honor is not having a high position in this world or in your church. Honor - real honor - is when God hears your prayers ... and answers them. That is honor!

*Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.
(Jeremiah 33:3)*

Ten Lepers

And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. (Luke 17:15, 16)

A friend of mine told me that he would rather go witnessing up in the Northeast, where people know they need salvation, than to be here in the midst of the Bible Belt where so many people, no matter how much they are in sin, think they are saved. That's a pretty tough statement, but if you think about it for a moment, its truth starts to sink in.

Have we become so comfortable with our salvation that we have forgotten to turn around and give thanks? There were ten lepers that were healed; only one turned back to give glory to God. Do we rest in the fact that, because we go to church on Sunday, we can now relax because that part of our lives is now taken care of, and we can go on to other more important facets of our lives?

Of course, most everyone would take issue with that statement. After all, we go to church and have been saved and believe in God, and we go to church, and we know the Truth, and we believe we are saved, and we go to church and ... and ... and ... Well, after all, we do go to church and we do believe, don't we? I mean, really, what else do you want? Read the Bible? Well, we read the Bible...sometimes. And we pray ... when we need to. We keep most of the commandments - at least the ones we need to, and God understands that we can't keep them

all. Doesn't He???

Have we forgotten something here? Are we missing something? Or can we just relax and be raptured? After all, we do go to church ...

When you get a chance, go find an old-timer who remembers the old brush arbor revivals and ask them what it was like. Or, find a missionary who has come back from some Third World country and ask them what it is like to go witnessing there where people are so hungry for God that they throng you for more. Now, take a handful of Gospel tracts, go stand on a corner, pass them out, and see the difference.

Jesus asked, "Where are the nine?" I've got a hunch that they are a lot closer to home than we think.

A Field of Barley

He was with David at Pasdammim, and there the Philistines were gathered together to battle, where was a parcel of ground full of barley; and the people fled from before the Philistines. And they set themselves in the midst of that parcel, and delivered it, and slew the Philistines; and the LORD saved them by a great deliverance. (1st Chronicles 11:13, 14)

Two men, Eleazar and David, stood in that field and refused to budge. I can just hear the wind rustling through the barley, tugging at their garments, while they gripped their weapons in quiet determination. I can feel the morning rays of sunshine rising behind them as a silent tension hung in the air. The ominous feeling of battle must have been strong as they set their feet and stood waiting. These were not men who stood because they thought they could beat this army of Philistines, but these were men who just would not run. They would not give in; they would not compromise. They would stand to defend the honor of God no matter what and leave the consequences to God.

Where is it that the souls of champions such as these are forged? It is at the very rim of defeat, at the point of desperation; at that place where character and integrity are all that hold you up, and where you have to grasp out by faith to take hold of the courage to stand for what you believe regardless of the odds against you.

Warriors such as these are not worried about being politically correct, socially correct, or religiously correct. They are made of steel that won't bend, that is

forged in the fire from the altar before God.

It is this kind of steel that is needed to form the framework of any church if it is ever to be strong. Weak messages in the pulpit never make strong Christians in the congregation. Nice people and nice churches and nice ministers do not feel the call to battle; neither do they perceive the dark realities of spiritual war. The desperate need for revival is felt only by those who are hungry and thirsty for the power of God.

The Lord told the Israelites that their prophets had seen vain and foolish things for them and had not discovered their iniquity to turn away their captivity. They did not have the guts to tell the people the truth then, and not much has changed since. As long as we are more willing to hear the messages of peace and love, blessings and prosperity rather than the messages of repentance, mercy, and righteousness, we will fall prey to these false prophets and will allow ourselves to be lulled to sleep, weakened, and ultimately, defeated.

Many will allow themselves and their churches to be carried off to a last days, ecumenical Babylon. Others will run from the battle and lose their souls because they just wouldn't take hold of the victory. But there will always be those who will stand in that field of barley and fight for the honor of God.

May God give us all the courage to stand and be valiant for the Truth.

Separation

Be not ye partakers with them ... (Ephesians 5:7)

Separation. We see this theme throughout the Scriptures. Even in this particular passage in Ephesians, we hear a strong admonition to separate ourselves, not only from those in the depths of sin, but even from the covetous who are driven toward success and a love for the things of this world. Do we prepare our hearts to seek the things of God, Truth, and righteousness? Or do we allow ourselves to be carried away with the life that abounds around us?

The world holds many wonderful, interesting paths, many of which are not evil in themselves, but they lead in directions that take us away from that focus on Eternal Life. To allow ourselves to be driven down any one of these paths simply means that we have set our goal on the thing which that path leads us to. Are we driven toward success, money, position, fame, love, or excitement? When we attain that goal, will we be any closer to the Truth? Will we find peace for our souls when we have gotten there?

Sometimes, when we turn from those enticements, we see very few options. The Lord doesn't want us to pick from a set of options but to find the courage in our hearts to separate ourselves and depend on Him to lead us in ways that we would never have figured out for ourselves.

That choice to follow Him and let Him be the guiding force of our lives leads us down a path that is narrow and strait. It's not an easy choice. It wasn't intended to be easy. He wants to see if you will make that choice anyway.

The children of Israel that fled Egypt made that choice and found themselves squeezed between a barrier that they could not get around and an army that was descending upon them that was lusting for blood. They had chosen to come down a path that gave them no options. There seemed to be nowhere to go. A huge sea was before them. To go back the way they came was no longer an option. Pharaoh was not in a negotiating mood. Where was God now?

When you have made a choice to separate yourself to serve the Lord no matter what, expect the unexpected. Depend on the supernatural. You've made a choice that may not lead to the things that this world considers success. It may not bring you the fun and excitement that the world seems to offer, and it may not be the "good life" that others seem to enjoy, but you have made a choice that leads to Eternal Life. Ten thousand years from now, you will see the difference. There is no success in Hell.

When you make that choice, there may not seem to be any way out, but stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.

Blow the Trumpet in Zion

Blow the trumpet in Zion, Zion. Sound an alarm in my holy mountain... (Joel :1)

What an exciting song. We sing it with great gusto, but what does the rest of the passage in the Book of Joel have to say? What is this “alarm” all about?

Throughout the Prophets, and even in the Gospels and epistles, we see warnings of a time of spiritual desolation coming upon the earth. In this century, we have seen exciting moves of God in many places around the world. Within the grasp of our memories is the evidence of what it is like to see an outpouring of the Spirit of God. Just a couple of generations ago, our churches were burning with a vibrancy that is still talked about today. Ask some of these old-timers what the Brush Arbor Revivals were like, and you can watch their eyes light up as they begin to tell you.

In the last 30 or 40 years, we’ve had a lot of good churches but very few good revivals. Are we living in the time that the old prophet spoke about in Joel 1:10 when the corn, the wine, and the oil would be withheld from the house of God? Is the excitement quite gone?

There is a promise nested in the Scriptures that the Lord would raise up an army unlike anything that has ever been seen before. There is a time of restoration coming. I want to see this great outpouring of the Holy Ghost. I want to be there when the excitement is running through our streets like a river, and souls are running to the altar to receive the power of God in their lives. I believe it’s coming, and nothing will stop it.

But before it comes, there must be an alarm that is sounded. The trumpet must be blown in Zion to prepare for the battle and to call the people of God to cry out for God to restore unto us that which the palmerworm and locust have eaten. No revival has ever come without somebody getting on their knees before God. It doesn't just drop out of the sky.

Are we satisfied with just "church as usual"? Then that is all we will have. Are you hungry for more? Then it is time to sound an alarm in God's holy mountain and prepare for the battle.

There's a rustling in the mulberry trees, and a breeze is beginning to blow. I can smell the smoke of battle afar off, and it is heading this way.

What an exciting time to live in!

About the Author



Dalen Garris has been in ministry since 1970 during the Jesus Movement in California. In 1997, he started a radio broadcast that was heard on stations around the world for almost 12 years. A newspaper column followed, for which he has written over 700 articles, which were published in newspapers and Christian magazines in several countries. He has also written several books and booklets.

Since 2004, he has been lighting the fires of revival in churches spread across sub-Saharan Africa. During the course of 15 years, he has preached in almost 1,000 churches, has seen hundreds of churches set on fire and exploding with growth. He has prayed with hundreds of people who were instantly supernaturally healed and tens of thousands who have been saved. And the fires are still burning.

Because of his work across Africa, Dalen Garris was awarded an honorary Doctorate in 2017 by the Northwestern Christian University of Florida.

Dr. Garris currently lives with Cindy, his wife of 42 years, in Waxahachie and is still heavily involved with churches across Africa. His pressing hope is in seeing this upcoming generation be the Gideon Generation that will usher in this last, great revival that he has preached about for so many years.

If you would like Dalen Garris to speak at your church or organization, please contact us for times and schedules.

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PO Box 822
Waxahachie, TX 75168
dale@revivalfire.org



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