

A Voice in the Wilderness

vol. 12

Superficial Shells

Dalen Garris

DALEN GARRIS

**A Voice in the
Wilderness
vol.12**

SUPERFICIAL SHELLS

BY

DR. DALEN GARRIS

DALEN GARRIS

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

Copyright © 2022 by Dr. Dalen Garris

Published by Revivalfire Ministries

ISBN 13: 9798353884651

All rights reserved.

*No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner
whatsoever, without written permission, except in the case of brief
quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews, as provided
by U.S. Copyright Law.*

*For information, address
dale@revivalfire.org*

First paperback printing September 2022

Printed in the United States of America

Table of Contents

Superficial Shells	1
That Secret Place	4
Dry Walks	6
“Despise not prophesyings.”	8
In the Spirit	11
Idolatry	14
Three Little Pigs	17
True Prosperity	20
Prophet’s Reward	23
Fig Tree	25
Balaam rose up in the Morning	28
Press Toward the Mark	30
Widow of Zarephath	33
Fools	36
How Big is God?	38
Gideon’s Heritage	41
Almost Persuaded	44
Reality	47
Peter’s Wife	49
The Winning Hand	52
Substance of Hope	54
Empty Tomb	56
Power	59
Paths	62
Concerns	65

DALEN GARRIS

Pilate	68
Led of the Spirit	70
Signs of Bad Weather	72
And What Shall This Man Do?	75
Unified Religions	77
Opinions	81
Let's Trade Places	84
Two Paths	86
Favorite Pastimes	89
Lord of Rings	92
About the Author	95

Preface

The theme of this series, “A Voice in the Wilderness”, reflects the nature and call of articles that I wrote over the course of a decade. They were printed in several newspapers and emailed around the world in an attempt to call the Church out of the spiritual desert she was in and see Her return to what she once was - a vibrant, on-fire fortress of righteousness and salvation to a lost and dying world.

I felt a call to make the crooked ways straight and prepare the way for the Coming of the Lord. How soon would that be? I have no idea, but I do know that the Lord often takes 20 to 40 years in preparation for a move of the Holy Spirit, so I started writing.

There is no order to these articles. They just came as they were given. I never knew when then next one would come, and I never knew what it would be about. Whenever the Lord would drop another message on me, the next few hours would belong to Him as the words poured out of me.

And that is what it is like – the words pour out onto the pages almost of their own volition. Sometimes I would start by lifting my palms up and ask for Him to anoint my fingers as I typed ... and He always did.

These articles are not mine. If I could, I would put His name as the author, but that would sound tacky. Nevertheless, He and I both know that He wrote these articles, not me.

DALEN GARRIS

I hope that, as you read through them, you will realize that also.

=====

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

(Isaiah 40:3-5)

Superficial Shells

A friend of mine recently asked me why people so often only look at the superficial shell of things and rarely dig down to the bare facts of a matter. Good question. Is it just human nature to take the easy road and hope that things will turn out right? Are we just lazy by nature?

I see that problem working against us in two different ways.

First, I have always maintained that the test that is placed upon us by God is not whether or not we have all the correct answers or how much we know or don't know. God looks at our hearts. If your heart is right before God, it will lead you into all righteousness.

If you want to stay right with God, you will do the things that are necessary to seek the face of God and overcome the lusts, the pride, and the pull of the flesh. You won't just try and give it a good shot. You will overcome. Remember, the promise in Revelations of eating off the Tree of Life is not to those who tried - it is to those who have overcome (Revelations 2:7).

If you only look as far as the superficial shell of your beliefs, then you aren't that committed to the Truth, are you? It's just not that big a deal to you, and you simply presume that the things you base your Salvation on are right. Jesus gave His life for this, but you want to have your salvation handed to you on a platter. (And for some of you Prosperity people, that would be a silver platter.)

In other words, like the old saying about Hallmark Cards, God thought enough about you to give His very

best, but all you did was scribble out something on the nearest scrap of paper and drop it off. And that is why presumption is a sin – it is not heartfelt Faith.

Maybe you could just happen to hit the jackpot. You guessed correctly and got all the answers right! Sorry, it doesn't work like that. It might be great for the Lottery, but God doesn't play the Lottery. He judges you by the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12) – and basing the eternal destiny of your soul on presumption means you flunked the test because you didn't really care to seek His face to find out the real Truth.

The other problem I see with this laid-back form of presumption is that, although you may know in your heart that you are right about a certain issue, you also need to know why. Not just for your sake but for those who will hear you. You will be held responsible.

I listen to a lot of people who will hammer away on a certain doctrine or belief and expect others to get in line with them simply because they insist that it is the truth. Well, what happens when someone who is not so enamored with your ideas decides to hold your feet to the fire? If you don't know why you believe what you believe, how will you answer them? And when the carpet is yanked from under your feet, what will that do to that person's beliefs?

I've always said that it's not about you – it's about others. We are held responsible for our testimony to others so that they may find salvation in Jesus Christ.

That's why the Lord tells us to "Study to show yourself approved" (2nd Timothy 2:15) and "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (1st Peter 3:15). You

must have substance to your faith. If you don't, who will believe you?

Is it a small wonder that so many of our young people have turned their interests to avenues other than what they have seen in the church? Don't you think that if they could see the power of the Spirit of God operating in your church that they would flock to the altar?

It's not only a matter of having the facts to back up your Faith. The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power (1st Corinthians 4:20). You've got to have something more than a superficial faith in order to have power in God. There's a walk in God that calls you to a deeper path than what your flesh is comfortable with. It's a crucified walk that leads to the Cross where you have to die out to superficial religion, your shell of beliefs, and your paper-thin presumptions. You have to know God in His power, in His authority, and in His Spirit.

Is this some radical theology that is only good for the young and exuberant? Or is this a test of your heart and what the really important tenets of your life are?

What is the prime motivating factor of your life? Decide what that is and pursue it with all your heart. It will determine the results of your death.

That Secret Place

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.” Psalm 91

Oh, to be in that secret place! That place where you are completely wrapped in the Spirit of the Lord, so that you know that no matter what comes or goes, you are protected by the bulwarks of the Most High.

Psalm 91 is full of promises that we hear quoted in song and in praise. But are you in that place in God where all those promises apply to you? To believe that everything will be wonderful for you simply because you believe or attend church borders on presumption if you are not walking in the depths of His Spirit. There's more to a Christian walk than just wearing a nametag.

We hear all the time about all the blessings we're supposed to get, and we take comfort in our complacency because we are told that we will find a place of refuge because we have faith. But you find that place of refuge only when you find that secret place in Him. And that place can only be found in deep, sincere prayer. That's the place where real Christians are made; that is the place where battles are fought and won, and that's the place where you can count on the refuge of the Lord.

When trouble comes, is there a refuge you can run to, or will you be looking around wondering where did God go? Is that place a fortress where you stand in the power of God to wage war on the powers of darkness?

Christians are called to be soldiers. They have a power to stand that comes from the Throne of God. But if you're not in that secret place of the Most High, where will your power come from?

We become easy prey when we stand without our weapons, trusting in promises that we have not earned. And then, when Satan pulls the rug from under our feet because we haven't given ourselves over to the power of God, we will fall, wondering what happened. We presumed. But presumption is not faith.

Prayer is the field of battle that Satan will do anything to keep us from. He knows that if we presume that we don't have to pay that price to seek the Lord in agonizing prayer, then we will not get those promises that would have come as a result. If you expect God to keep His promises to you, you will have to keep your promises to Him.

When you forget your reading, prayer, and fasting, you forget your power in God. Find that secret place of the Most High. You can't win this battle on your own.

Dry Walks

It's a rainy day today, but I've been feeling as dry as old bones lately. This has probably been one of the longest valleys I've gone through that has been this dry.

It used to be that every Friday morning, I couldn't wait to get to the computer to type out the newspaper column because I had something exciting from the Lord to share. On Sundays, you would find me racing to the radio station with an exciting, fresh new message from the Lord that I couldn't wait to bring. I never knew what would come out, but I could always feel the anointing of the Holy Spirit moving. I was so excited because I wanted to tell the whole world - and to a certain extent, those messages did go out to many different countries around the world with tremendous responses.

Lately, though, I feel like a pile of old, dry bones. It feels like God turned off the switch. That old excitement is gone, and the drive and desire to bring forth a message turns into a task instead of a thrill. I want the message to drive me, not the other way around. The Word of God must be anointed and drenched in the Holy Spirit for it to touch human souls. The letter kills, but the Spirit giveth life.

Like all valleys, these desert walks have an end. How we maintain our victory and keep our heads held high throughout that walk determines how we come out. And along the journey through those valleys, we usually learn something about ourselves we never saw before, and we get something from God we could never have received any other way.

Maybe we don't always pass the test. Maybe we don't even realize that it is a test until it's over. I guess that just means we've got to do it all over again until we get it right.

But every once in a while, we get it right and come out in victory. That's how I want to do it - in victory, rejoicing in the Lord, and thanking God for those valleys. I know He uses them to build us into something that He can use for His Glory. And that is our whole purpose here in Life - to use our lives to glorify God so that souls can get saved. What a great calling on our lives!

Lord, send the rain!

“Despise not prophesyings.”

(1 Thessalonians 5:20)

Ever wonder about that scripture? Why did the Apostle Paul have to exhort the Thessalonians not to despise prophesyings?

I used to figure that maybe it was an admonishment to keep your heart open to receive reproof or strong direction when it comes. So often, we tend to believe only the things that we want to believe. We are not always open to correction or change.

As I read it this morning, however, I saw a church planted right smack in the middle of an area that had seen its share of wild and crazy stuff - and I mean church stuff. Having seen Paul do many wonderful miracles in Ephesus, Thessalonica, Philippi, and throughout that whole region, the Greeks got pretty excited about this new religion. It had power! What a novel idea!

Well, it stands to reason that if Paul can cast out devils, heal the sick, bestow the Holy Ghost and do all these miracles, then so could they. And many of them proceeded to jump right into this new exciting religion with both feet and try to do just that.

Unfortunately, many of them discovered the hard way that the gifts of the Spirit of God can't be flipped on like some switch. Neither the devil nor God is impressed with bravado, presumption, or pride. There is a price to pay if you want power in God, and it is a price that is always higher than what human flesh expected. And it always takes longer than what you had

believed.

But many of these young Greeks hadn't learned those lessons yet, and they were expecting everything to be supernatural all of a sudden. I'm sure that many of them thought that they were called to be part of the new generation of holy prophets. Nothing new there. That's still going on today. Why, I have even heard that we have schools that teach you how to be a prophet! Isn't that convenient!

It's just plain trouble when you let some inexperienced young zealot loose thinking that he's a prophet. Not only is he susceptible to every wind of doctrine that Satan throws at him, but also pride begins to enter his heart, and he is no longer open to reproof. The next thing you know, he thinks that whatever dumb idea enters his heart must be from God. Those that listen to him simply because it sounds so good will inevitably be led away into heresy, sin, and ultimately, the destruction of the church.

You can usually tell the difference right off the bat - Prophets called of God preach repentance; False Prophets preach peace and safety. Figure it out.

It sounds to me like the Thessalonians had had their fill of self-proclaimed prophets coming into their churches with their nonsense, exalted and affected voices, and spiritual attitudes. They were ready to toss them out on their spiritual butts. And yet, Paul reminds them, don't despise prophesyings just because of some puffed-up heretics. God still does use flesh to bring forth His Word. But it has to be flesh that has allowed itself to be crucified, stripped down, emptied out, and beaten until it is void of self, ego, and emotions.

There are some prophets out there like that, but they are far and few between. There's a price tag on that calling that is just too high to pay for most church people, so you don't find too many that are willing to take on that course of action.

Another reason why there are so few genuine prophets of God is that no one wants to hear their message. Everybody wants to hear about the blessings, peace, love, and pleasant things. Oh, and don't forget about prosperity and money! But please don't tell us about having to give all these things up for the Kingdom of God's sake. Please don't tell us that we have to not only repent, but we have to stay in that place of repentance. Please tone down the messages about the Fear of the Lord, Hell, and Holy Ghost conviction. We don't mind being called Christians; we just don't want to get that serious. And we sure don't want to get that much on fire!

Despise not prophesyings. Forget the light and vain prophets of the wind that infest our churches today with their messages of chaff. Cling to those old warriors who stand up in the authority and power of God Almighty and deliver the same message they always have.

In the Spirit

I have been asked on several occasions what it means to “walk in the Spirit” and how to know when you are in the Spirit.

In this day and age of Self-Help books and videos, we have formed a habit of getting the answers to all our problems in life for \$19.95. We learn how to lose fat, make \$200,000 a year for free, and have a happy marriage by simply signing up with the newest guru on TV. It has become an American institution that has woven itself so deeply into the fabric of our culture that no one questions the validity of the process anymore. P.T. Barnum would be pleased.

God, however, has resisted the instant marketing offers on His behalf. To the dismay of the many people I talk to, there are no six quick, easy steps to being in the Spirit. He still does things the old-fashioned way -- blood, sweat, and tears.

There is no such thing as microwave faith. You know what that is, don't you? Press a button, wait 60 seconds, and bingo, instant Faith!

There is no light switch like the one at your house that will turn on power in God. You have to build that fire one log at a time.

Depth, wisdom, and understanding cannot be gained by assimilating some information from the latest seminar by someone claiming to have discovered a new, fantastic method that he is willing to share with you out of the goodness of his heart. (That is, for a “love offering”). That's the same mistake that the children of Israel made at the foot of Mount Sinai. They let Moses

go up the mountain alone while they waited for him at the bottom so they could buy his set of tapes on “How to Be a Christian in 10 Easy Steps”. If you try to do it that way, you’ll end up worshipping the same golden calves that they did.

No, if you want something in God, you will have to pay the price all right, but it won’t be the one you thought you could get away with. You’ve got to want Him so bad that you are willing to seek the face of God on your knees. You will have to learn to pray with the fervency of a heart that wrings itself out before God. You will have to cry out; you will have to contend before the Throne, and you will have to learn how to prevail in prayer. And you will learn the patience of real Faith.

This is the stuff that separates the sheep from the goats; the men from the boys; and the ones that are serious from the nominal Christians that think God owes them something. The only thing that you will get free from God is Salvation – everything else has a price tag.

How badly do you want these gifts from God? Are you willing to seek the face of God with all your heart? Or do you think God plays the Lottery where you can get something for nothing?

So, I always tell them, “Read and pray.” And I watch their heads bob up and down like apples in a barrel of water. “Yup. Uh-huh. OK.” “But isn’t there a program I can sign up for?”

“No. Read and pray”.

“But I read! I follow that ‘Go Through the Bible in a Year’ program”.

“No. That’s just snacking’ on the Word of God. That

only makes you accountable, not fed.”

“But I pray...sometimes...when the mood hits me, or when I’m in trouble. Sometimes for a whole 15-minutes!”

“Yeah, but do your prayers get anywhere past the ceiling? Is there a deep communion with God? Have you hidden in that secret place of the Most High? Or are you like so many that have a relationship of convenience with God?”

If this was a marriage, how much do you love your spouse? If this was your life’s occupation, how hard do you work at success? If this was your career and goal in life, how dedicated are you? Are you on fire for God, or are you just lukewarm?

Make a choice. It’s all about your heart condition with God.

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” John 15:7

Idolatry

The slickest sleight-of-hand trick that Satan has up his sleeve is idolatry. What a thrill he must get to subtly divert people's worship from God to whatever fake doll he puts up before them. And they never suspect a thing.

No matter how many of us know about the dangers of the love of money, this is an old trick that just keeps on working. Disguise that lust with religious robes, and you've just turned it into a righteous thing. Throngs flock to prosperity preachers because they justify gain as "godliness." (1st Timothy 6:5). While claiming that they are only pursuing the blessings of the Lord, you can watch their eyes light up as Satan turns their focus away from the Cross and that lowly walk of the Nazarene and places it on Success.

Another very powerful, emotional idolatry is Love. How many souls have been pulled away from what the Lord has called them to by their love for someone else in their lives? Satan whispers to them that, in some twisted way, they will be able to win their loved ones back to God this way. Afraid to lose the person they love so much, they turn from the Savior that truly loves them and follow their lover down a path that will destroy them both. How few return.

One of Satan's all-time favorites is religious idolatry. How we love church! How we cling to religion! No matter how much the Lord pulls us into a deep, crucified walk in the Spirit, we hang on to that nice, secure feeling that church will somehow save our souls. Convinced that we can relax because we are "Christians" now, we

will fight viciously to maintain our denominational status and end up worshipping golden calves. What a grand deception!

But the one that must satisfy Satan the most, the one that is the most subtle, and the one that takes down those who are willing to work the hardest is the pursuit of religious success. We strive for a special place of a new, higher level of understanding in God. We have arrived. We're special in God's eyes. We are really deep now. But our focus has, once again, shifted off God and turned inward. It is our position in God, now, that is our ambition. We are driven to bigger ministries, larger outreaches, and a greater position of power and acknowledged spiritual importance. We worship our own place in God. All in the name of Jesus.

So many see fruit from off the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and look at it as Eve did, as something that is desired to make one wise. We see ourselves as finding some "new thing" that has given us the "inside scoop on what the Bible really says." We are now like Post cereal – just a little bit better.

And all the while we are scurrying about in religious endeavors, the Lord calls us to find a lowly place of humility before Him. It is the all-consuming worship of God that He desires. It is to take our focus off our self-importance and place it on Him.

You cannot see through subtle spiritual lusts with a carnal rendition of the Truth. This kind of subtlety can only be perceived when you stand in the real Fear of the Lord.

Notice I said "real." There is a fear of God that, as Isaiah says, is "...taught by the precept of men" (Isaiah

29:13), but that is not the chilling Fear of God that brings you to a place of wisdom and understanding. That is a conceptual Fear of God that we may speak about and acknowledge, but that never reaches into your soul. You have to be in the Spirit of God to walk in the true Fear of God and to understand how wonderful it feels. When you do, you will find yourself lost in the worship of God and God alone, where there is no room for self or for the things we desire, however noble they may sound.

It's about finding your own death. Anything else is idolatry.

Three Little Pigs

Once upon a time, there were three little pigs. They were all brothers but were very different from one another.

There was also a big, bad wolf, but nobody paid him much attention because, although he was very dangerous, he wasn't seen very much. There were plenty of signs that he was around, but he rarely came out into the open.

Life was good. The sun was shining, the fields were warm, and it was summer – time to have fun. The first little pig loved to play in the fields. It made all the sense in the world to him to live for today and enjoy life while it was summer. He would worry about tomorrow when tomorrow came. So, he built himself a house of straw. It was easy to make and didn't take much effort. That gave him more time to have fun.

His older brother also loved to have fun, but he knew that he needed a better place to lodge in than just some flimsy straw. He took pride in the fact that he put forth some effort to build a house of sticks. It was a form of a house, but it didn't take that much more time to build. At least, he felt he had a better place of safety than straw – and it still gave him plenty of time to enjoy life.

He knew there was a big, bad wolf out there, but he didn't feel too threatened by him because the wolf had never really caused him any trouble. As a matter of fact, sometimes, the wolf could be seen smiling at him. Maybe he wasn't that bad of a wolf after all. So, a house of sticks would probably be sufficient. After all, work wasn't his prime objective. He could do just enough to

get by, and he would be OK.

The oldest little pig had a different view of life. He knew that old wolf was just biding his time and lulling his other brothers into a false sense of security. He knew that half-hearted efforts of straw and sticks would not protect them from the wolf, but his brothers would not listen to him. They thought he was just over-reacting and was missing out on all the fun and blessings that the world had to offer. So, this little pig spent all summer building a house of bricks – precept upon precept, line upon line, brick upon brick – while his brothers played, had fun, and got fat in the summer sun.

Then came that day... you know the rest of the story. Only one pig survived.

I think by now, you've picked up on the obvious analogy. We are in a time of relative "peace and safety," and many Christians are relaxing in the summer sun. Life is good, and we spend a lot of time singing songs and watching "Praise the Lord" television shows, but we are only getting fattened up in relative spiritual ease while the real Big Bad Wolf is biding his time.

Safety won't be found in a "name-only" Christianity of straw. Neither will half-hearted efforts of sticks be enough to stand against what's coming. The warnings are there in the Word of God for all to see. It may not be fun to spend your time building your house of safety while others proclaim the blessings and prosperity of the Lord, and its hard work laying all those bricks one at a time. It may not even seem that it is necessary to work that hard, but if you understand how diabolical Satan is, you will put forth the effort no matter what the cost.

If your Christianity is cheap and easy, you will find

that the time will come when Satan huffs and puffs and blows your house down. And where will you run to then?

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” Ephesians 6:13

True Prosperity

"The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth."

Ecclesiastes 7:4

The real prosperity of the Lord is not found on the mountaintops of your life. When surrounded by blessings, health, wealth, and happiness, life can seem really good, but this is not where you find the real prosperity of the Lord.

Like children on the playground where you have no cares and worries, life on the mountaintop is fun. There is no time of deep introspection and repentance and no need for wrung-out prevailing prayer to seek the face of God. Life is good. Everything is beautiful. I love Jesus.

But when God decides it's time for you to grow up, playtime is over. It's time to come off that mountaintop and start trudging down through the valley. Now it's time to get stretched to the breaking point, get squeezed until you pop, and get broken until you stop crying and learn how to yield. This is the forging ground for real Christians. This is where you are hardened into fine steel. This is where warriors are made.

Human nature tends to get it all backward. The playground may be fun, but that's not where you will find the true riches of God. Do you want depth in wisdom and understanding? Do you want supernatural power in God to heal? To preach? To win lost souls? To be used in a mighty, mighty way? Do you want something in God? -- You have to pay the price.

The true riches of God can only be found down on the very bottom of the valley floor, down on your hands

and knees, surrounded by total darkness with nothing to lead you but the Spirit of God. When you come to a place of complete desolation where the only hope you have is God, when there is nothing else to sustain you in a desert that is so dry that you feel like you're dying of thirst, when everything you thought was of value is gone including your own opinion of yourself and your abilities, when it's so tough that you feel like you don't care anymore, and when all your bones are broken and you feel like Job, then and only then, will you find that place of prosperity in God.

That's the place where you completely understand that He alone is worthy. He alone is God. There is nothing else but God. And that is true riches that you will not find in this world. Neither will you find it in today's "prosperity" preachers that promise you all that money and success for just a little ol' "Love" offering.

So, which is it going to be? Do you want instant gratification now, along with an easy ride? Just smile and be happy? Flash that Howdy Dowdy grin, wag your finger in the air, and tell everybody that Jesus loves 'em! Everything's cool between you and the man upstairs. You and Reverend Dollar can just sit back and relax cause everything's cool, and you don't have to fear God. He loves you.

Well, good luck. I hope you make it, but I'm not betting any money on it.

There is a path that leads in another direction that is calling you. It's a path that only servants take. It's a crucified, broken walk. The path is drenched in blood. You can smell the sweat, and you can feel the tears. It's narrow, it's hard, and it leads down, not up. And

sometimes, it's so dark that you can only go on by trust and faith, and you wonder why you're doing this. But there are footsteps there to follow. He went this way before you.

Why would I choose such a path, you say? Because this is the path Jesus took for me, and I am willing to follow Him. Nothing else matters.

And that, my friend, is the true prosperity of the Lord.

And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. (Luke 9:23)

Prophet's Reward

"He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward;" Matthew 10:41

What is a "prophet's reward"?

There are those who feel that if you acknowledge a prophet, you will get to share in his reward. In other words, if you subscribe to their message (and, of course, send them money), you get to receive a part of their blessings. Wow! Sounds like a deal to me! It sure makes it easy to get in on that Prosperity that today's prophets are talking about all the time.

You hear about these prophets all the time. They even introduce themselves as such, as if it was a title. Perhaps we should insert that into the old children's rhyme,

"Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief,
Doctor, lawyer, prophet chief."

Of course, you might point out that it's already covered with "rich man," "beggar man," and "thief," but "prophet" has a nice ring to it all it's own. Besides, "Prophet So-and-so" sounds a whole lot better than "Con Artist So-and-so."

We've got more so-called prophets running around today than there were in Jeremiah's time, preaching the same message that they were preaching then ... and, I guess, for the same reasons. P.T. Barnum would be proud.

But in Jeremiah's time, there was only one real prophet - Jeremiah. And he didn't spend his time

smoothing out people's feathers. He spent most of his time ruffling them. Not a popular guy. And he sure wouldn't fit in today with a Brooks Brothers suit and styled hair-do like we see on TV.

Real prophets expose sin, not console it. They don't preach "peace, peace" when there is no peace; they preach repentance for apostasy and warn of a coming judgment.

So, what is a prophet's reward? When you acknowledge a true prophet as having a message from the Throne of God, you get to receive the reproof of the Word of God into your heart. You don't get money. You get something far greater than all the riches of the world. You get to hear the Truth. You get the opportunity to get right with God.

But not everybody wants that. Most folks would rather buy into the Success message and get something for nothing rather than (ugh!) pay a price. As if God owes us something because Jesus already paid the price. "Just relax and be raptured."

Your heart will choose its own way if you let it, and people are absolutely in love with their own opinions, but truths are revealed to broken hearts that intelligent minds cannot grasp. Brokenness is the way of the Cross; peace and prosperity are the way of false prophets.

Pick your prophets carefully. You will end up in the same place as those whom you follow.

Fig Tree

“And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only...”

(Matthew 21:19)

The Litmus test for any church is winning souls. Yeah, I know, I know. Some of you churches are called to comfort people, some of you are called to love others, and some of you are just real nice guys, but the bottom line of Christianity has always been the winning of unsaved souls.

So why do we not see unsaved souls flocking to the altars these days like we had seen in the past when great Holy Ghost revivals swept the land?

You have to face the facts. It's because you don't have anything they want.

Why is that? Is that their fault, or is it ours? Or are we going to blame God? Don't be so foolish to say that it isn't the season right now. That excuse didn't work for the fig tree. He cursed it anyway.

People want the real thing. When the Spirit of God is alive in a church, and the excitement of the Holy Ghost electrifies the air, and you can feel the Anointing dripping off the walls, believe me, souls will come. If you don't have that in your church, then maybe it's time to ask why.

There are four elements that indicate the depth of any ministry: blood, fire, fear, and souls of men. The degree to which these elements of Christianity are pronounced in your ministry, your church, and your daily walk, shows how much depth you have in God.

Three out of four won't do.

The Blood of Jesus Christ must have the prime, spoken place of prominence in your church. It is the power of that Blood that broke Satan's back. Dismiss its importance and its power to repel the powers of darkness, and you show your lack of understanding in spiritual warfare. You'll be like a sitting duck.

Hesitant to warn your people about Hellfire? Not a comfortable, or shall we say, socially acceptable headline in your sermons? A little extreme for your congregation? Then you are ignoring the most prevalent reality that there is because, you see, most people will end up in Hell thinking they're going to Heaven. If you have forgotten to warn them but instead have comforted them with a "Pollyanna" Gospel, then the blood of their souls will be required at your hand. Not my words. That's what He says.

And what about fear? Is the fear of God nothing more to you than "awesome respect"? Let me guess - "perfect love casts away all fear" and "we're not supposed to fear because God loves us." Tell that to Moses. He feared God so much his knees smote together. Has the word "fear" become a four-lettered word in your church? If so, the Bible is very clear that there is no wisdom or understanding in you. Your walk in God will be very superficial ... at best. And you wonder why the unsaved won't listen to you?

And Souls. Is the winning of lost souls the prime, motivating passion of your ministry? Are you cut to the heart for those who will spend Eternity burning in Hell? Does your heart cry out like Rachael's, "Give me souls lest I die"? Talk is cheap. Are broken hearts found at

your altars crying out to God to send in the lost? God will not send His precious souls to people who don't care. You get what you pay for.

What, you say? I didn't mention "Love" or "grace"? Nope. The Love of God is not some fuzzy emotion, but it is the keeping of God's commandments, which the Word of God says is accomplished through the Fear of the Lord. And "grace" is not an excuse to sin, but it is the power of God to overcome sin, and you have to be in the Spirit to have that power. Slight difference there.

Show the above elements of Christianity and believe me, you will exhibit real love and will have grace with God. You'll have a church that is on fire and anointed with the Power of God that souls will flock to. If not, you will have what you've always had: "Church as usual." True revival only comes through repentance.

"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." Matthew 3:10

Balaam rose up in the Morning

“And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab” Numbers 22:21

Here was a man called out of Mesopotamia that was recognized as a prophet of God and was offered riches and glory from the king of Moab to curse Israel. The Lord told him to wait, but instead, he rushed off in the morning to follow the princes of Moab, thinking that God had changed His mind. He thought he was heading off to great honor and riches.

Why is it that he could not see the Angel standing in the way? Was it because his eyes were blinded by the prospect of great riches that he could not see? God had to speak through a jackass, not exactly one of the noblest of beasts, to reprove him one last time, as He often does today with us. Now walking in the severe fear of God, Balaam went on to fulfill God’s mission and lost his dream of worldly riches.

After failing Balak, king of Moab, Balaam left to go home in Mesopotamia. As he went, however, he realized that the key to nullifying the blessings that he had just spoken on Israel would be to teach Moab to befriend Israel and cause them to sin. If they did that, God would have to curse Israel because they had broken His covenant. Balaam must have come back to Moab to tell king Balak because he was slain there by the Israelites.

Balaam just never did get the message, did he?

Today, we see one huge TV ministry after another claiming all kinds of wonderful things that are happening with them worldwide and ending up each

broadcast with a convincing plea for more money. If we would just give to them, they claim that all sorts of wonderful things will happen in our lives. And yet, we see throughout the Scriptures, in Joel, Amos, the Prophets, 2 Thess., Matt. 24, Revelations, that before we see this last great revival of the church, there will be widespread apostasy, famine, and spiritual desolation.

Who do we believe? Make no mistake. There is coming an outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord like never before. It is coming, and it will shake us to our core when it comes. But before it comes, the Body of Christ will have to find a place of repentance to cry out to the Living God for cleansing and forgiveness. Sending money off to these golden edifices will not get us off the hook. God wants our hearts first.

First, we must realize that we are not in the place with God that we should be. We also have to want it more than life itself. That, hopefully, will bring us to that place of repentance to cry out to God for revival. We've got a way to go. Be careful that you do not make the mistake of taking a shortcut that will lead you down the wrong path.

I asked the Lord why these ministers could not see this clearly. The answer was simple. They're as blind as Balaam was, and for the same reasons.

Press Toward the Mark

"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:14

It seems that life is always one struggle after another. No matter what station in life we find ourselves in, there is always one more hill to climb, one more obstacle to overcome, and one more battle to fight. Do we ever get to that place where we can finally say that we have arrived? We look at others that have reached a place that appears secure and think that if we could just get to that point, we could relax. Upon a closer look, however, we always find that they also are in an upward struggle for the next level. That's how they got there in the first place. It's a matter of goals.

Religion is often handled differently, however. Most of our different denominations were forged in the fires of revival and had to overcome the persecutions that beset their early days. As they became established in the mainstream of society, their hard, sharp edge became dull with *détente*.

Now *détente* is a French word that means "slackened bowstrings." The analogy is obvious. Time to relax and pull in our horns. We have arrived. Time to pursue other things in our lives because our religion is now secure. As one old man put it, "We can relax and be raptured" ...as long, of course, as we go to church on Sunday. Oh, of course, we have our little battles, like prayer at the football games, but, basically, we assure ourselves that the fierceness of the battle is over. We get comfortable.

It's like taking a bath. No one likes a cold shower, and we certainly don't want to get scalded with hot water. No, we enjoy that warm, relaxing feeling of a bath with water that is just the right temperature. But God's perspective is a little different. He'd rather you were either hot or cold. His Word says that if you are lukewarm, He will vomit you out of His mouth. He wants you to be on fire and valiant for the Truth. (Sigh) More battles. Does it ever end?

The fading of the light that once burned so hotly in our churches is much like the sunset. It comes ever so gradually - even with a mellow glow. Suddenly, it is night, and we have become accustomed to the evening. Anyone with a bright torch can seem startling, even abrasive.

If we remember back to our heritages, however, we see men and women who were warriors and did not know the meaning of détente or compromise. There was no letting up in their pursuit to establish the Truth of God in the land. They stood for the honor of God regardless of the cost and regardless of the odds. I am reminded of David and his companions in 1 Chronicles 11:13. All of Israel fled before the Philistines, but they stood in that field of barley. They refused to run, refused to give in, and refused to compromise. They were willing to fight to the end against overwhelming odds for the honor of God.

Press toward the mark. Run the race to win. Stand for the honor of God and let your light shine brightly. We are in a war from which there is no discharge until we cross over into Eternity. Be courageous for the Truth and fight for the greatest cause of all time.

DALEN GARRIS

It is our heritage.

Widow of Zarephath

“But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.” Luke 4:26

Picture the land of Israel with luscious green valleys, bountiful fields, and flowing brooks. Life is good, and the kingdom is prosperous. Then along comes this rough-looking man with a hard, caustic New York attitude who presents himself before the King’s court with all its finery. As he stands there in stark contrast to the upper crust of their ecclesiastical society, you can hear gasps of shock at his brash boldness.

This man fears no one but God and levels an ultimatum at the powers-that-be standing before him:

“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. “

He is summarily chased out of the King’s court and takes refuge beside a brook, where the Lord then tells him to go to a widow woman in Zidon, far away from the people of God.

We all know the end of the story: the famine that was prophesied in the time of prosperity did come. Along with it came terrible persecution for the real people of God until hardly any believers in Jehovah were left. Elijah’s words had come true. Even after a final, bloody showdown in Mount Carmel, there was still little evidence of any kind of heartfelt revival. The judgments of God had fallen on a people who had chosen a religious path that was more to their liking than the path that led to the righteousness that God had

commanded.

It may be said that Elijah was the first prophet to the Gentiles – a foreshadowing of that which was to come – but there is another picture I see here that has replayed itself throughout the history of the people of God. Here we see the time-old story of the dominance of apostate religion and the seeds of true revival.

Flesh always leans toward a religion that comforts us and excuses sin. Every religion, as it slowly integrates itself into mainstream society, becomes more and more sophisticated and less hard and demanding. Those who are truly of the Lord begin to appear rough, caustic, and out of touch with normal life. They are chased outside the camp to take their ideas of righteousness and the Fear of God elsewhere, while the established religions comfort themselves with the belief that they are doing fine just the way they are.

That little widow woman who sustained the prophet is a picture of the outcast Body of Christ, suffering outside the camp, waiting for the time of restoration. Revival never comes to the established religions – it always comes from outside the camp. God raises up stones to take their place.

Do we see this same picture today? Are there not enough prophecies in the Bible of a spiritual famine and drought just before the Day of the Lord? Have our churches not fallen back into that old, comfortable way of doing things that makes no room for the hard message of the fear of God, of Hell, judgment, sin, and righteousness?

The Gospel of power that Jesus preached enables us to walk in the Spirit of God so we can overcome sin. The

Gospel of peace, prosperity, and love that I hear today from our pulpits has replaced that with the idea of Grace as an excuse for sin.

Multitudes, the Bible says, are in the Valley of Decision right now, just before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are making eternal decisions based on whether they are satisfied with “church as usual” or if their souls are desperately hungry for something more. Before that time of restoration arrives, they will have made their decision.

Make no mistake. It is coming. The question is, which camp will you be in when it comes?

“...there is a sound of abundance of rain.” (1Kings 18:41)

Fools

I have noticed, especially in Proverbs, that God certainly has His preferences.

He doesn't care that much if you're dumb or smart. After all, it was God that made you the way you are in the first place. He made you that way to challenge you. Neither does He care if you are rich or poor, good-looking or ugly, talented or not. But, boy, does He hate fools!

Now a fool isn't necessarily stupid. There's an overabundance of very educated fools out there trying to convince you that they are smart. As a matter of fact, it seems to me that there are a lot more fools out there that are weighed down with intelligence than there are that are just plain dumb.

So just what is it that defines a fool? Whatever it is, I want to pay attention because it doesn't look like they are going to get high marks when it comes time to be judged. And passing the final Judgment is the ultimate goal of Life.

Proverbs is a good place to start. It describes a fool as someone who refuses to hearken to the reproof of God. A fool relies more upon the way that they view life than the way that God views it. They rely upon their own thoughts, their own perceptions, and their own preferences to direct their lives. Fools tend to shape their reality the way they would like it.

*"The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way:
but the folly of fools is deceit." (Proverbs 14:8)*

In other words, the prudent man makes sure that his path is right, whereas a fool deceives himself into thinking that the path that he wants is right.

Which religion would you like? Which doctrine would you prefer? What would you like the personality of God to be like? How can you form the Gospel so that it matches the way you would like it?

I call this Shopping Cart Christianity. It's like going down the aisle at a grocery store and picking the brands and flavors that suit you. But when you get to the checkout counter, you will have to pay for what you have chosen, and there's no going back.

If a fool is simply someone who has refused the reproof of God, then it stands to reason that wisdom is just the opposite. It's not intelligence or education and scholastic degrees that define wisdom, but it is the humble realization that you must fear God. Without God in control of your ways, you are merely a fool.

A fool is someone who thinks he is smart, whereas a wise man is someone who realizes how stupid we all are. One relies upon himself for all Truth; the other seeks the face of God. One defines his own Truth; the other yields to God. A fool despises instruction; a wise man loves reproof.

And one goes to heaven, and the other winds up in Hell.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. Proverbs 1:7

How Big is God?

*“So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”
Romans 8:8*

Stars. Millions and millions of stars. Just how far away is the limit of the Universe? My mind can't get a grip on how enormous our planet is, never mind the size of the Universe.

So, just how big is God? And somebody, please explain to me the term “All-Powerful.” Kind of scary, isn't it? All our minds are able to visualize is a picture of God as a very, very big person. We are not able to grasp what God really is. As the Apostle Paul put it, “We look through a glass darkly....” We get enough of a glimpse of reality to know that it is true but never enough to fully comprehend it. We have to take it by Faith.

If God is really that big and omniscient (another incomprehensible word), then how do we measure our little lives here on Earth? Isn't it dumb to get caught up in all the hurry and scurry of our lives and forget that He not only inhabits reality - He is reality?

Like a fish that is surrounded by water and cannot comprehend what it is like to be on dry land, we are immersed in this life. The physical reality of this life covers us like water covers a fish. God is something we think about ... when we can. “Yes, He's there, but I'm busy right now, and I'll get to Him in just a minute.”

But, oh! To be able to walk in the Spirit of God all the time! To be able to be completely consumed with His presence all day long! Wow. Is there anything more important?

Let's face it, folks, we want to go to Heaven when we die. I don't want to end up in a burning Hell just because I was too dumb to pay attention. If we have a choice between being in the flesh or being in the Spirit, I want to choose the latter. How does one do that?

Simple. Read, pray, and fast. "Oh, c'mon", you say, "it couldn't possibly be that simple!" My answer to that is, "Prove me wrong."

The Word of God is not just some textbook to study, so you will know all the answers to the test on the Day of Judgment. It's food. You eat it. You absorb it into your soul. It becomes part of you. It gives you Faith. If you don't eat it, guess what? You starve to death.

Prayer isn't a handy-dandy telephone to call in emergencies or some psychological release spoken into the wind to soothe your troubled mind. It's communion with the One who created you out of the dirt of the ground and blew His breath into you to make you a living soul. It pulls you into His Spirit, and it brings you to a deeper level with Him.

The deeper you get into God's Spirit, the deeper you plunge into God's Word. The deeper you get into God's Word, the more Faith you absorb. The more Faith you have, the deeper your prayer life becomes. And so on. Get the picture?

But we are always besieged by our flesh, which is constantly pulling us away from the Spirit of God. Fasting crucifies the dominance of your flesh and allows you to surrender to the leading of the Spirit of God. Where do you get the power to overcome your flesh so you can dive into some deep, meaningful fasts? You guessed it, reading and prayer.

Maybe you think it's no big deal. You figure you're OK. You believe in God. You're cool with "the Man upstairs." You ain't that bad. You're just a regular guy. Well, let me give you a clue: regular guys end up in Hell. They never sought to get past the reality of this life to walk in the Spirit of God. They just figured they were OK.

That was the difference between Saul and David. Both were kings of Israel; both were anointed by the same prophet; both knew the Truth. But one worshipped God with all his heart, and the other was an example of religious tradition.

The choice is yours, my friend. And yes, you do have to make a choice. You don't get to Heaven through osmosis. You have to stretch out by Faith, reach through the blood-washed portal that was opened for you on the Cross, and grab onto the hem of His garment. What you will be gripping is the very substance of Faith. It is what will pull you through that Door and into the Spirit of God.

Gideon's Heritage

"And Gideon said unto him, Oh my lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?" Judges 6:13

Yeah, I know how you feel, Gideon. What happened? Where did everybody go?

Our land, at one time, was filled with powerful men of God who were warriors for the Truth. Now we have to be satisfied with toothless wimps who are afraid to bring their congregations under conviction and to sacrifice their lives to a crucified walk in the Spirit. They can't preach the Fear of the Lord because that takes a power that they don't possess.

Generations ago, Holy Ghost revivals cropped up all over the place because hearts were cut with repentance and were broken for lost souls. Their cries stormed the Throne of God, and He answered with the power and anointing of the Holy Ghost. Nowadays, we call for a revival by sticking a lighted sign out in front of our church and hope that someone shows up.

How exciting! I get tingly all over just thinking about it!

Not too many generations ago, altar calls were for lost souls, and they packed them nightly. The oil of Salvation flowed and flowed. Souls were saved, families healed, and the very fabric of a nation was changed. Today, our altar calls have become pity lines for the same people who couldn't overcome their same sins last week. And because there is no strength coming from the weak messages their pastors are feeding them, then you

can bet that they'll be there next week also. But we do believe in hugs, now don't we? Let's just hug 'em to Death.

Maybe you haven't been paying attention, but most common folks out there do not believe in the power of God. They don't think Salvation is anything supernatural because they haven't seen it. They got the idea from your church that Salvation is just a little poem you repeat at the altar and a little dunk in the pool. They don't believe that God really heals the sick. If they did, they'd be crying out to God for deliverance. Neither do they have any desire to darken the door of your church because they don't want to be like you.

Do you know what else they don't believe? They don't believe in Hell. Do you know why? Because you never told them. And if you did, they haven't seen the proof of it in our "Christian" walks. Nice people, nice church, but not much else in the way of excitement. If Christians REALLY believed in Hell, you'd think we would get a rise out of some of them, but they're just flat. Kind of like Coke without the fizz.

Satan's most effective method for destruction is to infiltrate the land and slowly destroy the sustenance of the field. Just like the Midianites did to Israel in Gideon's time. Israel fell into oppression because of their apostasy. Where were the great deliverances and mighty victories of God that they had heard about? Where were the mighty men of God that had once stood up against the enemy? Where was that spirit of war that had once fired up their souls to stand in the battle?

Gone, Gideon. Just like today. Wisps of faded memories of victories that were paid for with a price that

we are no longer willing to pay.

But Gideon threshed his wheat beside the Winepress of God, and that's where the deliverance came. There are many out there that, although little in the eyes of the world, are mighty men and women of valor in the eyes of God. They, too, are threshing the Bread of Life in secret besides that Winepress of prayer where the Spirit of God is trodden out.

There will come an outpouring of the Holy Ghost that has not been seen, but the church of Gideon that will rise to that challenge will be like the army in the Book of Joel. Few in number, but ferocious for the kingdom of God.

But then, that's always the way that God does it, isn't it?

Almost Persuaded

"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian..." Acts 26:28

I am always struck by King Agrippa's silence as he sat intently listening to Paul's defense in a Roman court. Even when the Roman governor burst out that Paul must be crazy to believe in the rising from the dead, he remained silent, intent, listening.

King Agrippa knew. He knew the prophets had foretold of the Messiah and that it had been noised abroad that this Jesus had fulfilled all those prophecies. He knew of the stories of all the miracles that had been done and how multitudes had been electrified at the preaching of Jesus Christ. Lives had been changed, the diseased had been healed, and even the dead had been raised. These things were not done in a corner.

He also knew of the Sanhedrin's corruption and greed that had incited this man's crucifixion. But then, that was a fulfillment of prophecy also, wasn't it? And then there were those reports of Jesus Christ rising from the dead and ascending into the heavens.

So, he listened silently and intently as Paul unfolded the Gospel. He knew Paul was not a mad man. He was too lucid, too bold, too sure of himself. There was something to this Gospel message that laid a finger on him and touched his soul. He was almost persuaded.

What held him back? Agrippa was no fool. He knew that if he accepted the Gospel, he would have to surrender everything he had. No more palace, riches, pomp, and splendor. He would have to decide between

the glories of this world and the cross of Jesus Christ. He was almost persuaded, but he was not willing to give it all up for the Truth.

Agrippa may be in Hell right now as you read this article, but he understood one thing that many who claim to be Christians today have not. He knew that there was a price that had to be paid to follow Jesus Christ.

Many today have turned the Gospel message around to just the opposite. We hear that Salvation is a way to receive blessings and glory, success and prosperity. We are encouraged to become a Christian because it is a good deal. God loves us and wants us to prosper and be rich.

God has a message for those of us who have become like the Laodiceans in chapter 3 of the Book of Revelations. We know the Truth but have become content in the fullness of our sufficiency. We are rich and have need of nothing. Our hearts are neither cut nor on fire. We're not affected by Holy Ghost conviction and therefore not given to brokenhearted repentance, a crucified walk in Christ, or the sufferings of the Body of Christ. We have settled into a lukewarm porridge. Not too cold; not too hot – just right.

That may be all right for Goldilocks and the Three Bears, but it's not all right with God. He would rather you were either hot or cold. If you are lukewarm, you will burn in Hell. There is no middle of the road, no comfortable place in-between, no compromise with the things of this world. God calls you to burn with a passion from the fire that comes off the Altar of God.

King Agrippa knew this, and he made his choice.

You will have to make yours also.

Are you almost persuaded? Do you know the Truth but have convinced yourself that it is OK to be a Laodicean Christian? Like Agrippa, is the price too high to pay for you to give up everything? Have you figured that somehow you will escape judgment simply because you have heard the Gospel? Have you yielded to the conviction of the Truth, or have the desires of your fleshly heart forged your path in life?

The path to the Kingdom of Heaven is narrow and hard, and few there be that find it. Don't allow yourself to go along with the crowds who have settled for that wide, easy path. It leads to destruction.

Don't be almost persuaded.

Reality

"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." 1 Corinthians 13:12

Life runs quickly. A puff of breath, and it's over. And at the end, as we look back, what have we given our energies and our heart to?

Joshua's command to stop the sun and moon in the valley of Ajalon has struck me as physical proof that this world we surround ourselves with is not real. We live in a temporal world that, although subject to physical laws, is ultimately under the command and direction of the whim of God. He made it, He directs it, and in the end, He will dissolve it.

As an old Holy Ghost preacher once put it for some non-believers, "God is not a figment of our imagination. We are a figment of His imagination." How true.

As Science delves more deeply into the world of Quantum Physics, the hand of God as the Creator becomes more and more evident. There is a point when you begin to wonder what is real and what is not. Certainly, our perceptions, constrained by physical limitations, are not the same as how God sees things.

So, what is real? Is it true that if we just had a little grain of mustard seed of Faith, we could really move mountains? Jesus said so. How can faith heal the sick, raise the dead, and convert the soul? There has to be something more to life than what we see with our eyes.

If this is true, then one of these days, when we will come to the end of our lives as we know it, we will look

back at a life that was immersed in a dream. And what, then, did we give our lives to? Did we invest our hearts and souls into something that wasn't real? Or did we look through the curtain of death to the reality that will last forever?

We joke that "You can't take anything with you when you die," but the truth is that you can - and you will. Your testimony will follow you forever. It will either haunt your soul in the eternities of Hell, or it will be the glory that gave you entrance to Heaven.

If we could just get a glimpse of reality as God sees it, how great our faith would be in God and how differently we would lead our lives. But we don't. Not yet. And yet, the encouragement from the Word of God presses us to believe Him, to trust Him, and to have faith. God is in control. Just believe.

Oh, if we could just get a grip on this! If we could just grab hold of the power of God that is available to him that believes, what great and mighty things we could accomplish for God! Just think, if Elijah was a man like us and he stopped the rain, if Joshua could stop the sun, if Jesus could walk on water, what great and mighty miracles we could do!

But it's not that way, is it? We walk by faith, not by sight. God wants to test our hearts first.

Someday we will look back and see Life for what it really was - just a dream. A tale that was told. But for now, He gives us something even greater:

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." 1st Corinthians 13:13

Peter's Wife

"And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them." Matt. 8:14,15

Think about it for a minute. Who was paying the bills while Peter was off running around the countryside following this new prophet from God?

Peter was a fisherman. It wasn't like they had a shop that his wife could take over while he was gone. He made his living out in a boat - not exactly a place for a woman to take over. I imagine she made do somehow, as all women do that find themselves in that situation. But she may have been a little less than thrilled about it.

I wonder if she shared the same enthusiasm that Peter had about this new messiah. She could hear the excitement in his voice and could see the light and the fire in Peter's eyes as he went on and on about Jesus and how wonderful it was to be in His presence. That was all fine and dandy, but it didn't put bread on the table. On top of that, she had her mother to take care of.

"How long, Peter, were you going to run off after this new avatar from God and forsake your responsibilities at home? Doesn't the Bible say that you're supposed to take care of your family first? What about us?"

Then came the day that Peter brought Jesus home. Was his wife hostile? Quietly bitter? Gritting her teeth in submission as she offered the required hospitality? Maybe she was just as excited as Peter. It doesn't really say. Mom was in the back room, sick and unable to help,

so it was all up to Peter's wife to greet these new friends of her husband.

And then Jesus touched her mother's hand.

Talk about excitement! Wow! I can just picture that old lady jumping up out of her bed that she had lain in for who knows how long. She wasn't just healed! She jumped up and started setting the table! You had one excited old lady! She had been touched by the hand of God.

Was this the miracle that Peter's wife needed? It's one thing to hear and even believe the Gospel. It's another thing to have your own personal revelation with God. As they say in Texas, "It's better felt, than telt." Now she knew. It had come home to her right where she was at. One simple touch made her know that this truly was the Son of God.

Every one of us needs our own personal revelation in God. There has to be that miracle in your life that opens up your heart and soul to the reality of the Truth. Once the hand of God has touched you, you will never be the same again. Until that happens in your life, however, you may be just following a program by rote. You know it, but you don't feel it. The passion has to come from His touch.

And what about Peter? The other disciples had no responsibilities tying them down as Peter had. While they could just get up and go, Peter had to drag along this weight of family responsibility that must have had an effect on him. He probably needed this even more than his wife did because Peter was about to embark on a path that would lead him around the world in a life of sacrifice. This one simple act set him free to go.

Have you felt the calling from God to drop your nets and follow Him? It isn't always as simple as it sounds, is it? There are so many things in life that stand in the way. And yet the Lord stands there in the path of your life, beckoning you to drop those nets anyway and to follow Him. No matter what the obstacles may be, the Lord is faithful to those who will take that step of faith to follow him.

Even if it means healing your mother-in-law.

The Winning Hand

You know, if the stakes weren't so high, Life would be just a great game to play – kind of like an evening out with the boys playing poker.

We all have our hands to play, and we're betting that we're going to be the one that wins the jackpot. We work our hands as best we can, and if we don't win, oh well, there's always another hand to play.

But Life isn't that way. This is the only hand you get, and you're not going to bluff your way through this one. You either win, or you lose. That's it.

Unlike poker, you choose your cards. You can pick any hand you'd like - there's one for every different belief that's out there. Many feel that it doesn't really matter that much which hand you pick, as long as you pick something. We're all in the game together, so nobody really loses - or is it that nobody really wins? Just play the odds and have fun. No big deal which hand you choose.

As I said, if the stakes weren't so high, it would all be just a great game. But the stakes don't get any higher. There's only one winning hand. You either win it all or lose it all, and there's no coming back tomorrow night to try your luck again. Better make sure that the hand you pick is the right one.

Unfortunately, everybody thinks that their cards will win, and they play them for all they're worth. Looks good enough to them, so they should probably be OK.

Maybe we should take some time, however, and take a good, long look at the cards we're holding and see

DALEN GARRIS

if they're the ones that the Rule Book says will win.

If we don't, then we're gambling our eternal souls on chance.

Substance of Hope

*“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for...”
Hebrews 11:1*

It has always struck me that just believing in God is not enough. You must have a desire for Truth. A lot of people believe in God, but that doesn't mean that they're all going to Heaven when they die. There has to be something in your heart and soul that hungers for that which is right and good.

The Bible says that the goodness of God leads you to repentance (Romans 2:4). It is that desire for righteousness in your heart that God uses to pull you to the point of Salvation. I guess it can be said that if you don't want it bad enough, you're not going to get it. You have to want it enough to allow faith to spring out from your heart.

When your heart hungers after Truth and righteousness, it opens the door to allow you to reach out to the Throne of God. What you will grab hold of is that faith in God that becomes the anchor of your soul and pulls you to Salvation. If that hope is not in your heart, you will not reach very far.

Of all Israel that crossed the Red Sea, not many crossed Jordan. It is written that they entered not in because of unbelief, and their bodies were left lying in the sands of Sinai. Oh, they knew all right, but there was something lacking in their hearts that kept them from faith. They were quick to worship golden calves but slow to have faith in God because that wasn't what their hearts really sought after. Their hearts lusted after the things of this world, and that's as far as they desired to

reach.

What is it that your soul longs for? Does your heart yearn for Truth? Is it the beauty of holiness that quickens your soul? Are you hungry for something more than what this world offers you, or are you content with what you have? There must be a hope in your heart that God is really there and can deliver you from the darkness you are in and bring you to a land of light and truth. That's the kind of hope that will find its substance in faith.

Some do; some don't. Some will; some won't. But if you come to that place in your life where you feel hope rising in your heart for the things of God, don't let it die with unbelief. Have faith in God. He really is there and is waiting for those who have a love for Truth and are willing to overcome all things to reach the Throne of God.

There's an old saying, "You get what you pay for." I would add to that, "You get what you hope for."

Empty Tomb

“And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher.” Luke 24:2

It was Sunday. The darkness of grief weighed heavily on these women who had come to fulfill the traditions of the Law by anointing His body with spices. Things hadn't gone the way they had all hoped and expected. Jesus was dead, crucified on a pack of lies by the greed of a corrupt priesthood. But He was still their Lord.

And now this. His body wasn't even there. Someone had opened the tomb that had held him, and He was gone. They couldn't even fulfill the rest of the old Jewish traditions dictated by religious law.

They were met at the opening of the tomb by two shining white angels, “Why seek ye the living among the dead?” The great stone of the Old Law, written on tablets of stone, had been rolled away. There is no longer a need for the traditions of the Law. He is not there. He has risen!

It is interesting that, although he was crucified and buried on the feast of Passover, he rose again on the feast of the Firstfruits, which was a Sunday, the morrow after the Sabbath (Leviticus 23:11). Jesus was the firstfruits unto God, and He ushered in a new covenant of fruits acceptable unto God.

No longer was our faith to be based on a blind adherence to the Torah, as some Christians maintain, but now, in the newness of faith, we can expect to have a new life based on a new living covenant with God. The old one has passed away.

Even the appointed feasts point to the importance of what I call the 8th day of the week – the morrow after, the day of new beginning, the day of the resurrection into new life. Not only is the feast of Firstfruits to be held on Sunday, but so is Pentecost, both very symbolic to Christianity and the new harvest of the Lord.

Let's not get confused. Passover, the death of the Lamb, was very important to the Israelites, but for our Salvation to have power, the blood that was shed on Passover had to be applied to the real Altar in Heaven. That was not possible until Jesus had risen from the dead.

Remember when Jesus told Mary not to touch him because he had not yet ascended to His Father, but a few days later, he told Thomas to reach forth his hand and touch him? Something happened in between those two times -- the Blood had been applied to the Altar in Heaven.

Why seek ye the living among the dead? Our faith is not based on the Old Law; it is based on the resurrection power of God that happened on that Sunday, the Feast of the Firstfruits. It is our faith in a risen, resurrected Savior that saves our souls. A Torah-based faith only calls us back to a covenant based on death and nullifies the Blood of Jesus Christ.

While many try to call us back to a covenant that died on the Cross, they are merely using the same arguments and scare tactics as those who opposed the Apostle Paul on the issue of Circumcision. The Bible says that a scorner seeks wisdom and finds it not, but knowledge is easy to him that understands (Proverbs 14:6). Instead of seeking the Knowledge of Good and

Evil with our carnal minds in a vain attempt to enhance the Gospel, perhaps we should instead yield to the Spirit of the Lord to reveal the hidden truths of His great Plan. You can either rely upon the ego of your carnal mind or surrender to the Spirit of God for wisdom.

The stone of the Old Law has been rolled away. The Word of God in the flesh died and has been resurrected as the Word of God in the Spirit, bringing us into a New Covenant.

You won't find the answers to Life in the Tomb. He has risen. He is not there.

Power

I believe in a Gospel of power.

1st John 5:8 tells us that the Word and the Spirit agree in one. If you have one without the other, you don't have the Truth. And you won't have that power.

An intelligent Gospel may sound very convincing. It may give one an exalted feeling of pride in the knowledge he has accumulated, along with the feeling that he is just a little bit better than others because he has the "inside scoop." It's one of the lusts that go along with the Tree of Knowledge. Without the Spirit, however, that knowledge is death. You may think you've discovered some new thing, but it's the same old story. It's a trick of the devil that he has used since the Garden of Eden - the pride of life.

You see, wisdom isn't knowing a bunch of "stuff," whether it is New World Order conspiracies, Torah-based faith doctrines, or new revelations to enhance the Word of God. True wisdom is to walk in the depths of the fear of God. Who cares how much you think you know? Without the power of God, you're just a rambling bunch of nonsense - or, as it is written in the Book of Colossians, "philosophy and vain deceit."

On the other hand, I see many that have turned the worship of God into an emotional circus. Affected voices, jumping up and down, and making a show of "feeling the Spirit" will not accomplish any more than it did for the priests of Baal at Elijah's fiery sacrifice. You can get so supernatural with your head in the clouds that your feet are no longer planted on the solid rock of the

Word of God.

Is it any wonder that unsaved souls look at this and think this one is crazy and the other one is nuts?

The Word of God must be anointed with the Spirit of God in order to give life. A Gospel that is delivered in the power of the Holy Ghost rips through the veil of the reality of this world and touches your soul like nothing else. You can't fake it. It has to be real enough to feel. Jesus said the Spirit was like the wind - you can't see it, but you can feel it. Phonies can't see it, con artists can't imitate it, and educated fools can't understand it. But, oh boy, they sure try!

Only men of God who are anointed by the Holy Ghost can deliver such a Gospel of power. The price is high for such a calling. They've had to walk valleys so deep that they couldn't see with their eyes. They've had to be completely broken inside until they were emptied out of themselves. They've had to face their own death so that the only Life that was in them was of God. And they've had to partake of the sufferings of the Body of Christ so that their only victory was the Cross. There are no 90-day wonders with God.

Not many are willing to pay that kind of price, especially in these days of groomed, sophisticated, and processed preachers. I guess that's why they call it the Old-Fashioned Gospel. But that is the only Gospel that has real Life.

Jesus warned us that seducing spirits would abound in these days and that many would be deceived. These "new" doctrines may look good, sound good, and smell good, but that doesn't make them the Truth. Test the spirits and find an old-fashioned Holy Ghost preacher

DALEN GARRIS

that is anointed with power. That's the witness of truth.

The Spirit and the Word agree, and when they don't, it's the wrong spirit and the wrong Word.

Paths

There are times in our Christian lives when we are presented with so many different paths to take that we don't know which is the right way. Although they all claim to be the truth, they all lead in different directions. They can't all be right.

The common line that you hear is that they (and they alone, of course) are based on the real Word of God. "*We just preach the Bible!*" Ever heard that one? Yeah, I'll bet you have. All you really want to do is to be right with God, and you're willing to do whatever God wants you to do, but Lord, which way is the right way to follow?

Well, here are a few guidelines to consider:

1) Stick to the basics. You can't go wrong with the basics. If it was good enough for all the saints that have gone on before us, it's good enough for you. The more complicated and intelligent a doctrine gets, the more likely it is to go off-track. Eve fell for that old satanic trick that if she ate off the Tree of Knowledge, it would make her wise. It didn't.

2) The Gospel is simple -- simple enough for a child to understand. Yes, the Bible is incredible in its depth and perfection, but it is the simple preaching of the Cross that saves souls. The object of the game is to get to Heaven, not get a degree.

3) There's nothing new under the sun. When you start hearing about some "new" thing, you can be sure that it's not new - it's just the same old trick of the Devil. It may be some "new revelation" or a "new discovery" that has been overlooked all these thousands of years.

Yeah, right. Heard that one before.

Satan will sell you anything that will get you to swerve from the Truth, but the Bible warns you that if anyone, even an angel, preaches any other Gospel than what you have received, let him be accursed (Galatians 1:8). If it is good enough to save your soul, then stick with what works.

4) Don't get overly supernatural. Yes, the real power of God can overwhelm you when God pours it out on you, but you can't fake it, but don't get so supernatural with your head in the clouds that your feet are no longer planted on the solid rock of the Word of God.

A real outpouring of the Holy Ghost is always accompanied by two distinct things: Christians yielding to deep, broken-hearted repentance and sinners getting saved, not "enlightened." Only God can accomplish those two things.

5) The Gospel must be anointed with the power of the Holy Spirit. The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. It is the power of God that is invested in the Blood of Jesus Christ that saves souls. A church or a preacher that is lifeless will not give you life. If it looks dead, and it sounds dead, and it feels dead, well, it probably is dead. The Gospel must be delivered in the Spirit in order to touch your soul, and that's where the life-changing takes place.

6) There are no 90-day wonders with God. Only men of God who are anointed by the Holy Ghost can deliver a Gospel of power. The price is high for such a calling. They've had to walk valleys so deep and dark that they couldn't see with their eyes. Their own will had to be so completely broken that they were completely

emptied of self. They've had to face their own death so that the only Life that was left in them was the Lord. And they've had to partake of the sufferings of the Body of Christ so that their only victory was the Cross. There are not many around, but if you can find an old-fashioned Holy Ghost preacher that is anointed with that kind of power, you will find that witness of the truth.

Jesus warned us that seducing spirits would abound in these days and that many would be deceived. Many "new" doctrines may look good, sound good, and smell good, but that doesn't make them the Truth. Test the spirits and make sure they line up with the Word of God before you commit your eternal soul to something just because it sounds good.

Remember that the Spirit and the Word agree, and when they don't, it's the wrong spirit, the wrong Word, and the wrong path to take.

Concerns

There are some things that really concern me.

Most of us worry about a lot of the same things. There are always clouds hanging over us about finances, our jobs, paying the bills, and providing for our children's education. Then there's the worry of war and what that will bring. And our kids - will they grow up, right? Will they be safe? We could fill the page up with all the things that we are concerned about.

But I worry about other things.

I see that we are heading toward the fulfillment of dark prophecies that were written for the last days. I suppose most or all of us have had plenty of exposure to them. We are flooded with books and movies about end-time prophecies. Seminars, meetings, talk shows, websites, and everything else you can imagine find this as a popular topic. We've heard all about it. The range of viewpoints runs the whole spectrum. Some of these things we believe, some we dismiss, and some we wonder about.

That's not what worries me. Whatever is going to happen is going to happen. What we do and how we react will be dictated by the events that are thrust upon us. We can talk, shout, cry, pray, and vote, but Biblical prophecy is like a great millstone that keeps on turning. You won't stop it.

What worries me is that there are many of us that will be taken unawares. I worry that many will be so enamored with the flow of events that they will take their focus off the reality that the only thing that matters

is our salvation and how we stand with God.

If it is true that today's headlines are bringing us to Armageddon, then time is short. Could it be that within a very few short years, it will be all over? Will the span of human history, as we know it, finish right before our eyes? And if that is so, will it matter that we know all about conspiracy theories, political intrigues, and survival techniques? Will college, wealth, or a successful career matter in the end?

Church may seem like a safe place to find refuge, but if you read closely, the Bible doesn't say a lot of good things about the religious landscape in the last days. Religion can't save you. And I'm not talking about dicker over points of doctrine for doctrine's sake. It's a matter of focus. It's a heart condition with God. It's a matter of your personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Are you really saved – I mean REALLY saved? Are you walking in the Spirit of God, or do you just believe that you must be saved simply because that's what you believe? Is He real in your life, or is he just a fish on your bumper? Is your life completely transformed to the point that you're nothing but a stranger in this world, or is He just a hobby you enjoy on Sunday?

You have to ask yourself these questions. You have to be sure. The destiny of your eternal soul depends on your answers. You may not have a lot of time to come to a great defining point in your life. It could all end for you in a heartbeat, and then what good will all those things do for you that you spent your life pursuing? And which tomorrow are you spending your time getting ready for?

There are a lot of people out there who have not been

saved. They may know that these are the last days, but will they be caught unawares by the cold, hard reality of its finality?

What about you? Have you grasped the fact that life could soon be over? If you knew for sure that there were only a few short years left, how would you lead your life? Are you getting ready for what is about to come, or are you brushing up on your political end-time theories, so you'll be "in the know" when it does?

It's about to get really bad really soon. There's only one place you will find safety - smothered deep in the bleeding side of the Lord. You'd better start reading and praying like your life depended on it. You will need all the spiritual strength you can get in order to stand.

In the end, nothing else will matter.

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Psalm 91:1

Pilate

What is Truth?

Why is it that Pilate did not recognize the Truth when it was standing right before him?

It wasn't because he was exceptionally stupid. After all, he was governor of the whole province. He didn't get to that position on good looks. He just didn't recognize what Truth really was.

How many of us look at Life the same way? Jesus Christ is presented to us, but we don't recognize the reality of what He really means.

Sure, Jesus Christ is God, but does that really make a difference? Once we acknowledge that, does it really change anything in the way we lead our lives?

I see life as a very temporary thing – a means to an end, so to speak. Now that I know that God is really there and his Word is the truth, nothing else matters. Everything is secondary and subject to that one great truth.

I'm excited that there is something more to life than what I see around me. I want more, and admittedly, I have become a fanatic about it.

Now, not everybody is so taken by the excitement of being a Christian. It seems most folks just take it in stride. Shift gears and keep on going. But I not only shifted gears, I changed direction.

I would imagine that many think that that kind of intensity is fine for me but that it's not required for everyone else. But I look up into the heavens and wonder why they don't seem to get it. When you have

the Truth standing right before your face, then everything else is just an illusion that will pass.

If this life is real, then I'm just another nut. If I am right, then why waste life pursuing something that is not real?

The issue that comes up is where God draws the line. Once He has presented the Truth to you, what are you going to do with it? Will you forsake all and follow the Lord Jesus Christ, or will you simply adjust your life to acknowledge it and keep on truckin'?

I would propose to you that if you don't become completely transformed and step out of the reality of this world into the spiritual reality of submitting yourself to God, then you are simply making the same decision that Pilate made.

He sent Jesus to the Cross even though he knew who Jesus was, and he died a raving lunatic trying to wash the blood off his hands.

"So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." Revelations 3:16

Led of the Spirit

Every once in a while, I wonder if there is anything else to say, any new tale to tell, or any new message to preach that hasn't already been heard. There are times that I dig down deep in my bag of things and find nothing there. If the Lord doesn't give it to me, then I have nothing to give others.

I find myself in that situation every week. Every Sunday morning, I walk into the radio station armed with little more than faith in God. But I always walk out, having had the Spirit of the Lord deliver a message that even I didn't know was coming.

Every weekend, I look for a column to write, but I have to wait until I get it from Him first and then let it flow out from my fingers. My own efforts always sound so stupid when they are written down. So much for my writing abilities!

I wouldn't have it any other way. The importance of allowing yourself to be led by the Spirit of God cannot be overstated. The eternal souls of men, women, and children hang in the balance, and mistakes can be fatal.

In order to be led by the Holy Spirit, you must overcome your own self and get control of your own spirit. As long as there is a struggle within you, then God can't lead. Your spirit has to be broken just like a wild horse in order to allow the Master to ride. The hard part is that it is you that has to be the one to break your own spirit.

The Bible says that the spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet. If it is not, you can turn things into a

circus event, and instead of winning souls, you throw them. Don't think for a moment that you won't stand accountable before God.

But once you have allowed God to have control, anything is possible. It will be His words, not yours, that touch people's hearts. It will be His Spirit that they will feel when you speak, not yours. You will be led in directions you would have never thought of and will be led to things you would have never dreamt of.

But to let God have His way, you have to deny yourself.

It takes a certain confidence and faith in God to believe that He really will lead you if you let Him. There are times when you have to close your eyes, hold your breath, and step out into what seems to be darkness just because you felt Him leading you in that direction. I don't care if you're King Kong; that can be scary at times. But you just have to know that He really is in control. He's God. That's what He does for a living.

The results can be fantastic, even though sometimes you never get to know what He is doing. But know this, a real man of God does not rely upon his intellect to show him the way. Neither does he depend upon his own talents to allow God to do something wonderful. And he doesn't prepare his own messages; he opens his mouth and lets God fill it.

He just has to yield.

A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps. Proverbs 16:9

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Romans 8:14

Signs of Bad Weather

And in the morning, It will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? Matthew 16:3

Why is it so hard to convince people of the Truth? Ever wonder about that?

It's not as if the Gospel is complicated or hard to understand. It's just that it doesn't seem to get people's attention. Sure, a lot of people believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, so I guess that means they believe that the Gospel is the truth, but that doesn't make them believers. There's a pretty far spread between those that say and those that do.

I guess most folks figure that as long as they make some kind of a profession of belief and show up at church, they'll be just fine. I reckon that if that's all they're interested in, then that's all they'll get, but it's pretty clearly written that there is more to being saved than just saying so. For some reason, that just doesn't seem to sink in. Succinctly put, if you are not burnin' hot and on-fire now, you will be later on when you wind up in Hell.

Well, that's not what a lot of people want to hear. You see, they've got a bunch of other things on their plate, and, excuse me, but they're just a little bit busy right now. Can you come back later?

Well, I'm not some telemarketer with a new deal for a free credit card. If you don't want the Truth, that's fine. I'm not looking for someone who's not looking. I'm looking for those who are looking. People who aren't

looking for the Truth don't want to be convinced no matter how hard you try. The Lord will have to deal with them first to bring them to the point of conviction.

Now, I'm not talking about those who have never heard the Truth explained to them. They definitely need to be told. I'm talking about people who profess to believe the Gospel but, for some reason, have never been able to come to a point of understanding.

Here's a good example: Halloween. How many professing Christians out there will send their children around all dressed up to celebrate Satan's High Holiday? Think it's harmless? You wouldn't if you understood the nature of the fierce spiritual war that we are in the midst of and that there's no middle ground in this war. You are going to be on one side or the other.

The enemy's chief weapon is what is considered "harmless" seduction. Satan presents himself as an angel of light to tell you the same lie he told Eve - "Thou shalt not surely die." She believed him. (And this woman knew God about as well as anyone who has lived.) She didn't get it, did she? She never understood what was at stake. Neither do many parents who send their kids out for some "harmless" Halloween fun.

And there's my question. Why is it that people choose to believe a lie rather than the Truth? They can see the signs of the times; they can see the truth of the Bible; they can even repeat it backward, but they will choose to believe what they want to believe, period. If your heart is not seeking the Lord, you will choose your own brand of truth.

The Bible says that the natural man, someone that is not in the Spirit of the Lord, cannot receive the things of

God. It's foolishness to him (1 Corinthians 2:14). The Bible says, on the other hand, that those who seek the Lord understand all things. There's a difference here, and it has to do with the Spirit of the Lord.

The Gospel is not just another philosophy about life. It is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). In order for it to be an effective witness to the Truth, the Spirit and the Word must agree in one (1 John 5:8). A Gospel that is without the anointed power of the Spirit of God is dead, but a Gospel that is delivered in the power of the Holy Ghost is life and truth. You can feel the difference.

Perhaps if our churches would return to the roots that once forged them in the fires of revival, then people would see that difference.

Ah, but then there's the rub, isn't it? It all starts with the Christians who are supposed to understand. For us to present a Gospel with power that is a real alternative to a "harmless" Halloween, the people of God have to cry out to God for revival. It is up to them to pray for God to move on people's hearts to make them hungry for the Truth and not to be satisfied with "church as usual." When the Church is on fire, the difference will be evident. When it is not, people will not be able to discern what the Truth really is.

What's that I see over there on the horizon? Is that a cloud? Hmmm. You know, it looks like it's going to rain.

And What Shall This Man Do?

“...Lord, and what shall this man do?” John 21:21

A little jealous there, Peter? Just a little? What does it matter where your brother John would go, what the Lord would have for him to do, or what kind of a price he would have to pay for the Kingdom of God’s sake?

Peter had just been given a commission and a glimpse at what he would go through. What higher calling could there be than to feed the sheep of God? What a tremendous responsibility had just been dropped on him!

Here they were, a dozen guys who had come out of nowhere, and it was given to them to carry the Gospel, the only Truth there is, to the entire world. They had walked with the Master for a few short years, and the Lord had commissioned them to the greatest calling of all time.

“Feed my sheep.” Wow. From a dumb fisherman to someone with this incredible responsibility! But there is always a price to pay for that kind of calling, and Peter was told in no uncertain terms what that price would be like. But what an honor to be chosen by God himself to shoulder this calling!

But, Lord, what about this guy over here? Does he get to scoop up all the easy stuff and still get to be so close to you? How does that work? Surely, if I have to step up into this great commission and pay the price that will be required of me, then I must be called to a stronger, more powerful ministry than him.

Wrong, Peter. First of all, you have no idea what

price your brother John will have to pay. You may find out that you got off easy in comparison to what John the Revelator would be called upon to suffer for the Kingdom of God. You'll be cruisin' in Heaven when he's dropped off on an island of despair.

Second, what difference does it really make? So what if you get the fuzzy end of the lollipop? Does it really matter? The ultimate objective is not what your position in God is or how you rank in the army. The ultimate objective is the salvation of those souls out there who do not know God.

If you're that concerned with what your place in God is, then forget it. You don't have one. But if you're more concerned with others and what their place in God is, then don't worry. You've got one that is far greater than the one you were expecting ... or even cared about.

It's not about you - never was, never will be. It's about others. Jesus Christ was Charity incarnate. Charity, correctly defined, is the giving of oneself out of love to see souls get saved. Everything you do, everything you aspire to, and all your efforts in this life should fit into that description. If it does, then you won't care what someone else's walk in God is.

We are all pieces on God's chessboard, and He is the Grand ChessMaster. The goal is to win the game.

"...and the greatest of these is charity." (1 Corinthians 13)

Unified Religions

I am increasingly concerned about the movement toward a unified religion. I wonder how many others are aware of how much this persuasion is encroaching upon us.

I cling to our American heritage of the freedom to worship after the dictates of each person's heart, but that does not mean I believe in compromising my beliefs. And I would assume that someone with a different viewpoint would also cling to what they believe is right. I can argue, expound, and preach under the anointing of the Holy Ghost, but, in the end, everyone must make their own decision for Eternity.

I see another tactic at work, however, which is cause for alarm. It's another one of those old tricks of the Devil that is designed to catch unsuspecting souls off guard. Instead of winning the argument by confrontation, Satan's idea is to win his opponents over through subtlety.

It starts with compromise.

This may be great for political statesmanship, but any military general will tell you that you never win a war through compromise -- and make no mistake, we are at war. Compromise only leads to a weakening of your position and an undermining of your values.

To "live and let live" is one thing, but when the ultimate objective is to absorb your beliefs into a more universal belief system, then it has the exact same effect as a total defeat. Either there is one Truth, or there is not. If there is no Truth, then nothing matters anyway. If

there is no Judgment, then there are no consequences, so why bother? You can do whatever feels good

But if there is an overriding absolute Truth, and you are persuaded to accept other forms of "truth" as also having a certain validity, then you have betrayed the very tenets that you profess to believe in.

Now some may object by pointing out that many religious differences are only a matter of perspective. While that may sound good, let me remind you that God is neither confused nor uncertain. And while methods may change, principles do not.

So how does Satan get around this? By persuading you that it is good to accept everyone else's beliefs and that it is bad to be judgmental. "Accent the things we have in common and minimize our differences." Slowly but surely, we will be moved into a universal way of thinking. It will begin with a common Christianity and move toward accepting other religions. Soon, it will be that as long as you believe in some kind of God, any God, you're OK, even "enlightened." This leads to a form of universal humanistic religion.

That will set the stage for a One-World Church. When we get to that point, then the old-fashioned Christians will be considered renegades and troublemakers. Then it will only be a short step to being hated of all men for His name's sake (Matthew 10:22). Quite a slide from those first steps of détente!

A good place for Satan to start is by taking the sharp edge off God's Word. Since it is the primary weapon in spiritual warfare, it must be weakened and mollified to fit a more indistinct theology. I've got news for you. He's been on that tactic for 100 years by slowly moving

us into new translations that are based, not on the original Received Text, but on another stream of Gnostic texts that originated elsewhere. It has been a slow transition, but the cookie crumbs have left a distinct trail to Satan's sleazy fingertips.

Does it really matter, or is this just another tempest in a teapot? Is this diversion to a homogenized religion really that slick, or is it should we all put away our differences to "love one another"?

There is much more to the Gospel of Jesus Christ than a Howdy Dowdy wooden grin mouthing out the words, "Jesus Loves You." The Word of God doesn't really give any place to diversions from the Truth - not even one word, jot, or tittle (Matthew 5:18). Either the Bible is the absolute Truth, or there is no Truth upon the face of the Earth.

How do I say this? I believe in the unity of the Body of Christ, but that does not necessarily mean the unity of the churches. I can respect your beliefs, no matter how different from my own, but to say that we should all come together in love is nothing more than a thinly disguised deception designed to move us to a one-world church. That is the ultimate deception that the Bible says will be cast upon the whole Earth in the last days (Revelations 3:10).

If you believe something, then make a stand for it. Don't compromise your stand just because someone is trying to place a guilt trip on you for being narrow-minded.

How does the song go? "If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything."

DALEN GARRIS

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. (Jude 1:3)

Opinions

“And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”
1Corinthians 2:4,5

Opinions, opinions. The world is full of opinions. It's the one thing that everybody has and is not only willing but anxious to share with everybody else.

How completely opposite to the way God wants us to be. We want to lean on our own understanding; God wants us to acknowledge him. We want to know everything; God wants us to walk by faith. We want a grip on what is happening around us; God wants us to learn how to trust Him.

It's a continual struggle between our ways and God's ways. Our flesh does not want to be denied (or worse, crucified), but to submit to the leading of God's Spirit, that is what has to happen. Only one can be in control –God or you. It sounds like an easy choice to make, but it's not. It requires bringing your flesh, your ego, your lusts, and the way you want things to be under complete control. And keep them there.

This is a struggle that had its first battle and its first loss in the Garden of Eden and has continued until today. Eve saw a tree that was desired to make her wise. Wrong kind of wisdom, though. What she got was carnal wisdom, fleshly intelligence, and knowledge. It's great for your career but not for your soul.

Well, what seems to be the problem with having some “smarts” and being able to figure things out?

Doesn't God want us to know and understand the mysteries of Life?

Yeah, He does, but our brains are made out of the dirt of the ground like the rest of our flesh. If God leaves it up to us to figure everything out, we will end up all over the spectrum of wild, screaming heretics, all puffed up over the power and glory of their minds. A classic case of Humanism at work.

The principle God wants us to learn is to lean upon Him, trust His wisdom, and let Him reveal His Truth to us as we are ready to receive it.

The immediate rebuttal, of course, would be that God says in His Word that He wants us to study to show ourselves approved. Yeah, study His Word and let Him reveal its hidden truths to you. Don't get hung up in some theological dissertation or some genealogical debate that leads nowhere.

Well, you may ask, how does one know when it is the Spirit of the Lord teaching you and not some fleshly intelligence? Good question. There is a simple answer - let God reveal it to you.

Out of all the belief systems, religions, and theories in this world, the Gospel of Jesus Christ stands alone by virtue of the one thing that not only separates it from the rest but also validates it - the Spirit of God. Nothing else can boast of the power of God.

There is power in the Word of God when it is delivered and received in the Spirit. That's an important distinction. It has to be delivered and received in the Spirit otherwise, as Paul says, "the letter killeth" (2 Corinthians 3:6). In other words, it is just text on paper

if you are not in the Spirit of the Lord yourself.

It is such an important distinction that the Lord warns us that all three - the Father, the Word, and the Spirit - must agree (1 John 5:8). If you've got one and not the others, you're dead in the water.

When you ignore that warning and attempt to plow ahead on your own, you may end up self-satisfied that you "figured it out," but you'll be basing your faith on carnal ground - a dangerous place to be.

Is it a small wonder that there are so many different theories out there about the Bible? How many times have you heard some new take on end-time prophecy and what is *really* going to happen in the last days? It's that same carnal lust at work - everyone wants to get "the inside scoop." We want to rush to get that "new" revelation. We want to know some "new" thing. It's a tree desired to make one wise.

My advice? Stick to the basics. You can't go wrong with the basics. Be concerned with what the Lord considers the "weightier matters of the law" - judgment, mercy, and faith (Matthew 23:23) -- and let the Lord reveal the rest of the stuff to you.

*"And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."
Job 28:28*

Let's Trade Places

"And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." Luke 16:2

Sometimes life is just not a lot of fun. Do you think you've got it pretty bad right now? Maybe you got an eviction notice. Maybe you got laid off from work. Maybe you found out you or someone close to you has a dreaded illness. Maybe your kids, who have heard the gospel all their lives, have gone off the deep end.

So, while you are musing on all your troubles, praying, and doing some serious soul searching, I would like to share a simple but profound one-liner that someone shared with me a few days ago:

"Anybody in Hell would gladly trade places with you."

All the problems you have would seem like a piece of cake compared to what they are going through. Being alive and on earth means we have hope for a better tomorrow. Being in hell today means being in Hell forever with endless tomorrows of torment.

When it is put to you like that, it makes all the heartache of today easier to bear. I'm not trying to minimize the trials that each of us goes through. Through these trials, the Lord wants us to grow and mature in His Spirit, but it sure puts things in a new perspective when we think about somebody in Hell being given the chance to take on all our problems and being ecstatic to do it.

Well, ever since that day, I have been more thankful for everything—the good, the bad, and the ugly. I

certainly don't like some of the things I have gone through over the years, but looking back on those times now, was it really that bad? And even if it was, would I gladly trade places with somebody in Hell to get out of whatever "hell" I am going through on earth?

"I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." Psalm 27: 13-14

Two Paths

“And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:2

There are two different paths to modern Christianity. Although there seems to be a very blurred distinction between the two, they actually lead in two different directions. The path that we, as individuals, choose to follow is usually the one that our hearts lead us into.

On the surface, it is difficult to see that the differences are very great, but at the very root of their basic premises, they are complete opposites.

The path that most American Christianity follows has some very fuzzy edges. It is a broad path that has plenty of room for slight inconsistencies in viewpoints, different perspectives, and variances of doctrine. However, they all generally lead in the same direction and are based on the same premise, so the edges do not scrape too harshly against one another. Besides, we are constantly exhorted to be broadminded and not to be too judgmental about others. We are told, after all, that we can't keep the commandments of God anyway, so how can we be critical of others who believe differently than ourselves?

This particular path flows easily toward a general belief that we have a right to prosperity on the basis of sheer faith, a disannulment of sin by virtue of belief, and a grace that speaks of undeserved mercy instead of the power of God to overcome sin. The main objective is peace, love, and blessings.

That, however, is not the root premise that underlies

that path. It lies more along the quest for a reward without price, a Cross without suffering, and an easy way to get around a conviction for sin. We do not want to face our own death. Anything that would stand as an obstacle to that premise is immediately rejected as something that is wrong, judgmental, and opposed to the modern gospel's definition of love. The object is to redefine the Cross of Jesus Christ as a terrible price that God had to pay, but because He paid that price, we don't have to. It's like getting a "Get Out of Jail Free" card.

On the surface, it might appear to be absolutely correct, but does that give us free license now to expect that we can now escape all that the suffering of the Cross entails?

The other path, however, has quite a different focus. Instead of looking at the Cross as an opportunity for entitlements, it stands as an inspiration to follow a path of dedication and suffering for the salvation of lost souls. The object is not to escape suffering or to obtain a place of comfort, blessings, prosperity, and ease for ourselves, but to be willing to stand in a place of sacrifice to hold forth the Truth regardless of the price. The prize that we run for is not one for our own gratification but one for victory in the face of all adversity.

One looks to get; the other looks to give. One looks for ease; the other faces sacrifice. One looks at the Cross as a free pass; the other looks at the Cross as a price to pay and a cause to fight for.

Human nature will always choose the easy way out, but God asks us to deny ourselves and choose that strait and narrow path that leads to a crucified walk in Him. He asks us to pick up our cross, not our crown, and

follow Him. Few there be that choose that path (Matthew 7:14).

There is a price to pay to make that decision and to hold up a Torch in a dark world that hates Light.

As Robert Frost once said,

"I shall be telling this with a sigh somewhere ages and ages hence: Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -- I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference."

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Matthew 16:24

Favorite Pastimes

I am amused by the predominance of political thought in America. It's our favorite pastime – that and money - - the two ugly stepsisters of American society.

If you want to show yourself wise these days, all you have to do is voice an opinion about either politics or how to get wealth and write a book about it. Then jump on the lecture bandwagon, and off you go. We can't seem to get enough of either one of them, so your success is almost guaranteed.

In the arena of political battle, you don't even have to worry about what to talk about– there's always something to holler about, and no matter what position you take, there will be plenty of people who will agree with you. When they don't agree with you, it's even better. Then you've really got an audience. It is, after all, everyone's favorite subject ... next to money, that is.

Yeah, that pursuit of wealth is a real winner. Everyone wants to get rich. We've been bottle-fed from birth about the American ideal of the righteousness of wealth and success. There seem to be no social barriers to that elixir. The poor are constantly looking for ways to beat the system, the rich look for ways to cheat the system, and the middle class is stuck in the middle, trying to figure out a way to get into the system. What a splendid game!

While so many of us are running in circles, whether it be chasing the next political soapbox or the next self-help program, do we ever consider how any of these fit into the grand scheme of Life?

Of course, there is a ready answer to that. The trick is to incorporate it into our Christian beliefs, and then it all becomes validated, even righteous.

The political pundits will tell you that they are doing all this in the name of God. God is a Republican, didn't you know? Or was that Libertarian? Or perhaps He's taken on a new liberal slant and become a Democrat. And since God isn't registered to vote, well, we have to do our best to promote His political agenda. It's all very satisfying to know that He is on our side. Jesus for President!

The Success crowd, on the other hand, is quick to tell you that God really wants you to be wealthy. Haven't you heard? "Broke people can't help broke people!" We're supposed to have the "blessings of Abraham." Funny, I thought the blessing of Abraham was Jesus Christ. I guess that means that the Bible is supposed to be a Self-Help book. "Get saved and get rich!" What a deal!

All the while, there are men and women standing on the sidelines pointing to the Cross. Well yeah, we have to acknowledge them, but they're just religious guys who are a little out of touch with life. This is absolutely true. They're in touch with another life—one that will never find accolades in this life because it doesn't appeal to the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and, of course, the big one, the pride of life.

So, we relegate those guys to a secondary status, reserved for Sunday when we have to stop for a day before we dive into the fray again on Monday. Great guys, but they just aren't playing our tune. They aren't quite as cool and sexy as the heroes we've chosen to

follow out there in the “real” world, but we do have to acknowledge them because ... because ... well, I guess because we’re supposed to. So, we show up at church and bob our heads up and down while we’re checking our watches for the magic hour of 12 o’clock when we rush out to beat the Baptists to the steak house.

Maybe the fault lies in our preachers because we don’t feel the power of God in our services anymore. Certainly, there’s a definite lack of men of power and authority in God these days. Or maybe it’s just that fact that we’re a product of our glassy-eyed society. Hey, it’s not our fault. Maybe we can just blame our mothers. Whatever our excuses may be, they may be great to live by, but I’m not so sure I’d want to die by them. What good will they do us 10,000 years from now?

Tell me something, friend, if you knew that Armageddon was right around the corner and that you would soon see Jesus Christ split the skies, standing there with a rod of iron in His hand to execute wrath and judgment on this world, how would that affect your priorities today? What if you knew that this was the last year that you would be alive? Would it be so important to be politically correct then? Would it matter what level of success you had attained? Would you care what anybody thought of you then?

Maybe those guys standing on the sidelines have it right after all. They may not account for all that much in society’s eyes, but maybe God thinks that they are the real heroes.

“But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?” Luke 20:12

Lord of Rings

When I had just come from seeing the movie, Lord of the Rings, I was impressed with the themes that seemed to come straight out of Biblical end-time prophesy. Perhaps that is the reason why these movies have made such an impression on people - they are the great universal themes of the last days' conflict.

Like Hobbits, most people are living out normal lives without a suspicion of the swelling power and ambition of the forces of Darkness. Life is good, and yes, they've heard rumors of dark things moving in distant lands, but it hasn't really affected their lives yet. Even if they knew and could understand, the rumblings from over the horizon are too vague and distant to worry them. So, life goes on as usual.

But it is coming -- probably sooner rather than later. And when it comes, it will break out upon our lives with horrible fury. Will you be prepared for it when it comes, or as a snare, will it take you unawares? Knowledge is not wisdom. Just knowing that these things are coming is not enough to give you the strength to withstand the onslaught. Wisdom entails a realization that moves you in the fear of God to prepare.

Do you realize that events will soon take place from which a quarter and then a third of the world will die? (Revelations 6:8 and 9:15). The old prophet said that there would be many dead bodies in every place. They would carry them forth in silence (Amos 8:3). Can you get a picture of the deep, solemn silence in that ancient prophesy? That is a chilling statement, but it will soon

be more than just words on paper. It will be a living reality.

While modern Christianity slumbers with dreams of blessings, peace, and prosperity fed to them by our TV prophets, the Satanic drumbeats of darkness continue to roll in the distance. We're told that, although these things are coming, we will be insulated from them somehow because we go to church. As a result, we are encouraged to let down our guard and just "love Jesus."

Doesn't that just sound so wonderful? How nice to think that, even though the entire history of real Christianity is one of conflict, persecution, and the Cross, we will somehow be raptured out of it all. Perhaps we're just better than everybody else, or maybe God loves us just a little bit more to spare us from the terrible times to come. How nice.

So, don't worry. Hakuna Matata! Just relax and be raptured. Jesus loves you.

I am struck by the scripture that tells us that the days will come when they will kill us, thinking that they are doing God service (John 16:2). While that may be a clear picture of persecution in the last days, I also see a picture of those who preach a watered-down message of peace and blessing that destroys your resolve to prepare yourself for battle. They may think they are doing God service by feeding us Pabulum, but it is nothing more than homogenized swill that will ultimately lead to spiritual death.

There are those, however, who have heard the call to battle and have realized that the only refuge is, not in prophets of peace and safety but in meeting the enemy headlong in spiritual warfare. Their safety is found deep

in the Spirit of the Lord while warfare is waged in bloody battles on their knees before God in deep prevailing prayer. It takes warriors to win victories. Those who ignore the call will find that they will lack the spiritual armor to withstand the subtle persuasions of darkness and will end up falling in battle. Yes, even the very elect (Matthew 24:24).

There is no glory in war – only in victory. And victory does not come without its price. War is coming, my friends. Like Hobbits, we may think we will be able to scurry into little holes for safety, but the fury of the storm will overshadow the land from one end of the earth to the other. When the Lord says to “Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain,” will you answer the call?

Prepare yourself for battle, for surely it is coming.

About the Author

Dalen Garris has been in ministry since 1970 during the Jesus Movement in California. In 1997, he began a radio broadcast that ultimately spread to dozens of countries, including Israel and Saudi Arabia. His program, *Fire in the Hole*, was selected for broadcast four times a week across North America on the Sky Angel network as the Voice of Jerusalem.

A newspaper column followed, for which he has written over 700 articles, which were published in local 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 16 years, he has preached in over 1,000 churches and has seen hundreds of churches set on fire and explode with growth. Hundreds of people have been supernaturally healed, and tens of thousands 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

DALEN GARRIS

church or organization, please contact us for times and schedules.

Books by Dalen Garris:

Available at: www.Revivalfre.org/books

Four Steps to Revival

Do You Have Eternal Security?

Standing in the Gap

Two Covenants

Fire in the Hole

Revival Campaigns

The Kenya Diaries

A Trumpet in Nigeria

A Scent of Rain

Into the Heart of Darkness

Fire and Rain

Revival Campaigns in Africa – 2019

The Battle for Nigeria

A Light in the Bush

A Match in Dry Grass

Planting a Seed in Liberia

A Whisper in the Wind

Talking With the Women, by Cindy

A Voice in the Wilderness series:

- vol. 1, The Journey Begins
- vol. 2, the Early Years
- vol. 3, Prophet Rising
- vol. 4, Revival in the Wings
- vol. 5, Sound of an Abundance of Rain
- vol. 6, Watchman, What of the Night?
- vol. 7, Mud and Heroes
- vol. 8, Ashes in the Morning
- vol. 9, Shaking the Olive Tree
- vol. 10, Winds of Change
- vol. 11, A Final Call
- vol. 12, Superficial Shells

Booklets

Available at: www.Revivalfire.org/booklets/

- A Volcano in Cape Verde
Tanzania, 2011
- Nigeria, 2012
- Calvinism Critiqued
- When is the Rapture?

DALEN GARRIS

RevivalFire Ministries

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

