

The background of the cover is a photograph of a desert landscape. In the center, a large, jagged rock formation, possibly Shiprock, stands prominently. The rock is illuminated from the side, creating strong highlights and deep shadows. The sky is filled with heavy, grey clouds, suggesting an overcast or stormy day. The foreground is a flat, arid plain with sparse, low-lying vegetation.

**A Voice  
in the Wilderness**

Volume 3

**Prophet Rising**

**Dalen Garris**

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# **A Voice in the Wilderness**

## ***Prophet Rising***

Articles from 2003

By Dr. Dalen Garris

DALEN GARRIS

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

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*“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.”*

*Isaiah 58:1*

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## Introduction

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

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

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

As the Church began its long decent from the '60's to today, those who followed this new, easier gospel of grace and blessing grew to become the new normal. They were now the mainstream church and the old-time gospel of the fear of God, holiness, and righteousness, and of a crucified walk of the Cross became out of date and too critical. That which had been good was not considered evil, and that which had been evil, was now considered good. Times had changed, but not the message. The voice was crying in a greater wilderness than ever.

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

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



## Rusty

Rusty died a few days ago from cancer.

I remember 20 years ago when Rusty had been first saved and filled with the Spirit of God. He was so excited to have found God that he turned into a ball of fire! But then, as things go, he slid away and ended up, in his words, watching TV, drinking beer, and taking care of his dogs.

He thanked God for the cancer.

Oftentimes we have to be brought to a point where we face our own mortality before we realize what real life is. It's like being snapped out of a hypnotic trance.

Life in this world is mesmerizing. The horrible specter of Hell and Death are for others. It doesn't seem to be something that will happen to us – not now, not today. Maybe later when we are more prepared for it. We smother the stark reality of Eternity with our daily lives, but we are closer than we think.

Have you ever had a loaded gun pointed in your face? Gone is all the bravado of the cool tough response that you thought you would have. Your only focus is on the twitch of that trigger finger. There is a very sharp outline to the face of Death that will wake you out of the slumber of life with acidic suddenness.

A blind person has to rely on other senses to navigate through life. Since they are blind, they must focus on what they can't see. That's the way it is in the spiritual realm. We have to look past the things of this world to be led by the Spirit of God. If we don't, then we are blind to reality.

Didn't Jesus tell the Pharisees that because they thought they could see, they were blind? They were looking at the wrong things to lead them to Eternal Life.

Perhaps we tend to look at the wrong things. It is human nature to focus on what we see, but what would it take to snap us out of our natural slumber?

For Rusty, it was cancer. It was the wake-up call that brought him closer to God than he had ever been before. For others, it might be something just as dramatic.

I believe that if we would just crucify ourselves to this life and break our own spirits to seek the face of the Lord during the good times, perhaps we wouldn't have to face trauma to open our eyes.

As I'm writing this article this morning, Rusty is in a place that he's only dreamed of, and he can see like he's never seen before. That, my friends, is the mercy of God.

## Walmart Prayer

My wife hates the big discount stores like Walmart and Kmart. They are too big; too much stuff. She gets lost in crowds. But there sure is a lot of women that just love all the stuff! Aisles and aisles of stuff. Sure, you lose that personal touch that you get at the local Mom and Pop store, but the convenience is great.

Prayer is lot like that.

I am not a fan of these prayer request shopping lists. You know, the ones that have a long list of people that have dozens of needs from people all over the place. A list of one-liners, no matter how serious, does not give me that feeling of personal urgency. It may be urgent for them (and I certainly do not want to minimize their need), but it's hard for me to feel the same sense of drive for a hundred different people every day. I'm not God. I'm sure He can do it, but I'm having a hard time keeping up.

Because we have an active website on the Net, we get a lot of prayer requests from people all over the world, and I sincerely try to pray for as many of them as I can. But sometimes, I just get overwhelmed and try to slide by with a blanket form of, "Lord, you know what their requests are. Can you just cover them all for me?"

I don't know if that works or not, but sometimes I wonder what really does work. Do all our prayer requests go up into some huge database in the sky to get logged in, and then compiled into some report that God reviews for content and quality? How does He decide which ones to act upon? How do you get your prayers answered?

Is it a matter of repeating a prayer a certain number of times until it registers? If that's the case, maybe we could just sit down looking out the window while a tape player repeats a recorded loop a certain specified number of times until the magic number is reached. Uh, I don't think so.

Maybe it's a matter of getting a certain number of people praying at the same time. Surely, God will pay attention if the number of signatures on the petition reaches critical mass. Or maybe it is a matter of finding the right guy that God pays attention to. If He won't listen to Charley, maybe He'll listen to Gladys. I don't think that counts either. Either He hears you, or He doesn't.

I'm sure there's something to be said for the effort to ask huge numbers of people to pray for something, and there's certainly a lot of charity to be considered with the folks that forward on long lists that are all-inclusive, but I just get lost somewhere in the crowd. I want something personal; something special; something that will drive me to labor in prayer to reach the Throne of God and fight until I have my answer.

He is a personal Savior. I want a personal relationship with Him, and I want a personal answer to my prayers. I want to know that if I bust my way into the Throne room of God, He will stop what He is doing, turn to me and hold out that golden scepter. I have rights to the Throne through the Blood of Jesus Christ, and I have the holy boldness to use them. I will not be denied.

To reach that level, you have to mean business in prayer. The need has to be felt on a personal level that will drive you to get past your flesh and contend for an answer. Elijah, the Bible says, was a man just like us, but wow, he knew how to prevail in prayer!

If Elijah could stop the rain, if Joshua could stop the sun, if the Apostles could heal multitudes and raise the dead, then surely, we can get an answer to our prayers if we follow their same example. Somehow, dropping your one-liner on the bottom of some lengthy petition seems more like trying to jump onto a bandwagon in someone else's parade.

Leonard Ravenhill said something that I have never forgotten. "God doesn't hear prayer. He hears *desperate* prayer!" If you aren't cut to the heart, how do you expect your prayers to get past the ceiling?

I guess these forwarded prayer lists are OK, but don't let them lull you into a presumption that dilutes the potency of your need. Walmart is great for finding a discount item that you need, but when I have to have an answer in prayer, I don't want to wait in the checkout line.

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## Church on Saturday

*“Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?” John 9:16*

Did you think this dispute was settled 2,000 years ago? Think again. We are still going through this debate. Many Christians sense that this modern-day reactionary movement back to a “Torah-based faith” is pretty much the same challenge of legalism that was seen with the Pharisees.

The question boils down to which leading do we follow? The analytical musings of a theological mind, or the leading of the Spirit of God? Displays of carnal wisdom and education may impress the uninitiated, but the Lord says they are vain (Titus 3:9). Our best efforts fall way short of what God requires of us.

There is something more than facts, theological dissertations, and carnal analysis at work here. You don't figure out faith, and you don't get it by listening to somebody else's ideas. You empower it through the anointed Word of God and deep, sincere prayer.

Even miracles don't increase faith. They may wow the crowd, but it doesn't instill a desire to seek the face of God. Jesus did a lot of miracles, but when he turned to the multitude that followed him over the sea of Galilee, he told them that they followed him because they ate of the bread, not because they saw the miracles. They turned away, but Peter answered that he knew Jesus was the Christ because He had the words of eternal life.

It is the anointing of the Spirit of God that gives us faith, that feeds us, that directs us into all wisdom, and that keeps us in the Truth – nothing else. The Spirit and the Word agree in one. If you can't feel the anointing of the Holy Ghost, then guess what, something's missing!

Guess what else? It is the most important thing that is missing, because the Word without the Spirit is Death. "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth Life." (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 3:6)

On the other hand, if the Spirit of God is moving somewhere, but it doesn't fit into your idea of how things are supposed to be, then it doesn't take much to figure out that you got something wrong.

I've been told by some Sabbatarians that I'm going to Hell because I don't go to church on Saturday. Well, my answer to them is that I'm sticking with the Spirit of God. If God is going to go to Hell for going to church on Sunday, then I'll take my chances and go with Him. I figure He'll get me out.

Don't let anyone put you on a guilt-trip just because you don't wear a yamaka. Spelling God's name without a vowel doesn't make you holy. (How do you pronounce "G\_d" anyway?) Going back to an old covenant that has been done away with is, as the Apostle Paul said, just another attempt of flesh to establish its own righteousness, and not submit to the righteousness of God (Rom. 10:3) That was the mistake that the Pharisees made, and it cost them their eternal souls.

Reliance upon a carnal theology nullifies the Blood of Christ. Jesus died to set us free to walk in the Spirit of God and serve Him in newness of the Spirit, not in the oldness of the letter. We attain to the righteousness of God by walking in His Spirit, not by our own works of righteousness. Yea, we establish the law.

Go where the Spirit of God is moving. Stay away from dead works and dead churches.

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



## Trouble

*“Oh, there’s Trouble! Right Here in River City!” (Music Man)*

One of the most wonderful tools in God’s hands is Trouble. It is the most effective instrument that He has to bring us unto him – and boy, does He know how to use it!

Throughout the Scriptures, we are exhorted that we will have trouble. “Man is born unto trouble...” (Job 5:7) It’s through much tribulation (that’s heavy-duty trouble) that we enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). But God also tells us that the sufferings of this world are not to be compared to the glory of the next (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 4:17).

Yeah, we got trouble, but it is actually the mercy of God. Sure, it’s a little tough to “rejoice in tribulation” (Rom. 5:3). Nobody likes trouble, but look at what it gets you – patience, experience, hope, and the love of God that is spread abroad in our hearts.

Those are not the gifts that a kid likes to see under the Christmas tree. It’s not fun to go through all the stuff that trouble brings just to get patience or experience. It sounds more like you’re just getting set up for some more trouble so you can handle it better.

Oh, but if all the experience of this world of affliction is merely considered light in comparison to the glory that shall follow, then I guess we got a bargain. It's just that Payday has been deferred for a little while.

This is the tool that God uses to correct us and deepen us, but the most important objective is to bring us to prayer and trust – two things that He absolutely requires. If Life was all about being happy, having prosperity, and nothing but mountaintop experiences, we would never feel the need to cry out to God. We would never realize how much we need Him, and as a result, we would start thinking that we can do things without Him. The soul that realizes that only through Jesus Christ is it able to do anything at all, is a soul that realizes that everything, good and bad, is in His capable hands, and He will work out all things to His glory. And that's what is important.

The soul that does not trust God is one that is more concerned about its own self rather than others. It is not an overwhelming burden that many people are on their way to Hell forever and ever. At least not enough to encourage him to make whatever sacrifices that are necessary to bring the power of the Gospel to full bloom. An untrusting, complaining soul is one that is selfish. And that is a lock on the door to glory.

Jesus never preached a “prosperity, feel-good” message. He preached the Cross. It was there that the ultimate sacrifice was made, and the ultimate trust was placed in the hands of God. And it is there that the ultimate Christian is made.

Yeah, we got trouble. But praise God for the trouble. It is what makes us like Him.

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## Salt is Good

*“Salt is good, but if the salt has lost his savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?” Luke 14:34*

I hear from an increasing amount of people around the country who tell me that they cannot seem to find a church that they are satisfied with. Why is that?

Surely there is no lack of churches in America. Christianity is more commonplace than McDonald's. And yet there is a growing division between the satisfied and the unsatisfied.

It could be said that many of these people are looking for something that they will never find – a perfect church. If it was just a small splinter group of people that were complaining, I might be inclined to consider that point, but the problem seems to be growing. And it is not coming from just one section of the country or one type of people, but from everywhere.

Something is missing. People are hungry and are not getting fed. Our churches seem to have all the elements of traditional Christianity there, so what is it that they are not finding?

As churches grow, they usually become more involved in the social lives of their congregation. But there's something more to the Christian experience that must be there, and when it is not, you end up with hungry souls that are stuffed with activities that will not satisfy their deepest needs.

What is it that I look for in a church? What is it that makes the difference? The answer is simple: it is the Spirit of God. When it is there, you have life; when it is missing, things are just dead.

Now, I'm sure everyone that has two eyes and a mouth will say that their church has the Spirit of God, but if that's so, why are so many people left hungry? And why are the altars empty?

If the salt doesn't have any flavor in it, then you can eat all you want, but it won't flavor your food. It's useless. If a church has a comprehensive list of activities, but the power of God is not flowing, then it is merely just another religion – and religion won't save your soul.

If you're still hungry after the sermon, maybe it's not a matter that you are too hard to please. Maybe there's just no salt on the food you're getting served.

If you can't remember what the message was about five minutes after you've passed through the church doorway, then maybe there wasn't one.

If you didn't feel the electrifying Spirit of God moving, well, maybe that's because it wasn't.

If souls are not getting saved at your church every week, maybe it is because the Spirit of God is not drawing them. The litmus test of Christianity is winning souls.

Perhaps the answer lies in the Word of God. Doesn't Amos say that there would be a famine in the last days for hearing the true Word of God (Amos 8:11)? Doesn't Isaiah say that the days would come when the vintage would fail (Isaiah 32:10)? Joel says that people will be groaning for pasture in the last days and not be able to find it (Joel 1:18). What about some of the other prophets, and even the Epistles? Aren't these same warnings echoed throughout the Scriptures?

I believe that we are in a time right now when the Lord is testing the Church to see who, after attending the feast, is still hungry for Living Waters from which they will never thirst again (John 4:14).

## Lamentations for Modern Christianity

*“How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people!”  
(Lamentations 1:1)*

I can't help reading the Book of Lamentations without thinking of the modern-day Church. I see us fitting right in with the people of God back then.

As you may know, I am not very high on our church-based Christianity today. Our “feel-good” ministries don't make me feel good, our prosperity ministers are robbing us spiritually, our “peace and love” preachers are bringing us neither peace nor the love of God, and our educated, analytical Christian Intelligencia haven't figured out what real wisdom is. Scheesh! What a mess!

I see the same thing in the pages of Jeremiah. The Jews back then fell prey to the very same deceptions. Rather than listen to the old prophet of God, who obviously had a bad attitude and wasn't a very nice guy, they chose to heap to themselves prophets of peace and safety. Certainly, there were enough of them to choose from, and I'm sure they gave them plenty of offerings and donations (pretty much paying for their own delusions), while ol' Jeremiah got dropped down in a well. If you tell the Christians of today what they want to hear, they'll send you money, too. Just don't preach a message of repentance, of judgment, and the Fear of the Lord, because then you'll be labeled a judgmental legalist.

The Jews in those days trusted that they were the people of God in the City of God, and that their walls would protect them from their enemy, Babylon. Today, we trust in the walls of our religions to save us from the modern day Babylon, but walls alone will not save you if you are not established in both the righteousness and in the Spirit of God. That kind of wishful thinking is based on presumption, not faith. The enemy broke through the walls of Jerusalem in those days, just like he will in this generation, and Christianity will get carried away to a modern-day Babylon, the One-World church.



Jeremiah sat broken-hearted in the ruins of what was once the most wonderful place in the world, because of its refusal to hearken to the Word of God. Everything was gone, destroyed, broken, and in its place was sorrow and despair, captivity, and affliction...and little hope.

Will that happen to us in this day and age? No one wants to think so. It is natural to refuse the warnings and look to prophets that will prophesy peace and prosperity unto us, but that is the very thing that has destroyed the people of God, both then and now. We choose the flesh over the Cross. To do that, we have to reject the prophets that call us to repentance, (after all, what do we have to repent of? We're all saved, aren't we?), and find preachers that will tell us what we want to hear, ("...speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits." Isaiah 30:10). Thus, we end up cutting off our only avenue of escape from the judgment that will surely come.

Will it happen to us just like it did to them? Yes, it will. We're living right in the middle of it, but most of us can't see it. Babylon is right outside the gates, while we're glued to our favorite "Christian" broadcasting network with their entertaining preachers, smiling faces, and snake-oil salesmen. Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. And all the while, the Word of God cries out of spiritual famine, a great falling away, and apostasy to a church that no longer recognizes the personality of God nor the voice of the Lord. We jump up and down, wave our hands in the air, and shout ourselves into emotional highs, but our ancestors from just a few generations ago would be aghast at our phony mimicry of what once was the real thing. We talk the talk, but we don't walk the walk.

Time is short. Soon, a coming war will set off a series of events that will turn the Earth into a worldwide graveyard. When that happens, the one-world powers will clamp down on all civil and religious liberties – in the name of peace and security, of course – and you will not be allowed to make a stand for the Truth. People will either be swept away with the great delusion that will carry the church away to a one-world religion, or be hunted down as intolerant, religious fanatics and terrorists. Daniel 11:33 gives the Christians who have the courage to make a stand in those dark times four choices: sword, flame, captivity, or spoil. Count 'em and take your pick.

That may not be a very pretty scenario, but Jeremiah didn't have much of a selection to choose from either. The point is, you do have a choice: either you will end up falling for the delusion that God says he will send and end up getting carried away to Babylon, or you will hearken to the warnings of judgment set against our churches today and end up like Jeremiah -- sitting in the ashes of destruction, weeping for a church that would not repent.

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## The Fellowship

*“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;” Philippians 3:9*

Picture yourself in a war-torn land; shadows and destruction all around you, bombed out dwellings in a desolate landscape. Even in daylight, it’s dark. Suspicion and danger lurk around every corner and the enemy is near. You don’t know whom you can really trust, and you’re not really sure that even the ones that you can trust won’t be turned by the enemy to ultimate betrayal.

But, thankfully, you belong to a Fellowship – not one that is out to destroy a Ring, but one that is dedicated to holding forth the Truth. The members of this Fellowship are not defined by prosperity and blessings, but by their commitment to the sufferings of the Cross. Your numbers are few because there aren’t very many that are willing to pay the price of that kind of deep sacrifice, but you know that you can trust the ones that are with your very life.

As the darkness descends, you find that the bonds that hold you together become stronger and stronger. You find that you are not only committed to the cause that binds you together, but also to one another.

It looks dark, but there is a point where integrity becomes more important than winning the battle. It's not a matter of whether or not you will win; it's a matter of determination that you will not give in to compromise just because it's easier that way. It's going to get worse before it gets better, but you are prepared to face your own death in defense of the cause, and so is the Fellowship. Your Captain has gone on this very same road before you, and you are willing to follow him all the way no matter what comes.

There are enticements everywhere that beckon to you to follow other groups that offer an easier way out. They proclaim that they have the same goals that you do, but you know better. It is just not the same. So, you cling tightly to the Fellowship even though your circle of light is becoming smaller and smaller. You can feel the power of darkness welling up around you, but you hang on. The end is near, and you are determined to go out in victory.

Makes for a great movie, doesn't it? But this isn't the description of some Warner Brothers set. This is the spiritual landscape of the last days. Those who are part of that Fellowship can sense it; those who are not seem oblivious to it.

It has been going on for 2,000 years, but the final culmination of this war is about to take place as you begin to look up. The final countdown has begun as the angel brings up to his lips that final trumpet. Your redemption draws nigh, and there is a scent of victory in the air.

*“He will swallow up Death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” Isaiah 25:9,10.*

## Frustration

*“And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”  
Jude 14,15*

Every time I read that passage, I can just feel the frustration that Enoch had, even way back then in the beginning. I guess there have always been those who have scoffed at the judgments of God, choosing rather to follow their own desires than live a life for God. Thankfully, there have also been men and women of God who have chosen to stand up for righteousness. It is an age-old battle.

I can just imagine old Enoch banging his head against the wall trying to make these scoffers realize what the Truth is and getting nothing in return for his troubles but mockery and persecution. After all, it was only seven generations removed from the Garden of Eden. How short was their attention span, anyway? Had they forgotten? Didn't they know? How could it be that they were turned so quickly from the ways of God? Ahhhhhgh! What is the matter with you guys?

But the old principle of human nature is that people are going to believe what they want to believe in spite of the facts. It's not a matter that they didn't know, or they hadn't heard. It's a matter of choice.

When man draws away from the Fear of God, he finds an innate ability to rationalize the reality around him to fit the imaginations of his heart. He is the most adaptable creature on the face of the Earth. He can create his own Truth and convince himself that it is true. It's a matter of where our hearts are.

But God always has His people who desire the real truth of God in spite of whatever the world around them offers. Their treasure is in Heaven, not in this life, and that's where their heart yearns to be.

The difference between the two is the same as what separates the sheep from the goats. As Proverbs puts it, "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it" (Prov. 9:12). In other words, you're going to reap what you've sown.

Friend, the Bible speaks of two eternal destinations that we will all face. The choice of where you are going to spend Eternity is made now, in this life. Most people will choose to follow their own ways, many thinking that just because they believe in God, that will be enough to make it into heaven. That's the greatest deception there is – to know what the Truth is, but never make a decision in your heart to pursue it. Hell is stuffed with nice people that had good intentions but never made the right choice.

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And all the while, the Enoch's of God are banging their heads against the wall, trying to make people wake up to the reality of Judgment and wondering why they can't seem to understand. Well, Enoch, the answer is that they don't really want to understand. They have chosen their own delusions.

Jesus Christ is coming back to this old earth very soon -- sooner than most people realize. He's not taking excuses, there's no Tardy slips, there are no second chances, and there's no going back to do it again. Once those skies split open, it will be over once and for all, and Judgment will be set.

Choose wisely.

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## The News

*"I read the news today, O boy..." Beatles song*

I'm ready to swear off the news again. I cancelled all my subscriptions, and I am ready to shove the TV back into the corner.

I once went for years without a TV or a regular newspaper. I always figured that, if things got bad enough, somebody would come and tell me. Nobody did. So, I'd sneak a look at the headlines now and again, because the suspense was just too much for me. It was like a heroin addiction.

Sure enough. Everything was still the same. The world was still turning, people were still mad at each other, movie stars were still having affairs, and the Texas Rangers still hadn't won the Pennant. It bums you out when you find out that you didn't miss anything.

Well, I started getting the paper again, and made sure that I sauntered into the Living Room just in time for the news as often as I could. I convinced myself that I was doing something important. "Sorry, Hon. I'll have to get to the dishes later. Gotta catch the news here." Yup. Real important stuff. I'm a better man for it, too – cultured, sophisticated, and informed. I got the inside scoop.

Everybody these days is a foreign affairs expert, and they all know exactly why they are right and why everybody else is wrong. You know why? Cause they saw it in the news! Momma said not to believe anything you hear, and only half of what you see, but she didn't say anything about the newspaper.

Sometimes it feels like I am watching a three-ring circus. Stuff is going on all over the place. People are swinging through the air, animals are roaring, performers are doing tricks, the parade is going around and around, and there are clowns all over the place. Very entertaining and well worth the money, but no real eternal significance

When it is all said and done, I sit and wonder what the point of it all is. Is it a matter of which political viewpoint is better, or whether the current war is justified or not? Who decides? And when do they make their final decision? Or is there never a final answer and we just go on and on forever? Makes you wonder if this is Hell.

When I stand back from the fray, it occurs to me that being right or wrong is not the real issue here. The Bible says a war is coming regardless. The real issue is whether or not we are prepared for what's coming when it does.

The Bible is chock full of references to a horrible war that is coming. When, where, and how doesn't matter. What matters is that, when it is over, a world order will take over which will not allow you to profess your Christian faith unless it falls under the auspices of a one-world Interfaith religion. The strength you will need to stand for your beliefs will not come from your knowledge of the events or the correctness of your assessment of the situation. It will only come from sowing deeply into the Spirit of God through reading His Word and deep prevailing prayer. Throw in some serious fasting with that because you're going to need it.

That's enough for me. Dump the papers in the trash and shut off the TV. Let me start seeking the face of the Lord instead and get ready for what's coming. In the meantime, if it gets too bad out there, somebody please come and tell me.

The Rangers probably won't win the Pennant this year anyway.

## Flight in Winter

*“And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter...”*  
*Mark 13:18*

Chilling words.

The suddenness and the ferocity of a trouble that will come upon those Christians who will be left standing in the last days will be worse than since the beginning of time (Mark 13:19). When you get warned to not even go back into the house to get your coat, that’s pretty scary. You better pray that it’s in summertime.

What could possibly prepare you for such a time? Consider how bad it will be –

- We will be hated of all men (Mark 13:13)
- The Antichrist will scatter the power of the holy people (Dan. 12:7)
- Many of us will face one of four ends: flame, captivity, sword, or spoil (Dan. 11:33)
- One third of the entire world will have been destroyed (Rev. 10:15)
- One fourth will die by the Pale Horse (Rev 6:8)
- Satan will be loosed upon the face of the Earth (Rev. 12:12)

Money won’t do you any good at a time like this. After all, Ezekiel says they’ll be casting their gold and silver in the streets (Eze. 7:19). No, you’ll have to take the Mark of the Beast to buy anything.

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Getting a cabin in the woods stocked with canned good, water, and ammunition will not do you any good. The slain of the earth will be from one end of the earth to the other. Desolation will cover the earth. There will not be anywhere to hide.

The bonds of friendships, societies, and yes, even families and churches will not do you any good. Mothers and fathers, sons and daughters will betray one another.

Shall I go on?

If you thought that you would escape all the trouble that is coming on the face of the Earth, you might be inclined to thank God for His mercy, and be confident that you can just relax because the Love of God will deliver you from all your troubles. No sweat. Ain't it great to be saved! Hakuna Matata! Just relax and be raptured.

Well, save a place up there for me, because I'm going to have to endure to the end – at least that's what is written (Matt. 24:13). You see, unless they kill me, I'm going to have to wait until Jesus Christ splits the skies open. After the stars fall, after the earth reels to and fro like a drunkard, after the Moon turns to blood – after Jesus Christ comes back in victory.

While others may be able to relax, it's going to get tougher and tougher for me. You don't have to worry about being deceived by false Christs and false prophets and that great delusion spoken about in Thessalonians – but I do.

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You don't have to worry about that hour of temptation written in Revelations that will come to try the whole earth. Shucks, you'll be long gone -- but I'll be here.

When the so-called Prosperity ministers and prophets of Peace are exposed for the frauds that they are, you won't have to worry. The Lord will hang them up to dry when tribulation starts crashing down. You'll be gone, but I'll be here.

When disease, pestilence, and famine devastate the world, and the only thing you will be able to trust in is the power of God to heal, you may be gone – but there are those who will be here to the end.

There's only one way to get prepared – read God's Word like a starving man, wring your heart out in prayer, and fast your guts out. Those who expect to stand in the days that are coming will have to have power in God like never before. Nothing else will be able to withstand the deception and temptation of the thick darkness that will descend. As I've said many times, you can't fight spiritual battles with carnal weapons. Just because you think you know something, or you believe in God's existence, or you figure you'll never give in because you're a regular good guy, that is not enough to give you the power to stand. Hell is stuffed with good intentioned people that didn't fear God enough to realize that they can only make it when they are standing in the depth of the Spirit of God – and that comes from seeking the face of God with all your heart. All of it.

I don't know about you, but I'm getting ready. I fully expect not only to be here, but I figure the Lord will require me to make a stand for the Truth in those dark times when men will have no light to turn to. Yeah, I'll be here, and I'll be ready because I know that it's not to those who try, but to those who overcome.

*"And they overcame him [Satan] by the Blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." Rev 12:11*



## Moriah

*“And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.” Genesis 22:2*

Consider this challenge to a man who had already received such incredible promises from God. Now, this God who had already promised so much to Abraham through his son, Isaac, was demanding something so contradictory that, if done, it would destroy that very same promise. This required much more than belief – it required trust.

Trudging along on the path to Moriah, the weight of what God required must have been heavy on him. God was asking Abraham to give up everything in this life that meant anything at all to him. God wanted it all. But after three days, Abraham lifted up his eyes ... and he saw the place afar off.

What did Abraham see? It must have been something that put that spring back into his step, because he immediately turned to the men that were with him and told them to wait there. He and Isaac would go yonder, and they both come again to them. Abraham knew Isaac was coming back.

Mount Moriah is the place where Jerusalem sits. It is the place where the Lord stayed the plague on David, and where David built an altar to the Lord. It is where Solomon built the Temple. There is also a hill there called Golgotha.

What did Abraham see? He saw Calvary. He lifted up his eyes and saw that place afar off where God would provide a lamb for the sacrifice for the sins of mankind. It wasn't distance that he saw afar off; it was time. Abraham saw the redemption of God. It wasn't Isaac who would die, but in his place, God would provide the Lamb to pay the price for sin, once and for all on that same lonely hill in Moriah.

But Abraham knew that he would have to go all the way to that place. He would have to be willing to surrender all that he valued in this life and take it to the Cross. Abraham had to trust God. And when he did, God, in his mercy, surrendered all that He had, His only Son, for man.

How many have been faced with this same test, only to turn away because they didn't trust God? He calls us all to that place afar off, to lay down our lives at the foot of that Cross and surrender it all unto Him. It is an enormous test, but when we yield completely, it is then that, as God said to Abraham, "Now I know that thou fearest God" (Gen. 22:12). It was there that the great covenant between God and man was established once and for all for all mankind. It is the same place that we all must come to so that we may enter into that covenant with God. Total subjection; total surrender; total humility ... and total trust. There are no shortcuts to that place. We have to go all the way to Golgotha, for it is there, and only there, that we find redemption.

Many may say that it is too hard, that God doesn't ask that much of us. They say that it is enough merely to believe in God, and we will be saved. But Abraham knew better. You see, God does not ask us to do anything that He hasn't already done for us. He gave it all. He expects the same from us.

To enter into that covenant of redemption, we have to go all the way to that place of sacrifice. It is there that Jehovah-Jireh provides the Lamb that was slain in our place.

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## Saved Hard

*“Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore’s forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed.” Jeremiah 3:3*

Strong words for a young man in a religious society that looked upon themselves as God’s chosen people. Not only that, this was right at the time of Josiah’s great revival. What audacity for Jeremiah to stand up to his elders like that! Especially at such a time when they had a righteous king who had found the Book of the Law and had brought Judah back to God. Didn’t Jeremiah realize that they had had the greatest Passover since the times of Joshua? Not only did Jeremiah have bad manners, but he was judgmental! Who did he think he was?

There was only one problem. It wasn’t Jeremiah’s words. It was God’s.

Having a church on every corner did not make their hearts right with God. Just because they thought they were saved did not mean God thought they were. And the proof was that as soon as Josiah died, they went right back to their old sinful ways. They never really bent their fleshly ways to seek the Lord and His righteousness, and, as a result, judgment fell on them. All the way up to when Babylon broke down the walls of Jerusalem, they still thought they were going to be saved because they

believed that they really were the people of God.

What separates a “good Christian person” from someone that is really right with God? Where does God draw the line? Apparently, it is not based on how we perceive ourselves. Rather, it is determined more along the line of what our hearts seek after.

A listener to our broadcasts called in yesterday and told me that although he had gotten saved as a young man, it was only the last few years that he, as he put it, was “saved hard”. Saved hard. That really tells it all. He wasn’t just saved; he was saved hard! His life was dramatically changed from the old traditional earmarks of a “good Christian”. What a difference!

The focus of his life had changed. He was no longer enamored with anything this world offered. His time wasn’t taken up with his career, his prosperity, his standing amongst the people of his community, or even what was on TV tonight. No, he was driven by a fire in his heart to seek the face of the Lord. The Bible was now his fascination and his time spent in prayer was what gave him that deep flowing river of Life.

There is a line that God draws, and it is not based on your church attendance. Christians are not made in the pews; they are made on their knees. The fire in their hearts is fueled by the pages of God’s Word and it focuses their entire attention on Him.

It's as easy to slap on a label of Christianity as it is to put a fish on your bumper, but there is a price that God requires of you to cross that line and be completely converted from this world into His.

Have the showers of revival been withheld from your church? Is the power of the Spirit of God missing in your life? Maybe God wants something more out of you than just a label.

God wants you to be "saved hard".

## The Ultimate Christian

There was a professional wrestler who used to be a customer of ours. He called himself the Ultimate Warrior. Nicest guy you'd ever want to know ... until he got in the ring. Then he was transformed to a level of extreme intensity. He became the ultimate warrior.

What about becoming the Ultimate Christian?

Many Christians want to serve the Lord – it's something that the Lord puts in us – but to take it to that level of intensity is something that runs deeper than standard B-flat Christianity. Not everybody wants to pay the price that would require. As a matter of fact, nobody does. But the Lord is faithful to bring us to a crucified place anyway.

But there are some Christians to whom the calling of the Lord is the most important thing in their life. Their heart's desire is to become completely lost in the Spirit of God and in the service of the Lord. Nothing else even comes close. Those are the people to whom the appeal of the Ultimate Christian calls.

When you think about it, what else matters? If your treasure is in Heaven, then that is where your heart will be also. Everything in this life is dull in comparison, so why invest the focus of our life in things that do not matter and which will ultimately dissolve? Why not strive to become an Ultimate Christian?

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Now, the picture you may have in your mind is the description in the Book of Ephesians of the Christian soldier – strong, courageous, bold, and full of power. When we think of powerful warriors of God, we see prophets standing on a mountaintop with the wind blowing through their hair and their arms outstretched calling down fire from Heaven. At least, that is the picture that appeals to us.

But that is not the Ultimate Christian.

To become someone who has boldness and authority and personal power in God sounds good to us, but that appeals more to our ego than what we would like to admit. In reality, the real powerhouses in God were meek and lowly before God. It wasn't their power that made them formidable: it was His. For God to take complete control, everything inside you that is you has to be broken, stripped down, humbled, and crucified.

I'm sorry. Did I fail to mention that? Yeah, it's exactly opposite from what we would like to envision. You don't become a big shot when you become an ultimate Christian. You become a little shot – a very little shot. So little, in fact, that you are no shot at all. It is not about you. It's all about others.



You see, to become the Ultimate Christian is to become like Jesus Christ. Sacrifice, humility, blood, and death is the way. The price you must pay is to give up yourself – all of yourself. And the goal you must strive for is Charity – the giving of yourself out of love to see souls get saved.

That, my friend, is the Ultimate Christian.

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

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## Until John

*“The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.” Luke 16:16*

I don't preach an intelligent Gospel. I always figured that if we had to rely on figuring out the Truth to get to Heaven, a whole lot of us dumb folks would end up burning in Hell. And from what I've seen of the real smart guys, I don't think they'd make it either. I reckon there's just got to be something more than intelligence that's important.

I suppose if I was going to have to rely on figuring it all out, then I'd be enamored with the preachers that spend all their time running on and on about the Old Law, a Torah-based faith, how this dispensation means this and that one means that, and how each symbol means something significant.

Then there's the crowd that loves to pull out their Greek Lexicons to tell you how certain words don't really mean what you think they mean but mean something else. They have raised linguistics to a whole new level. They can't speak the language, but they've got their study books to pull stuff from, and they talk as if they have a better understanding of the language than the ones who wrote it.

It's all real fascinating stuff. I can even see where it would almost be hypnotic. After all, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was a tree that was desired to make one wise (Gen. 3:6). The more you learn, the smarter you figure you've become. I reckon it makes you feel pretty good about yourself knowing all that "stuff", but you have to wonder what the point is. It didn't do much good for the Pharisees – then or now.

The Law and the Prophets were until John, but something happened after John's ministry. Something dramatic. Something that had nothing to do with the theological analysis, religious dissertations, and ramblings of spiritual gymnasts. It was something that had to do more with your heart than your head. We entered into a new Covenant through the Blood of Jesus Christ where the Spirit of God could enter right into our hearts and lead us into Truth. We could actually take on the very nature and mind of God.

That's what I want. I want to be like my Father in Heaven. I want to press into the Spirit of God, not into some theological doctrine. And I want to feel it, not analyze it. Jesus said the Spirit was like the wind, and just like the wind, you can't see it, but you sure can feel it. I want to feel the Holy Ghost leading me into all righteousness.

The Bible is not a textbook; it's the Bread of Life. It's not supposed to be figured out; it's supposed to be received. As a result, you will find that intelligence is not a factor in Faith. Rather it's a spiritual liability that keeps you from realizing how dumb you are. At least when you know you're stupid, you know you won't lean on your own understanding. When you're smart, however, you have a tendency not to realize how much you need God.

The trick is to devour that Bread of Life and allow God to do the life-changing work in you that your intelligence can never accomplish. Let Him reveal His Word to you through the Spirit, and He will teach you all things when you are ready to receive them. Don't try to jump the gun by lining up all your study books and figuring it all out. That's the Old Covenant way – a carnal way that leads to spiritual pride. If you do, you'll be ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (2Tim. 3:7). Just let God do it.

Seeking the face of the Lord has to be done with your heart. Prayer is not a recital; it's the crying out from the depths of your soul to a God that will only listen to the prayer of the heart. That's how you enter into that deep place of communion with Him and receive Life. Who cares how much "stuff" you know? I want to be buried deep in His Spirit, in that secret place of the Most High, and look back at this life through His eyes, not mine.

I'll figure the rest out later.

## Bottom Line

What's the bottom line of Christianity?

I've always maintained that there's more to Christianity than going to church. Church is nice. It's even good. And it's even important for us as believers, but is it the bottom line? What is it that we got saved for in the first place?

To me, a church is like a retail business. You can have a beautiful store with great merchandise and wonderful salespeople, but if it doesn't make a profit, it will go out of business. Well, we as Christians also have a product to sell. It's called Salvation. Our "profit" is the souls that are won. That's our bottom line.

Churches that are not winning souls will go out of business with God. Now, that's not to say that that is the only thing that churches are supposed to do, but it is the cornerstone of every church. The Bible refers to churches as the barns to bring the harvest into (Joel 1:17) – a place to bring in souls and raise them up in the Spirit of the Lord. Nurturing them, teaching them, and developing them into strong soul-winners is part of that process, but replanting the seed from that harvest is paramount to having another harvest. If the process of winning souls is not re-seeded, there will be nothing to nurture.

How is that process maintained? Only through the Spirit of the Lord. Now, I realize that is a short answer to a long question, but it is the filter through which all our efforts must go through. Custom video programs, church basket socials, and entertaining speakers are all efforts of the flesh. All your outreach programs must be done in the power of the Holy Ghost or they will not produce a real spiritual harvest.

It all starts with the messages that come from over the pulpit. It takes guts to preach a strong message, but if all you have is a weak message, you will only get a weak congregation. Although, it's important for pastors to love their flock, the real love of God is manifested through the fear of the Lord. That's how we are brought into the righteousness of God -- through the fear of the Lord -- and righteousness is the definition that Jesus gave for the real Love of God. You can't have one without the other.

You can preach love, love, love all day long, but if it is the type of love that is nothing more than a warm, fuzzy emotion, then it will not bring anyone into that deep walk in the righteousness of God. And without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.

If you're not in the Spirit, you won't draw souls that are hungry for Truth. Oh, you can always appeal to the light attractions of flesh, prosperity, and blessings and draw a big crowd, but what about those souls that hunger for a serious dedication to seek the face of God?

Not everybody is going to Heaven (although almost everybody thinks they are). Where does God draw the line in judgment between those who are on fire for God, and those who are just attending church?

We all have to make a choice in this life, and no one can make that choice for someone else. I am searching for those who have determined that the Truth is a pearl of great price that is far greater to them than anything else.

As for the rest, I can only pray for them until they are ready to open their hearts to God. You can try to persuade them with candy, but that won't give them the real nourishment they need. We aren't used car salesmen here; we're presenting the only Truth upon the face of the Earth and it is serious business.

But oh! A church that is on fire for God, that hasn't shied away from the strength of the Gospel, that is willing to pay the price to seek the face of the Lord and remain in the depths of the Holy Ghost, there is no limit to what God can and will do for that church. Souls that are truly seeking God will be drawn to that church and will be lit up with the fire of God. Others will see that fire and the Light will shine into their souls.

And they will come. And that is the bottom line.

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## Funny

*“A merry heart doeth good like a medicine” Proverbs 17:22*

I wish I were a funny guy. I’m not. Humor has a quality to it that has always escaped me, and all my jokes fall flat.

I cracked one joke once with a denominational guy and his friend telling them that I had heard that they were going to get to Heaven before all the rest of us. When he raised his eyebrows I said, “Yeah, the Bible says the dead in Christ will rise first!” His friend cracked up, but this guy went red in the face. Oops. I guess I just never learned the art of a good delivery and right timing. I’m just not a funny guy.

I know the Lord created humor just as He also created music, and color, and art. It ranks right up there with the greatest of miracles. The greatest humor is to be able to laugh at ourselves, and to see our human absurdities as they really are. That is the real miracle of humor. Wouldn’t it be fun to write a parody of all the denominational religions without getting everybody all riled up? But that would take more than talent to pull off – it would take sheer genius.



I know that there is a time for everything, and a wise man discerns both time and judgment. As wonderful as humor is, you can never let it displace the deadly seriousness of the spiritual war we are in the midst of. That's where humor becomes foolishness, and it becomes sin. After all, you don't read much about the prophets running around doing stand-up comedy.

Nevertheless, the Lord does have a sense of humor, but only as a healing balm, not as an end to itself. Laughter and merriment do not lead anyone to repentance. Neither does it lead anyone to righteousness. I suppose that's why prophets seem so grim, because the job of a prophet is to lead the people of God back to a place of repentance, holiness, and righteousness in the Fear of God. There's nothing funny about Hell.

We all want peace, prosperity, blessings, and maybe a little bit of fun, but the true love of God is manifested in adversity.

Everyone loves the mountaintops where everything is rosy, but it's the valleys where we get our strength in God. That's where we learn how to rejoice in tribulation and face our own death in the flesh so we can be alive in the Spirit. We can laugh our fool heads off, but never forget that we are at war – with the Devil, with temptation, and with our own flesh and ego.

And that's not funny either.

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## One More Revival

I went to church this Sunday.

It was nice. There were lots of great people that were excited about being there, and there was a good message from the Pastor. I would probably recommend it to just about anyone.

Why then, did I leave feeling so flat? Is it just me? Am I just some cranky old fusspot that is never satisfied no matter where I go? Or am I looking for something that no longer exists?

You know, sometimes I'm not always sure that I have an answer to those questions.

I got saved back in 1970 at a church that was in the beginning of an incredible Holy Ghost revival. I had grown up as a stone-cold atheist, but when I walked in the door to services that night, I knew that I had found the Truth that I had always been looking for.

The presence of the Holy Spirit was so strong that the place literally shined from a light that you could feel rather than see. The Spirit was dripping off the walls.

Stupid me, I never knew you could feel the Spirit of God. I didn't even know what "saved" was! But I'll tell you what, I knew what it meant before that night was over.

People from all walks of life flocked to that place – from priests to prostitutes, from drug dealers to businessmen, from housewives to movie stars. Every single night, forty, fifty, sixty souls that were dying to get saved, crammed the altar of prayer. From all over the world, souls were drawn to that little church – and kept coming and coming. The excitement was so intoxicating that you couldn't wait to get back to services again, night after night.

The prayer room was constantly filled with people storming the Throne of God. It was like walking into a shower. You couldn't help getting wet. Before you knew it, you yourself were in the thick cloud of loud prevailing prayer, shouting out praises to God. Your feet may have been on the floor, but your heart was soaring in another world.

You don't go through that kind of daily prayer experience, day after day, without becoming a lion in God. I always figured that was where the power had to be coming from. God responds to strong prevailing prayer in a powerful way. He even stopped the rain for Elijah, a guy who really knew how to pray.

The message from the pulpit wasn't anything fancy or theological. It was a strong Salvation message delivered straight from the hip – Repent or perish; get in or get out. We got in. Man, did we get in!

Where do you go to experience something like that today? Beats me. I'm still looking.

The problem is that, once you have a taste of something like that, you'll never be satisfied with anything else. Everything else is like Coke without the fizz. Still tastes like Coke, but it just doesn't have the same pizzazz.

And how do you explain it to someone who's never experienced that heady wine of revival? You can't. As they say in Texas, "It's better felt than telt." But oh, how I wish you had been there! You'd never be the same again.

So, yeah, church was OK this Sunday. But I'm still feeling flat. I want that overflowing, overwhelming, electrifying outpouring of the Holy Ghost again.

I believe the greatest revival of all time is yet to come. Without reiterating a list of scriptures that people will argue over anyway, I believe it because I have hope. If God did it then, He can do it again. As we approach the final battle between God and Satan for the souls of mankind, how much more does it make sense that He will send down that kind of power again? Especially since we will need it more than we ever have.

I pray that God will raise up ministers that are more than just “nice guys”. I pray for Holy Ghost warriors that can stand up in the authority of God. There is something about a man or woman that walks in the depths of the Fear of the Lord that gives them power and authority like we haven’t seen in a long time. I believe that God has his mighty men of war out there, just waiting for Him to raise them up. Wow, will that be something when that happens! Here they come!

Unfortunately, there are many who will not recognize it when it comes, because they’ve become too used to the homogenized Pablum that they’ve been fed all these years, and they’ve lost that hunger for something more.

When you get hungry enough – and you’ve got to be starving -- then you’ll be crashing those gates of Heaven, crying out night and day for a revival like we did so many years ago. That’s the kind of prayer that God answers – desperate prayer.

And that’s when He will send it.

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## Just Having Fun

I remember as a young Boy Scout when a District Manager came to our meeting and asked us all why we had joined the Boy Scouts. Thinking that this was some kind of test, we came up with all kinds of serious responses that reflected intelligence and moralities that none of us had. Finally, one of the guys just simply answered that he joined so he could go camping and have fun. That was the right answer. The rest of us felt like fools.

There is a similarity in Christianity. After all these years, every once in a while I will sit and ponder why I chose to serve the Lord. The answer is always the same – because it feels so good. Without the Spirit of the Lord, this would be just another dead philosophy, but with that touch of the wind of the Holy Ghost, it becomes Life. For me, that is all the answer I need. I don't need to figure it out any further than that. It just feels good.

But not everybody feels that way. Some people have to make it so hard, that it just isn't fun anymore, while others want to make it so much fun, that it is no longer serious.

There are dangers inherent in the extremes of asceticism, just as there are in the over-indulgence of the flesh. Some of these Holy Joes get so deep and serious that you wonder if they aren't some cranky old men that just hate life. They always sound like they are leaning down from some sterile, antiseptic holy place to cater to our fleshly insufficiencies. They must like it up there (wherever it is that they think they are), but all I see is some puffed up jerks who have their pants on too tight.

You know where that ascetic extremism comes from? Spiritual pride. Just follow the breadcrumbs and you can see where it comes from, and what it leads to.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that we are forced to struggle between two opposing worlds – the carnal and the spiritual. Give yourself over to the carnal, and it will pull you away from the spiritual until you cross over a line that you never thought you'd cross. Just ask Sampson. He never figured that he would end up in the prison house, blind and shackled, but when he started flirting with Delilah, he lost his hair. He didn't even realize that the Lord had departed from him until it was too late.

One would think that there has to be some balance between the two, but, I don't think so. It's not a balance we need of two things that don't count, but something entirely different that has nothing to do with either of them.

Trying to be righteous by doing good works is a lot like trying to bribe God. It's all good stuff, but if you think that it will make you righteous with God, then you've forgotten the thousands of years of failure with the Law. Do you really think that it is a big deal with God if you don't touch or eat certain things, or you go to church on a particular day, or do or don't do a variety of other things that you think will make you holy? And God forbid that you should smoke a cigarette! But, all that stuff is just as carnal as anything else, and will never win you brownie points.

Conversely, flesh is still flesh, and it will never inherit the kingdom of God (1Cor. 15:50). You can have lots of clean fun, but that's not the formula for getting close to God. There's a separation there that cannot be crossed.

No, there is a third option that has nothing to do with the other two, and it has to do with your heart.

For a long time, the picture I had in Romans 12 of becoming a holy, living sacrifice for God was of a skinny, gaunt, humorless shell with no personality or life of my own. (I think I actually pictured Gandhi's face when I thought about it.) But try and reconcile that with the rest of Romans, and you will see that the kingdom of God is not in meat or drink (or any other carnal thing), but in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost (Rom. 14:17). To put it succinctly, you have to be in the Spirit!



Whew! That takes all the sweat out of it, doesn't it? I seek God with all my heart, and He pours out His Spirit on me to enable me to be part of Him. I just have to get in the Spirit and He will take care of the rest, so that, instead of being driven by superficial spirituality or by fleshly desires, I let the Spirit of God drive my heart – and that nullifies the other two.

Wow! He made it so simple, didn't He? I don't have to be anything deep and heavy. I just have to read and pray so I can latch onto the Spirit of God, and He will lead me into all righteousness. He made it so easy to overcome sin when we make a decision to yield to God and let him do the driving.

Yeah, I love serving the Lord. He makes it so much fun when you let Him do it.

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## Chuck Wagon Revival

I went to the Men's Chuck Wagon Breakfast last Saturday and had a great time. It's something that all you guys out there would enjoy going to. Just a good time of fellowship with a bunch of guys without any denominational lines, out on a ranch overlooking a spring-fed lake. They had a pretty good feed too.

While I was there, it came up in the conversation how that many people feel like God has something in store for their communities and they are waiting for God to pour out revival on them. I know there's a popular saying that all things come to those who wait, but I'm not so sure about that. I guess it depends on how you wait. If you're just like "Wanda Waiting by the Window", quietly sitting there with your hands folded neatly on your lap, you could be waiting a real long time.

One thing I know is that a real Holy Ghost revival doesn't just drop out of the sky and fall into your laps if you're just sitting there twiddling your thumbs. And yet, there are many that feel that they can just hang out while they are waiting for their number to come up.

But God doesn't play the Lottery.

When I hear someone call out that God wants to do something in their city or town, I just sit and grin. Excuse me, but I would imagine God wants to do something everywhere. I also know that He is no respecter of persons. If you want a revival, you will have to get up and go get it.

All revivals begin with prayer. Unusual prayer. Desperate prayer. Knock-down, drag-out, down-on-your-face, screamin', hollerin', crying out, prevailing prayer. The kind of prayer like Rachael's cry, "Give me souls, lest I die!" Great moves of God are not turned on like some light switch. No, somebody has to get down on their knees.

Do you think God will entrust His precious souls to a people that do not care enough to cry out for them? If He did, they would show that same lackluster level of care with them as they did in their prayers. And that's not good enough. He sent us His very best – he expects us to do the same.

As it says in Corinthians, there is faith, hope, and charity. You must have faith that God will hear you, hope that He will answer you, and the charity to keep praying until He does.

Just believing that God can do anything is not faith. Faith is that determination that God is going to do it, and that you are going to contend before the Throne of God until He does! “One of us is going to move, God, and it ain’t gonna be me! I ain’t moving, I ain’t gonna shut up, and I will not be denied! “

That’s what you call a Prayer Warrior, and that’s the kind of prayer that moves God. Everything else is just presumption.

You get what you pay for.

## Light Bulbs

Wouldn't it be great to see some real supernatural miracles again, just like we have heard of in the stories from the past?

A gentleman approached me about praying with some men for the healing of someone who had been paralyzed from the neck down. There's a group of them that gather together each week to share, fellowship, and pray with each other. These are good guys. They have hearts that really want to see God move in miraculous ways, not only in their own lives, but also in the lives of others. But something is missing, and they don't know what it is.

Where has the outpouring of God's power been lately? What ever happened to the great moves in the past when there were tremendous revivals when God showed up in supernatural power? Thousands were saved and multitudes were healed miraculously, and the power of the Holy Ghost was so thick you could cut it with a knife. What happened to all that?

I thought of the common, everyday light bulb. Light bulbs are intricate things. The filament has to be of a very special element – you just can't use some old string. And it is shaped and sealed with precision in a vacuum so it will work. It's a real piece of work. But by itself, it is useless.

Okay. So, you need to screw it into a light socket -- and screw it in tight so it will work. Still nothing. Nice decoration, but not much else. It's just like a lot of us. We're like that light bulb. We believe in God, but that's as far as we have gone.

That light fixture has to be plugged in. Neither the lamp nor the bulb will work if there's no electricity. Okay, so we get plugged into some church, maybe even a real fancy one, or even a real high-powered one. Looks like we've got it now, doesn't it? Hmmmm. Still nothing.

Well, duh. You've got to turn on the switch! And then, voila! There's light! And it lights up the whole room and everyone in there. After a very short time, it also gets hot. Real hot. That bulb is on-fire for God and it is shining the bright light of Jesus Christ to everyone in the room.

It's not the light bulb that is the fire, and neither is it the lamp. It's not even the socket that you plugged into. It's the electricity of the Spirit of God that is flowing through you! But if you ever turn the switch off, or unplug it, that light bulb may stay warm for a while, even "lukewarm", but after a while, it will turn back to that cold piece of glass and it becomes nothing more than a decoration on the table.

So, I wondered about these guys that wanted so badly to see a miraculous healing for this man. They really wanted to see God move, but there was something missing in the formula.

They do all the right things, do their best to be good Christians, read all sorts of Christian self-help books and go to seminars, sing songs, and show up at church. If someone points out a scripture that is really cool, they'll even go look it up. They even go so far as to sit down and read a passage right out of the Bible itself – well, at least, every once in a while. They're screwed in the socket and the lamp is plugged in, but there's no electricity and they wonder why.

There is a price to pay for power in God. It is not a given. You can talk about how much you love God all you want, but if you don't turn on the switch, you're just a decoration on the table with no power, no substance, and no light.

That Bible is not some study book – it is the very sustenance of Life. Prayer is not an act of convenience – it is where you get your power from. Nothing else can take its place. That's how you turn on the switch. It may be a real spirit-breaker to sit down and read the Word and devour it every day, but if you don't, you will starve. It might seem hard to take the time to prevail in strong prayer and wring your heart out to God for an hour a day, but if you offer up weak, Mickey Mouse prayers, they won't get past the ceiling. You get what you pay for.

God hasn't left us. He's not off on some vacation in the Bahamas, and He hasn't grown old, tired, or bored. He's still there and He is just as accessible as ever – if not more so. But if you ever want to see great things in God in your life and in the lives of those who are around you, you have to turn on the switch.



## Grand Deception

*"...some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." 1 Timothy 1:6*

Satan is one slick weasel. You got to give him that. That weasel is so sneaky, he could creep up on his own shadow.

The other day, I heard a popular TV preacher, who is known for her down-to-earth, grandmotherly Christian advice. She admitted that she doesn't read the Bible every day. And then made fun of it! Yeah, she says she doesn't have to read the text every day. She already knows what it says. Every once in a while, she went on to admit, she'll sit down and read a few chapters (as if that is really doing it hard!).

I was floored! But then, why should I be? I hear different supposed pillars of the churches tell me about all the self-help books they read, all the videos they watch, and even the courses and lectures they attend, but they hardly ever read the Bible. They're listening to everybody else except God.

Have they lost their minds? Do they honestly think the Bible is some textbook that once you've learned the lessons then you're ready to pass some test? I have news for you – you are not going to be presented with a 3-page exam with a #2 pencil when you are judged. Do you think that if you get 85% or better you will get to go to Heaven, and if not, then you will flunk and go to Hell? Sorry, it's not about how much “stuff” you know. It's about seeking the face of God and walking in His Spirit.

No wonder this supposed preacher has to rely on her stupid, witty little sayings for her text. She's not preaching – she's just giving a self-help lecture. There's no anointing – just some earthy, “feel-good-about-yourself” swill.

Yeah, Satan has done his job well. He has stolen away the Christian's main weapon. And, on top of that, he has made them think that they're real good guys by “fessing” up to their human frailties -- as if they get points for being “honest” about it.

The enormity of this problem is huge. It is destroying Christians.

Strong prevailing prayer brings forth great moves of God, and the power to pray like that comes from the Word of God. If you don't read, you won't have the power to get your prayers past the ceiling.

Is it any wonder, then, that there are so few moves of God today, so few supernatural healings, and so few men of God with Holy Boldness? We are left with gutless preachers, anemic congregations, and a Gospel without power...and lost souls are dropping off into Hell by the thousands because of it.

The Bible is the Bread of Life. It is where you get your power and strength. It is the fountain that brings forth Faith. It is your source of wisdom and understanding. It is the Light. Without it, you are like an idiot without a roadmap. You're going to get lost!

So many people are stumbling around in darkness, but because they show up at church on Sunday, they still think they are right with God. They can't see, they don't understand, they don't feel the Spirit, they can't pray, they can't overcome sin, ... and they don't know God. But hey, they're all good Christians, aren't they? Or are they?

Jesus said many would be deceived – even the very elect if possible. How is that possible? When they don't read His Word.

What a Grand Deception.

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## **“Hell, no! We won’t go!”**

Ahhh, the excitement and vibrancy of the 60’s! Remember the determined crowds of anti-war protestors? I can still see and hear the whole crowd chanting that call (where was it? Philly? – I’m too old to remember.) Led by on-fire young kids that were thrust into leading their peers into a rebellious, outrageous decade that questioned the foundations of their society, they were willing to give up careers and the sedate submission to rules of behavior, even go to jail and be beaten, to take on the monolithic society they had been born into.

Whether or not we agree with their perspective and views, nevertheless, they pricked America’s consciousness and gave birth to a fresh, new decade of change. So, where did all that go?

Their parents’ generation was raised in the Fabulous Fifties – a generation that was absorbed with a hedonistic materialism that, in turn, was a reaction from the generation before them, the generation that was defined by sacrifice and unselfish dedication during WWII.

Is there a repeating cycle here? There are historians that say there is, and I partly believe it. Look at the next generation. They call it GenX because there is such a lack of dedicated social vibrancy. They were more interested in their stock portfolios than their stock in God, and they've become spiritually bankrupt as a result.

We see that same cycle manifested in the religious world. There is a cycle of apostasy that has been repeating itself since the Jews crossed over Jordan. After Revival comes establishment, then a relaxed apostasy, then judgment, and then revival again. Is there no end?

Yes, there is. It will all come to an end at the Final End.

America was once defined by on-fire Holy Ghost revivals from coast to coast, but now we have "church as usual". The altar calls for repentance and holiness were once packed with souls that were hungry for God. Now, you are hard pressed to even find an altar call for the Lost. (I don't count the "pity" lines we find today as serious altar calls.)

Christians used to be excited to give themselves to a dedicated call for sacrifice, to immerse themselves in the Word of God, to crucify the old flesh and seek the face of God. Now, even our most stanch church leaders are more dedicated to self-help books and "feel good" messages of prosperity and personal blessing than a crucified walk to face our own death in the Cross.

Think I'm exaggerating? Point out to me some all-night prayer meetings where Christians gather to cry out all night long to God to save lost souls. They're not there. We've replaced them with Christian entertainers, Gospel rock concerts, and "love" gatherings.

Need I say more?

But the winds are beginning to shift again. There's an unmistakable rumbling of discontented, hungry souls, who look at our established churches and say, "Hell no! We won't go!" The scent of revival is in the air.

According to Joel 2:1-11, the strongest army that God has ever raised will stand up and trash the established norms of church etiquette. But just like the contented cows of previous generations, many of today's nominal Christians will neither understand, nor tolerate the generation that will rise up and challenge their sedate lifestyle.

It has all happened before. It will happen again. And if you're not careful, you'll miss it.

*"Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth. For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion." (Joel chapter 1)*

## Seasoned with Salt

*“And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.” Leviticus 2:13*

What a strange thing salt is.

Too much of it and you burn your tongue; not enough of it and your food tastes flat. It is one of the most plenteous substances on earth, and yet it is so precious that kingdoms have fought and warred over possession of it. It is a very humble thing – you can find it on every table – and yet it is of utter importance to serving the Lord.

So, what’s the deal with salt? Jesus warned us that if our salt had lost its savor, that it was worthless. Why is it so important to God?

According to the Law, when we make a covenant with God, it is a covenant of salt. That salt is our zeal to the Lord. Without it, whatever sacrifices we covenant with God are flat and tasteless – it is no longer savory to Him. We can go through all the motions and honor God with our lips, but if our hearts are far from Him, then it is all in vain (Isaiah 29:13). Salt is the true worship of God which comes from our hearts.

But it must be the right kind of salt.

I encounter many Christians who devote so much of their efforts into trying to figure out their Christianity. They read all kinds of books and get so caught up in learning “stuff” and analyzing the numerology and symbolism of the Bible that they get lost in it. The fruit off the Tree of Knowledge may be one that is desired to make one wise, but it will never give you the Life you are searching for.

It’s like watching a blind man trying to figure out everything around him. He will listen intently, tap his cane around, and try to grope to find his path, but even his best efforts will not replace sight. To walk in the Spirit, you must be led by the Spirit. To try and understand the Truth by using your intellect will lead you astray – and yet, so many try anyway. It has to do with pride.

To serve the Lord in our own way, how we think it should be, or what we have figured out is not salt. Salt is a zeal and devotion to humble ourselves before God, and let Him be our zeal, our wisdom, and our understanding. If our best efforts are not salted with a true zeal and worship, then we are left with sacrifices that are worthless.

Salt. Such a strange thing. And yet it is the very spice of Life.



## Come Unto Me

*“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30*

There are times when I wish life would go smoothly, and that there were no bumps in the road! I want people who are not saved to be able to look at us and see the immediate benefits of serving the Lord! I want them to be able to see the rest in my soul and desire it. I want them to see besides the blessings they get now, that the ultimate reward from God to us is to spend eternity with Him in heaven.

But I also understand that there is a spiritual world we can't see that affects our carnal existence. Job is the perfect example of that! Sometimes life is so rough, that the picture of “rewards in heaven” gets crowded out because our problems are too big to look around. So how do I convince people that, regardless of what happens in our earthly life, there is rest for our souls in the Lord? The attitude of today's society is that we deserve to be blessed, and that God is required to bless us.

But God doesn't say that.

Actually, I don't want my life to go smooth. I can look at the times that it has been rough and bumpy and can see how I have grown in the Lord. That is so much more important to me since there is that spiritual world that we can't physically see but know is there, and how short this earthly existence is compared to our spiritual life in eternity! Whether people choose to believe in heaven or hell now, they will certainly believe it when they die.

God says that His Spirit draws men to Him (John 6:44). That is where my faith and trust in God comes in. As I continue to serve the Lord, I pray that He will open people's hearts and minds to receive His Spirit. I pray that they will have a heart that desires Jesus Christ simply because He is "Jesus Christ." And I know that regardless of what happens to me, that I have that rest in my soul. He is my strong rock, my refuge, my high tower, and my strength in times of trouble. He is my joy and crown of rejoicing. He is the song in my heart and the desire of my life! Instead of us trying to fight the rough times by ourselves, He is there fighting right beside us. And as we stand steadfast in our salvation, I pray that God will send His Spirit to draw people to us who are seeking more than just the easy road.

*"Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, the Lord be magnified. Psalm 40:16*

## A Prophet's Desire

*“But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.” 1Ki 19:4*

What is it that a real servant of the Lord wants? What is his heart’s desire before the Lord? Is it comfort, or fame, or prosperity? Is it a bigger church, or a more expansive ministry? What is it that burns down in the depths of his soul as a seed of hope?

In a day and age where we find huge international ministries and mega-churches, have we somehow lost something in the establishment of our churches? What is it that we are really looking for?

The most obvious answer is that we want to see souls get saved. And just how do we go about getting that? Building a bigger church is the usual answer. But will that really accomplish what we are looking for? Or is that just the establishment of a bigger church?

Elijah was faced with that very same issue. All Israel had gone after a carnal religion that probably sounded rather good to the regular guy. There were plenty of priests around, the whole kingdom supported it, and it seemed like the thing to do. But they had long ago left the true worship of God, and no longer recognized the difference.

Elijah was one solitary voice of repentance against a whole nation of Baal worshippers. No one dared side themselves with him, and yet, when he stood against the entire religious order on Mount Carmel, the incredible demonstration of the power of God in the form of fire from Heaven validated his righteousness. Did all Israel repent? Not hardly.

And now, here he was in the desert, a hunted man, alone with nowhere else to go. What else could he have done to bring the people to their knees in heart-felt conviction? How do you top something like calling down fire from Heaven?

Elijah's heart cried out for revival, but there was no revival. Not even in the ministry of Elisha, the one who followed him and inherited his ministry. Although the testimony of the Lord stood strong, people's hearts have a way of following their own lusts.

I have learned one thing in the last 33 years of ministry, and that is that people are going to believe what they want to believe – no matter what. And they will use the Bible to justify it. No supernatural miracles, no great works, no inspiring messages will bring about a real change when people have decided to follow the yearnings of their own heart's desires.

Only the Spirit of the Lord can turn a people around to begin to seek His face. Nothing else will work. Building bigger churches is oftentimes the result of a very subtle lust for more spiritual power, when all the while the Lord is leading in another direction. It is so easy to think we are pursuing great things in God when we are actually getting out in front of Him in building our own works. It all sounds so good on the surface, but is that what the Lord is really looking for?

Perhaps, instead of building up huge ministries, we should be getting down on our faces before God. It takes intense prayer and deep repentance to turn a society around, because only the Spirit of God can change hearts. And that takes a people whose heart's desire for revival is stronger than their desire for a bigger church.

Elijah couldn't do it, even with the mighty work that was accomplished on Mount Carmel. But he was a man of effectual, fervent prayer, and left in a chariot of fire leaving the work to God.

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## Folly of Fools

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

That seems simple enough. If you’re wise, you’ll take the time to make sure you understand where you’re going. If you’re a fool, you’re just going to convince yourself that you can go whichever way you want to go.

Prudence dictates carefulness. “A prudent man walks circumspectly (Eph. 5:15),”. You look forward; you look behind; you check out all sides before you take the next step. You don’t go by what you think or what you want to think. You go by what you know. And you make sure you are right.

A fool, on the other hand, is someone who does not fear God enough to realize what is really at stake. He is led more by his lusts and desires than by Truth, and he is willing to convince himself that just because he wants something to be true, then it must be true, and therefore, it is OK. If it feels good, do it. Consequences are relative, and there are no absolutes. “Eat, drink, and be merry”. We’ll worry about the rest later.

That is the folly of fools.

Did you ever consider that the beliefs you hold dear to your heart might not be true? Perhaps you've been told they are, and maybe it sounded so good, that it became easy to believe. But how do you know for sure?

Maybe everybody else is doing it, so it can't be all that bad. But the Word of God says that though the whole world hold hand in hand, yet will they not be unpunished (Pro. 11:21). It doesn't matter if they all agree – it won't keep them out of Hell, and it doesn't make it right.

It's so easy to deceive oneself when you want to believe something is true. I have found that most people will believe what they want to believe...in spite of the facts. And they will find some scripture in the Bible to justify themselves. That is the folly of fools.

But a prudent man will look well to his going. He realizes the eternal consequences of the path that he chooses and will seek the face of God to make sure. He walks by faith in God – not by faith in himself.

So how can one make sure? The Bible says that the Spirit and the Word agree in one—you must have both. Anyone can take a scripture out of context to justify sin. Skimming the Word in a year, casually picking at passages, or relying on self-help books and lectures to dictate your faith is sheer folly. You have to devour the whole Bible and engraft it into your heart. It is our Daily Bread from which we draw spiritual sustenance. You must read the Word of God yourself and read it prayerfully so that the fine flour of the Bread of Life is mingled with the oil of the Spirit of God. You must have both.

But when the Spirit of God is not present, there is no life and no truth. You have the Word, but you don't have the Spirit.

Ah, but how many of us really do that? How many of us, instead, rely upon someone else to tell us what to believe? We want Moses to go up the mountain and meet with God, and then come down and tell us what to do. But we end up at the foot of the mountain worshipping golden calves as a result.

Then there are those who have turned the outpouring of the Spirit of God into a circus and can't tell the difference between the emotional and the spiritual. But it sure feels good, doesn't it? But if it doesn't line up with the Word of God, then it is the wrong Spirit.



You must have both the Word and the Spirit that comes from the Throne of God. Anything else is the folly of fools.

*“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.” 2 Peter 1:10*

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## The Tollbooth

A few years ago, as I was coming back from visiting my 93-year-old mother in Florida, an unusual thing happened to me that I have not forgotten to this day.

I was tired and stressed from driving 1600 miles for a short two-day visit and was not looking forward to the marathon in coming back, so I had decided to take the Turnpike to relieve the driving a bit. I grimaced as I approached the tollbooth, digging out what was left of the money in my pants pocket. The trip was getting a little bit hard, and I just wanted to get home.

When I pulled up to the tollbooth, the attendant waved me on. The lady in the car in front of me had paid the toll for me. I was free to drive on!

I just sat there for a second thinking that I must have heard wrong. Some lady who I didn't know paid the toll for me? I just couldn't believe it!

My first reaction was to speed up and pass her so I could wave thanks at her, but she was already gone. She had done that one little act of kindness without any thought for acknowledgement -- not even a return smile or a wave! I never knew who she was.

I've always wondered why she did that. There was absolutely nothing that she was going to get in return -- not even a wave. She just did it. And I never forgot it.

Was she a Christian? Perhaps. Maybe she did it as a testimony for the Lord, but then, she never passed me a Gospel tract or anything to acknowledge that. If she had used this as an opportunity to present the Gospel to me, I probably would have smiled, bobbed my head up and down, acknowledged her, and then drove on unaffected – and would have promptly forgotten it. But she didn't.

Or was it something more than that? Maybe it was simply a glimpse at the goodness of God.

I saw in this one selfless act a cameo snapshot of the personality of an Almighty God who came down to give his life for our sins.

The Cross remains the greatest selfless act of all time. He didn't have to do that for us -- not one of us deserved it. We were all sinners, and like lost sheep, we have all gone astray, but He did it anyway so that whosoever among us would call upon him could have Eternal Life.

Jesus did that for us. Go and do likewise.

*"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8*

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## Dividing Line

*“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” Rev 20:12*

Have you ever stopped and considered what that moment will be like? I know that we all figure that we’ll be in that Book of Life, and that it’s somebody else that will end up in Hell, but really, exactly where does God draw the line?

Personally, I believe that the bar will be raised very high, but I know most people feel that it will be held to a more comfortable level. God is looked upon by many people as their “daddy”, and so naturally, He would never cast them into Hell. But you know what? Somebody is going there, and I don’t suppose whoever it is will be expecting it.

So just where does God draw the line?

If it was just a matter of professing that you know about God, then it would be pretty easy to make it into Heaven, but the Word says in the above Scripture that it is “according to their works”. Okay, so what are those works?

Many will defer to the work done on the Cross for their Salvation, and that there is nothing of themselves that they can do to gain entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven. That's true to a point, but if that's all there is to it, then all we have to do is say a prayer one time, and bingo! We're in!

I don't know about you, but that doesn't sound right to me. It sounds more like judgment, plain and simple. Either you do right, or you don't, and you reap what you sow.

Okay. So, we actually have to do something. What do we have to do? I mean, if there is some kind of measuring stick here, I want to know what it is because I'm not interested in taking any chances with my eternal soul. Is just going to church enough? How about wearing some Christian T-shirts, or giving canned goods to the poor? Or simply professing that I'm a Christian -- will that do it? I can just stand on a street corner and wave a religious flag, and I'll go to Heaven?

The answer I got back from the Lord when I was praying yesterday was so simple it may be hard to grasp -- you have to be in the Spirit of the Lord.

That's it.

It's that simple. If you are, you are going to Heaven; if you're not, you are going to Hell.

Think about it. What difference does anything else make? It is the perfect dividing line between the sheep and the goats; between the saved and the unsaved; between those who are on-fire and those who are lukewarm; between His sheep that hear His voice, and those who do not.

The trick, of course, is to know for sure that you are in the Spirit of the Lord, but that would take more than a short article to answer. I will tell you this, however, Proverbs says “those who seek the Lord understand all things.” (Proverbs 28:5) If you’ve been seeking the face of the Lord, you know exactly what that means. If you haven’t, you are left with not much more than presumption. And presumption leaves you a little short of the mark.

A long time ago, the Lord told me something that has rung true for all these years: “Some people care, and some people don’t. It’s as simple as that.”

So, it isn’t God who draws the line. We draw that line ourselves.

## Choices of a Modern Church

It says in Mark, that false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. Will we see these things come to pass in our time? Could it really happen to us?

Bob Dylan once sang, “The times, they are a-changing”. I don’t think he had any idea how true those words were.

Times have changed, not just politically, but, to an even greater extent, spiritually. The religious landscape of three or four generations ago has been replaced with a different world that is more aesthetically pleasing, and certainly more sophisticated and polished than that old, hard-core, hellfire and brimstone Gospel that our grandfathers were raised on.

Somehow, we’ve discovered that those old-timers just didn’t have it right. The stories that we are so fond of telling are wild and crazy tales of people throwing their babies in the air, rolling on the floor, howling like dogs, and of course the inevitable sneer directed at those who have been “slain in the Spirit”.

My, my, my. We look back in amusement at those harmless fools who had been caught up in such sheer emotional nonsense. Today, of course, we have a much better understanding. We're more educated (which means we're smarter, don't ya know?), and we would never fall for such antics.

Well, I don't know where you got the story of people throwing their babies in the air, but I do know this: if you've never felt the power of God crash down in your services, then maybe that explains why your churches are so powerless to win souls.

You don't have to look any further than the difference in the messages that were preached to see why there is such a difference between these two gospels.

While one preached about Hell, judgment, and the chilling fear of God, the other has promoted a God of Love who is our "Daddy" who will wink at all our fleshly shortcomings. The old-timers emphasized righteousness, while the modern Christian believes that the Grace of God is a covering to forgive sin. Once it was preached that we had to "overcome" to eat of the Tree of Life, now all we have to do is just "try", mean well, and above all, be nice to people. How nice. I call it the 11<sup>th</sup> Commandment – Thou shalt not offend anybody.



Satan has done a marvelous job. He has not only successfully yanked the guts out of the Gospel but has also made it seem to be a righteous thing to sneer at it. There is no longing to go back to those heady days when the power of God filled our sanctuaries, and there is no conviction over the loss of altars filled with repentant sinners. Where are the broken hearts in deep all-night prevailing prayer meetings for God to please forgive us as a people who once knew the meaning of Revival? We're more sophisticated today. We have arrived, and we don't want to back to those old days again.

When the Fear of God is reduced to "respect", when the word Hell becomes some four-lettered word that is not mentioned in church, when love has replaced righteousness, and when we have replaced the path of the Cross with the road to Prosperity, then we have, in effect, replaced the God in Heaven with the god of this world.

And, as it says in Jeremiah, *"The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so."* (Jeremiah 5:31)

Ahhh, nice, and comfy, and lukewarm!

When we arrive at that place, the Word of God will have no more power to reveal its Truth to us, and we will fall prey to every wind of doctrine that sounds good. We will see these false Christs that will razzle-dazzle us with their signs and wonders, and we won't realize the difference, because a long time ago, we chose deception over Truth.

Is it possible for even the very elect to be deceived?

Only when they make the choice to follow a different Gospel than what our forefathers have handed us.

## Humanism

*“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.” Romans 1:23*

Well, the dust is finally flying. Homosexuality is now not only accepted, but also legal. It's even considered a blessing by the Episcopalians.

We have placed the moral ethics of society in the hands of the courts, and they've decided that God needs to stay out of our daily affairs. He's a nice God by all rights, but He really needs to mind His own business and stay in church where He belongs.

Why should anyone be surprised? We're the ones who have made that decision some time ago by choosing Humanism over the Gospel.

Humanism has been creeping into our society one victory at a time. First, it was the movies and books, then our schools, then the legal system, and now finally, our entire composite as a nation has succumbed. We've allowed it to creep up on us by ignoring it, and now we are faced with a bar room brawl to get rid of it.

Humanism is the belief that man's nature is innately good, and that if we could all just get in touch with inner selves, our society would evolve into nirvana. It's called "self-actualization" by such prominent Humanists as Erick Fromm, Maslov, and a score of others. There is no concept of sin, neither is there an allowance for God as a Creator and the final moral authority. The self-actualized man is left to his innate goodness to discover what is right and moral. Unfortunately, the "good" discovered only applies to that individual.

In other words, "if it feels good, do it." There are no absolutes, no sin, no right and wrong imposed upon us. Hakuna Matata. We have finally figured out a way to get rid of God. And if there is no God, then there is no Hell. If there is no Hell, then we can sin all we want and not worry about it. How convenient!

The truth is that man has a wicked, sin-living heart. Although we are clever enough to figure out ways to convince ourselves that there is no Judgment, the reality is that Hell isn't going away. It will still be there when we die.

That kind of hedonistic thinking, however, has great appeal. Think about it. Which would you choose? A society where there is no guilt and you are free to do anything you want, or a dark, condemning world of shackles to the slavery of religion? Without some real proof of the presence of a righteous God, the decision will weigh heavily in favor of sin.

We need to have a Gospel that has power – a real and manifest presence of the Holy Ghost, a church that is so powerfully drenched with the Spirit of God that it will knock you down, a presence of the Spirit of God that can be felt as soon as you walk in the door. Know any place like that? They used to be everywhere, now they're so scarce that we don't even believe in them anymore. Is it a small wonder that people will readily choose the reality of a sin that is real and present, instead of a faith that is not much more than a philosophy?

How did we get here?

Well, it all started when we decided that we were more interested in the appeal of this world than in the truth of the next. We didn't like preachers that drove home the reality of Hell and judgment. We called them "Hellfire and brimstone fanatics" and considered them to be of the likes of Elmer Gantry. We decided to choose a God of Love, blessings, and prosperity, and refused a Gospel that demanded the Fear of God. We chose a "toothless" God who would wink at our human failings because He loved us so much. We chose the path of a good-time religion instead of the old-time religion.

It's a classic case of the flesh vs. the Cross.

*"Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits" (Isaiah 30:10)*

*"...and my people love to have it so:" (Jeremiah 5:31)*

Well, here we are. You asked for it; you got it. We chose a sleepy religion, and so naturally, we have fallen asleep. We have reaped what we have sown.

So, what do I think is the solution?

Forget changing the churches. They're too comfortable in their sedate ways to repent. Take your cue from Joel chapter 2 and get on your faces before God. Find a place of repentance – not only for yourself, but also for our whole nation. Fast your guts out, pray your heart out, and cry out for a revival. We need an old-fashioned, Holy Ghost revival from on high like has never been seen before.

Nothing else will work.

## Silent Bell

There are times when I see myself standing in an empty church courtyard, looking up at a tall, silent bell tower. High up inside the white stone spire that points up to God, hangs a huge, silent bronze bell. It's been silent for years now. The silence is heavy, and the solitude hangs around me like a thick wool blanket.

Where is everyone, I wonder?

The courtyard used to be full of activity and noise, the doors to the church were opened wide, and people with bright faces came in and out. And the bell that rang out its call from God could be heard for miles.

But now, I only see an abandoned structure; a shell of what once was.

There was a time when you could hear the thundering echoes of the saints of God, filling the air with the excitement of the power of the Holy Ghost. Souls stirred in response, and multitudes responded to the call. But now, I stand in the silence and peer into the shadows of a ghostly cathedral.

I realized something the other day. All those old giants in the faith that once stood in the incredible power and authority of God are now dead, and they have taken their vibrancy with them.

There is a more modern church down the street now. It's a beautiful building, and hundreds of cars are parked outside. I hear songs and laughter and see pleasant faces with complacent smiles on everyone there. Everything seems so nice, but somehow, it's just not the same.

The sharp edges have been smoothed over, and in their place is a sheen of appeasement. The bell no longer rings out the alarm of war, but in its place, I hear the mindless, repetitive 8 bar phrases of Maranatha music. No more blood-washed songs of that raw, old-time Gospel music that called us to repentance. No sirree! We are in a new age now, and everything oozes of peace and love.

There are no more warriors anymore. We don't need them. Everyone here is so nice and pleasant. Even our modern-day prophets are bringing forth a new kind of message that promises us of blessings and love, peace and prosperity. There's no more war, and we are at peace with everyone.

Maybe it's just me. As I turn into the late afternoon sun, I feel like an old veteran who has lived long past the time of the old glory days and is somehow out of place in this new pastoral setting.

I turn to walk out of the parking lot, and as I look up, I see a darkness setting in just over the horizon. It will soon be night, but not the night of a warm, summer evening. It is the darkness of an impending storm on its way that I see.



DALEN GARRIS

I turn my collar up against the chill breeze that comes gusting through, and I wonder if anyone can see the storm that is coming. It will be a big one. The worst we've ever seen.

And there is no bell to sound the alarm.

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## Two Mites

*“And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.” Luke 21:1-4*

You know what is amazing to me? Around the world, there are real Christians enduring incredible suffering and persecution that look up to us Americans as being shining examples of what they think they should aspire to.

Because our ministry has exposure in several foreign countries, we get requests for recordings, Bibles, and even this newspaper column from different places around the world. The responses we get back are inspiring.

One brother in Pakistan who receives our messages wrote back about one of his meetings where only a couple dozen crippled people had been healed, and only a hundred or so had gotten saved. His meetings, he says at the risk of his life, are usually much better than that, and he hoped that we would pray for him.

Gee whiz. Only a couple dozen supernatural healings and only a hundred souls saved! My immediate thought was that I should be getting ministered to from him, not the other way around. I'm afraid to tell him what it's really like here in America.

Another friend of mine in Texas told me of a young Christian in Indonesia that copies all her emails about the Lord and reads them out loud to several other villagers. They are so hungry to hear about the Lord that they gather from all around to listen to what their big sister in America has to say. And here we can barely get up to go to a prayer meeting.

These are not uncommon stories. There are many people out there in terrible conditions and under great persecution, especially in Muslim countries, that are starving for the Word of God and will go to great lengths to hear from their American brothers and sisters.

They look up to us as if we were spiritual giants in the Lord to lead them in the Gospel. If they only knew the truth.

If they could only hear us scrambling around spouting about the latest end-time theory, or running after "feel good" prosperity preachers that tell us how blessed we are, or pursuing some stupid new theological vain jangling that makes us feel intelligent. What would they think if they could attend some of our humdrum Sunday services where, five minutes after you've left the church, you've forgotten what the message was about?

Here they are sacrificing their very lives to win souls and standing up for the Truth against all adversity, and while they are starving for the crumbs that fall from the Master's table, we sit back in our spiritual prosperity picking our teeth with the insignificant ramblings of apostate minds.

They are fueled with a fire that we once had, but we let it burn out while we pursued other things in our lives.

Perhaps we are not so rich after all. It may be that their two mites are much more valuable to the Lord than all the seeming abundance that we have to offer Him.

It may be that it will take a time of intense suffering and persecution to wake us up to what we have lost, but it will take something far worse than what happened on 9/11. That day may come sooner rather than later.

What then will we have to cast into the offerings of God?

## Foolish Galatians

*“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?”  
Galatians 3:1*

Hey, Paul! Did you make a mistake here? Remember the song, “Were you there when they crucified my Lord?” These guys weren’t there! What are you talking about here?

No, Paul was pointing to his own walk— a crucified walk in the Lord.

Paul knew that the Gospel that he preached was the only Truth that could save mankind, but not everybody else knew that. These were Gentiles. They didn’t know what Paul knew.

Paul was the Lord’s representative to these people. Only if they would see Jesus Christ in Him could they possibly believe, so his walk before them had to be completely different than what they were used to. Somehow, he had to show his faith in Christ by the life that he led.

The life that Paul presented to them was a broken, humble, crucified walk in the power of the Spirit of God. No pride, no position, no personal gain, no glory ... no Paul. They had to see Jesus.

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Paul knew that when a man thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself (Gal. 6:3). And Paul knew – he really knew – that he was nothing and could do nothing without the Lord Jesus Christ. Walking in his carnal flesh would never win the hearts of those who are sincerely searching for the Truth, so that flesh had to be crucified and die. He had to show forth the suffering of the Body of Christ before them. They had to see someone who was willing to die out to the flesh and walk in the Spirit of God.

They also had to see the power of God evidently set forth before them. Philosophy and false humility would not do. They had to see the real thing. When they saw Paul, they saw Jesus Christ, evidently set forth and crucified among them (Gal. 3:1). They saw him in the flesh right before their eyes ... and they believed.

The Book of Proverbs points to those who are greedy of gain, and says it takes away the life of the owners thereof (Prov. 1:19). That gain is not limited to money. Spiritual pride destroys more ministries and waylays more Christian lives than money ever could. It is an invisible sin – one that you can rarely see in yourself, but that sure shows up loud and clear to others that are around you.

How many today are greedy of spiritual gain? Every time I turn on any Christian programming, I hear someone spouting about getting more blessings, more prosperity, more miracles, etc. Gimme, gimme, gimme! Daughters of the horseleach!

It's such a subtle thing that many pastors fall prey to it thinking that it is all for the glory of God to expand their ministries, build bigger churches, institute more programs, buy more airtime, more, more, more... It all sounds like the right thing to do. But is it always the case?

When I look at these (let's call them) "Christian personalities", I just don't see Jesus Christ evidently crucified. I see what they are -- "Christian personalities".

True, the Lord will most definitely expand the ministry of those who are faithful in God. When I look at those ministers, I can see Jesus Christ evidently set forth before me. That is not always the case with what I see in so many of today's huge mega-ministries. Instead of a crucified walk of suffering, humility, and yielded, broken flesh, and the real power of God, too often I see that unmistakable subtle desire for gain.

And what about us? It's easy to point our fingers at the phonies on TV – after all, they make a big enough target, don't they – but it is altogether another thing to remember that the Cross is also laid upon us to show the world that we are not just Christians by default, but that we must show forth the death of Jesus Christ in our own lives so that others might live. It is us, not someone else, that must be willing to pay the price that Christ paid so that others will believe and know the Truth.

We have to show forth His glory through the sufferings of His Body. A humbling experience indeed – but we were called to serve, not be served.

And that is what makes the difference in Eternity.



## SOGGY BREAD

*“Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.”  
Ecclesiastes 11:1,2*

Did you ever go fishing for guppies with little pieces of bread? It doesn't take too long until you've got a soggy lump which you don't want back. I'm not sure that even the fish like it all that much. But when you cast the Bread of Life upon the waters, which are the multitudes of people, you do it to give them the Truth. You're not looking to get anything back, and yet, the Bible says that you will find it after many days.

I see many in this generation rushing headlong after success and prosperity to make their million before they reach 30. Everything else in their lives becomes secondary in their drive to make it. What will happen if our economy receives its long-awaited judgment from God, and everything they have sacrificed their lives for is gone in an instant?

You don't think that will happen? Our society has removed itself from its former faith in God. Prayer is illegal, and murder of children is promoted. The butchery of almost 60 million babies is not enough. The courts have even allowed partial birth abortion. I guess the thrill of murdering them while they are still unseen in the womb has abated. They need something with a little more gore, so they catch these babies right as they are being born.

Church is no longer the fortification against sin that it used to be. It has become more of a convenience to sooth our conscience. We lean to gutless preachers who are afraid to take a strong stand against sin. Everything now is about "Love". It's no wonder that no one seems to want to hear about Hell anymore. It must stir up guilty consciences.

Darkness is coming. The time is coming when it will be illegal to preach the hard-core Truth. It is already starting. One of these days, your church will be allowed to operate only if it fulfills all the requirements laid upon it by the government. The Devil doesn't care if you have a church, just as long as you don't preach a strong message. He doesn't care if you know what the Truth is; just don't do anything about it. And for "Love's" sake, don't preach about the Fear of God or about Hell. Tell them "smooth" things (Isa. 30:10)

That portion that the Lord asks you to give now while you can is your life. Cast it on the waters. Spread the Gospel. Live a life of sacrifice, and don't worry about getting a return on your efforts for the stand that you take. Tell them the Truth. You don't want to end up looking back at a time when you could have sown the things of God but you didn't give it your all because you were worried about what your congregation thought. That's what happened to Adam.

Cast your bread upon the waters now while you can. It will come back in due time – and it won't come back soggy.

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## Mom

My 95-year-old mother is dying, and I need to fly out to see her before she goes.

95 years is a long time to weather this life, but she's about to see some brand-new incredible things that she's never even dreamed of. The funny thing is that she doesn't even have a clue of what she's about to see.

I have no doubts about where she's going. One of the deals I made with God was that I would serve Him with my entire life and with everything I had to give, if I could trust Him to take care of my house. Throughout the last 33 years, I have seen His faithfulness go over and above that which I would have ever expected of Him, and I trust Him that He will remain ever faithful.

What a wonderful consolation that He is who He is, and not some conjured up philosophy that we only hope will be there for us when we need Him. He is so real that everything else pales in His presence. I have heard his voice, seen his power at work, felt His power and His Spirit, and I know absolutely for sure that He is real.

There is no death for those who are alive in God – just a passing over into real life.

Mom is in for the surprise of her life! I wish I could see her face when she finally sees Jesus.

## Desert Walk

Every real Christian goes through desert walks from time to time. It's all part of growing in the Lord. Some of those times are worse than others, some are longer than others, but you always come out of them eventually.

Occasionally, however, you will go through one that takes you past the edge of your endurance. It is times like that when your faith really gets stretched to its limit.

Tell me if this sounds familiar -- you've been trudging along in the desert for quite a while, but it sure seems like you should've come out of it by now. You are dried out, thirsty, and tired and there doesn't look like there's any relief in sight. You don't even see any mirages, much less an oasis.

It wouldn't be so bad if you knew where you were going, but when you look up at the horizon, all you see is a flat landscape of more and more sand, and you begin to wonder if somehow you lost your direction and are now going around in circles. If you could just see a sign pointing to your destination somewhere, but all you see is sand. No gas stations; no rest areas; not even any 7/11 stores. Just sand.

Did you do something wrong? Did you lose your way? Were you not reading and praying enough? Was it something you said? Where did God go?

To make matters worse, every once in a while, some young kid zooms by you in a Dune Buggy with a grin on his face as he waves in passing. His ministry is running along at 60 mph while you're stuck trudging along one slow step at a time.

Your feet are getting heavy, your get-up-and-go is gone, and you would so love to just toss in the towel. But you can't. You're stuck out here in nowhere land, and if you stop, you'll end up like those bleached bones over there.

It's small consolation that this is supposed to make you grow into your calling in God. About now, you'd just as soon let God give it to somebody else, but He didn't ask you for your opinion, and He didn't give you any choices.

Then again, maybe this isn't really some fire that you're going through or some test. Maybe you are just finished. It is over and this is all there is.

Is it ever going to rain again? Will you ever feel the outpouring of the Holy Ghost once more? You can remember soaking up that Living Water when you prayed, but now it is just a dry well.

Noah was out here. He spent 100 years building a boat in this desert. Moses tended sheep out here for 40 years. Abraham left everything and came through here not knowing where he was going, either. Paul was out here for 13 years before he ever came into his ministry. Joseph spent his entire teen-aged youth here.

But none of that means anything to you because all you see is sand, and you don't know if you're even heading anywhere at all.

But then the answer comes down from the Lord that if you're ever going to be able to tell someone to trust God, you will first have to learn to trust Him yourself.

And then, over the next hilltop comes the scent of rain.

*"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Psalm 30:5*

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## Hungry

*“For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.” 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 1:5*

What ever happened to those old-fashioned Holy Ghost services where the power of God was so strong that you could feel the presence of God as soon as you walked in the door? Does anyone else remember that?

I went to a church this Sunday that has had a reputation for being on-fire and which is led by a nationally known evangelist who has been known for a strong, powerful message. Well, he wasn't there, and neither was the Spirit of God.

Instead, we listened to a religious lecture given by a religious scholar who brought forth his message out of a pile of disheveled papers and notes. Needless to say, I nodded out a couple of times before it was over.

Is it just me? Is there anybody else out there that is still hungry for something more than the Pablum that we are getting fed every Sunday?



I still remember coming out of those old Holy Ghost-filled services inspired by the presence of the power of God, with my heart on fire and filled with a faith in what God could do in my life. The Holy Ghost conviction to seek His face was real and tangible.

It changed my life. And guess what? It was like that every service!

But today, we have Ph.D.'s and theological scholars; prophets of Peace and Prosperity; pastors of Love and Blessings; and career ministers who have to rely on their notes to give a message. As Jeremiah said, "thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins." (Jer. 12:2)

Where have the great men of God gone who stood up in the power and authority of God to deliver messages from the Throne of God, and proclaim the uncompromised reproof of the Word of God? Look around. They're all dead and gone and have been replaced with bookish seminary graduates who know nothing about the fear of the Lord, nor the power of the Holy Ghost.

I feel like I'm sitting there in the midst of that last great day of the feast in Jerusalem when Jesus cried out, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37). Right in the middle of the religious feast, we sit there still hungry, still thirsty. Food all around us, but nothing to eat. We smile a good smile, hug each other, and do our best to convince ourselves that it was a very nice service, but we are not filled.

Is this so strange? Has it not been prophesied that it would come? Yes, over and over again throughout the prophets, into the Gospels and Epistles, and through to the end of the Book.

There is a famine in the land for hearing the real Word of God delivered in the power of that Holy Ghost that Paul spoke of (Amos 8:11). But it is only a test. You will make a decision in your heart whether or not you are satisfied with the homogenized swill that is coming from over the pulpits, or if your heart and soul is hungry for something more.

And that will separate the sheep that hear His voice from the goats that do not.

*"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Matthew 5:6*

## Discretion

*“My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding: that thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge.” Proverbs 5:1,2*

Sounds simple enough. But do we do that?

Lately, I have heard so many endtime theories, that my brain is getting tired. Everybody has a different take on how things are going to happen and in what order they will take place. We have all these different guys running around telling us that they have some new revelation from God.

That is great for selling books, but there are so many out there, that it is hard to keep track. Someone needs to write an Encyclopedia of Endtime Prophecies so we common folks can keep them all straight.

Everybody has a “word from God”. (I wish I could write that with that shaky, affected voice they use when they tell us that), and everybody has a revelation from God. The problem is that one guy tells us one thing which they claim is for sure from the Lord, and then the next guy tells us something completely different, which is also supposed to be from the Lord. It must really make them all feel good to know that they are such spiritual heavyweights, but how am I supposed to know which one of them is right?

I don't know if God keeps changing His mind or is just confused. Maybe it is an Eternal shell game, just to keep us guessing.

Maybe I'm just not bright enough to comprehend it all, but something seems out of whack here. There are literally hundreds of endtime theories out there all claiming to be the real truth.

You know what? I think I'll just take heed to Proverbs and attend to His wisdom and bow down to His understanding. And if I heard Job right, wisdom comes from the Fear of the Lord. I reckon it's more fun to figure out Endtime crossword puzzles than it is to fear God, but in the end, he that fears God shall come forth of them all (Eccl. 7:18).

Sounds good to me. I think I'll just stick to the basics. You can't go wrong with the basics.

Maybe that's what God means by discretion.

## Unlikely Heroes

*“and Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress...” Judges 6:11*

God has a way of calling unlikely heroes to rise to challenges that they had never dreamed of conquering. Almost without exception, God does this in times of oppression that have been thrust upon the people of God because of their apostasy.

The time of Gideon was one of those times. Soon after being delivered into the Promised Land, Israel went after idols, and as a result, the judgments of God fell upon them. It is not until the oppression is crushing that we seem to wake up to our sins – and then we wonder where God has gone.

*“Oh, my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?” Judges 6:13)*

It was because they had not hearkened to the prophets that called them to repentance. When life is good, we don't feel the need to hearken to messages of the Fear of God, of holiness, and a consecrated life. We tend to remain clueless until faced with destruction.

Prophets of peace are always more popular than prophets of doom.

But God is faithful even when we are not. He will always raise up a voice in the wilderness to call us back to Him. His righteousness and judgments stand in the way, but His mercy continually calls us to repentance.

If we are not in such a time as this, then where, as Gideon cried out, are all the miracles that our fathers told us about? Where are the supernatural outpourings of the Holy Ghost? Where are the powerful revivals that once swept the land? Where are the altars packed with repentant sinners? Where are the miracle healings? Where are the changed lives? Where is the focused drive to serve God with all our hearts and to follow the path of the Cross?

Does anyone remember the all-night prayer meetings for God to save souls? It seems we would rather spend an evening with Christian entertainment and singers than spending the night on our knees pouring out our hearts in prayer.

Why is it that we rush like a stampede of cattle to prophets of peace and prosperity instead of preparing our souls to pay the price of a crucified walk? Our focus has turned inward, and we are more enamored with what's in it for us than driven for what we can do for others and for God.

Have we fallen into the same pattern as Israel of old? Have the idols of our lives replaced the altars of God?

Is it any wonder that times have changed? When you change the message, you change the results, and you fall into a pit of apostasy that is earmarked by a Gospel of word only – a mere remembrance of where we had once been.

We need a Gideon church to lead us back to those times of Gospel of power. And it will not come from the established mega-ministries that we see on TV.

It will come from the most unlikely source. It will come from God.

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## O Timothy

*“O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith.” 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:21*

If Paul had a TV and could turn on some of the Christian broadcasts we have today, would he have a fit!

The Book of Timothy was written after Paul had left Timothy in Ephesus to watch over the flock. Now, if all you had to read was the Book of Ephesians, you would think that everything was wonderful there and everybody was going to Heaven. So why did he leave Timothy there?

The exhortations in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy seem to strike a rather different tone. Apparently, young Timothy had his job cut out for him in dealing with the prima donnas that arose out of the Ephesian congregation.

All of a sudden, there were all these spiritual giants rising up, each with their own take on the Gospel. Oh yeah! Real big shots in God! And of course, only they really understand the Truth, so they call the unsuspecting and naïve to follow them.

How do I know? Because it's the same today. Just turn on the TV. As they say, “the more things change, the more they stay the same.”



Wherever you see a strong work of God rise, you will see the 90-day wonders, self-proclaimed prophets, and supposed “avatars from God” abound. (“Where the carcass is, there shall the eagles be gathered together.” Matt. 24:8). The reason for this lies in the nature of human ego and the stubborn resistance to humble oneself. They despise dominion, as the Bible says in Jude 1:8, and are more focused on themselves than on others.

It’s amazing how they always seem to have some “new” idea, a “new” approach, or a “new way”. And of course, it goes without saying that it was “*revealed to them by the Lord*”. The funny thing is that I rarely, if ever, see one that follows a path to the Cross. It’s always about blessings, knowledge, and the pride of life.

And why is it always centered around money? Or as Paul so politely put it, “*perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness:*” (1Tim. 6:5)

Hmmm. Tell you something?

I call them the C.C.A.A. The Christian Con Artists of America.

I suppose they will always be with us, just as they were back there in Ephesus. The trick is to walk in the fear of the Lord so you can see with the eyes of God and recognize the way of true righteousness and holiness.

And hence, there lies the test.

*The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools. Ecclesiastes 9:17*

## Tower of Siloam

*“Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” Luke 13: 4,5*

Did you ever get that creepy feeling just before something bad happens? Sometimes it's so vague that you just brush it away as being something in the salad that you ate last night, but sometimes, it can be like a dark cloud hanging on the horizon – that ominous feeling of impending doom that just won't go away.

I'm not much into the paranormal, but I do believe in the leading of the Holy Spirit. When I get something like that, I just start digging in the Word. I figure that's how God speaks to us, right? If He wants us to know something, it will come out in reading and prayer.

I had that feeling before 9/11 and have heard from many other Christians that they had felt the same way – something terrible was coming to shake the Christian church to its roots. I feel that same feeling again.

After the twin towers fell, a lot of introspection went on. People started praying; they went to church; they held hands and sang songs to God; but after a certain space of time, we went back to business as usual. Well, maybe not exactly as usual, but our focus did go back to our everyday lives.

Were the thousands that were in those buildings sinners above the rest of us? No, of course not. They were regular folks like us – it's just that they found out the Truth a little bit sooner than the rest of us.

And what about us? Have we come to the conclusion that we are living on borrowed time, or have we gone about our daily lives as usual? Have we become like the man who built himself bigger barns to store his goods so he could relax, eat, drink, and be merry, not realizing that his soul would be required that night?

I've noticed that, in the Word of God, many times there will be a call to repentance, then something, or a threat of something, will happen that gets our attention. God sends prophets to warn us, but after the threat has subsided, we tend to go back to our old ways. It is then that the real judgment from God falls with unfailing certainty.

Could it be that, except we repent, we shall all likewise perish? It may be that we have spent more time pursuing Al Qaeda than we have God.

I realize that we all believe that we are all OK with God, but perhaps we should consider that that is exactly how everybody feels. Everybody's right, and nobody's wrong, and we're all going to Heaven together.

Uh, I'm not so sure about that.

There are these ominous prophecies in the Bible of the End Times that are almost too scary to consider. If they are true, then as the old saying goes, "We ain't seen nuthin' yet". The worst is yet to come.

If you're building a career for yourself in this life or investing your life in a tomorrow that may never come, take a moment and consider the man who built his storehouses for tomorrow.

Make sure your soul is right with God today, for tomorrow may dramatically change your life. Or it may never come.

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## Roadtrip

I just got back from a road trip this weekend that took me all the way out to West Texas and back. I saw a lot of sand, mesquite, and scrub brush, but I also saw a lot of people from a lot of different places.

There's a lot of folks out there, and most of them are good people -- just honest, decent working people like us, working out their lives trying to get through life. In a lot of those places out there, there isn't much going on. No busy thoroughfares, no wild honky-tonks, no high-tech stress jobs, no globally important occupations -- just everyday people with everyday jobs and everyday aspirations, living their lives out day to day.

I wondered as I was passing through, what does God require out of us all? True, the Bible spends a lot of time urging us to live our lives on fire for God as a bright and shining testimony to win souls for the kingdom of God, but how does that apply to someone living way out in the backside of the desert? What are they supposed to do? Go out and preach to the coyotes out there?

Where does God draw the line, or does He? You know what? I don't know. Maybe there's a whole lot required of some of us that isn't required of others. Then again, maybe if we could all see the stark reality of Eternity, we would choose a different lifestyle. Who knows?

One thing did stand out to me, however, and that was how much we all need inspiration if we are going to do anything for the Lord. The Lord said we are sheep – great at following, but not so good at leading. We can't do it on our own. We need leaders to keep us going -- men that excite and inspire us to reach higher and drive onward.

There aren't very many of them out there these days. Churches are filled with apologetic ministers who are unable to take power and authority in God. TV is filled with con artists who are obsessed with fleecing the sheep.

What ever happened to the great powerhouses in God that once led us onward into battle? They're all dead, and, sad to say, so are most of us.

We desperately need a revival. I'm not sure we really understand how desperately we need one. If we did, perhaps we wouldn't be so settled in the complacency of "church as usual".

Revival has to start with a realization of how far away we are from what God called us to be. People need to not only know, but to feel that conviction deep in their hearts. It takes strong, anointed preachers to bring that kind of Holy Ghost conviction. Conviction brings repentance in the church, repentance brings heartfelt, desperate prayer, and that's what brings revival.

We've got a ways to go.

Pray that God will raise up ministers that are invested with the anointing of the Holy Ghost to stand up in the power and authority of God to bring forth that powerful inspiration we so desperately need.

Otherwise, we'll be left out in the desert howling at the moon.



## Thanksgiving and the Passover

*“It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt...” Ex.12:42*

You think the Pilgrims were thankful? Oi Vey! The children of Israel were thankful! Passover was the original Thanksgiving!

Four hundred years in the iron furnace. Count ‘em – one, two, three, four, five, six, seven – that’s a long time sweating in the desert under slavery. And just like that, the children of Israel were out. They were free. No more bondage.

The Lord instituted the feast of Passover so that they would always remember and always be thankful that He had delivered them from Egypt. “It is a night to be much observed...”

And yet, Passover was simply a foreshadowing of a much greater deliverance – a deliverance that would be wrought on an old rugged Cross so many years later by the Son of God himself. We were delivered from the bondage of sin by the sacrifice and blood of the one true Lamb of God. How much more we have to be thankful for.

As we sit down to our turkey and recount the blessings that we have received, let us not forget the greatest blessing of all – that we can have Salvation through the selfless death of a Savior who chose to give His life so we could choose Life.

## Uzzah

*“And when they came to Nachon’s threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.” 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 6: 6,7*

If there ever was a passage in the Bible that demonstrates the difference between how we perceive the personality of God and how He really is, this is it.

The standard response for this incredibly severe judgment has been that Uzzah was not a Levite, and so therefore, he made a fatal mistake by touching the Ark. But there is much more to it than just that, and it strikes at the very heart of today’s modern Christianity.

The Ark of Testimony was never supposed to be borne on a cart. It was supposed to be carried by the Levites. It was fairly large and was overlaid within and without with pure gold -- even the staves were completely overlaid with gold -- so it was enormously heavy. It was a heavy burden that had to be borne. Only the Lord could enable the Levites to carry that burden. Flesh could not do it alone. They needed the Spirit of God.

What a message for today! We, as the priests of the Lord, are commissioned to carry the Cross in this world. It is a burden that is heavy. So heavy, in fact, that unless we are walking in the depth of the Holy Spirit, we can't carry that cross, and we will fall to the weakness of flesh. We need the Spirit of God.

But it seems that we are always looking for a cart to place that burden on – some easier Gospel that is more in tune with what we would prefer. “Feel Good” ministries abound, and people flock by the thousands to Prosperity preachers that will tell them all about the blessings and prosperity of God. We are always looking for a Gospel without a Cross.

But where are the old preachers that pointed us to the valleys and to a crucified walk before God? Where are the messages that exhort us to take on the sufferings of the Cross and a life of self-denial and sacrifice?

Feeding on the Word of God has turned into programs that skim the Bible in a year. Deep fasting and prevailing prayer have become light, superficial exercises in futility – “Mickey Mouse” prayers and one-meal fasts.

The fear of God has been turned into “awesome respect”, holy boldness has become “judgmental” and righteousness and holiness has become legalism. We're so afraid that we will offend someone that we no longer have the guts to take a strong stand for Righteousness.

Our Christian warriors have turned into Boy Scouts ... and Satan is pleased.

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But hey, it's nice to be nice. Or is it? Go ask Uzzah. While the path to the mountaintops of our Christian walk may be beaten down by the multitudes seeking all the blessings of God, you will find no substance there. The sun is shining, the blessings abound, and everything is beautiful, peace, love and joy -- but it is not the place where real Christians are forged.

No, that is reserved for the valleys -- those dark paths that lead down to where the sun doesn't shine, and everything is cold and hard. That is where you will find the footprints of the heroes who have gone on before us. That is where you get stretched, and broken, and tried in the fire so that the "You" is taken out of you to become a broken, empty vessel prepared and meet for the Master's use. Only then can you be brought forth as fine gold. The true riches of God can only be found down on your hands and knees on the floor of that valley. There is no victory without a struggle, and there is no prosperity without a price.

How few seek that path! It is not where we choose to go, but it is where we are led.

The burden of the Lord is heavy, but it is our trust in the Spirit of God to carry our burdens that gives us the confidence to pick up those staves of gold.

The Ark cannot be placed on a cart. Just like the Cross, it has to be borne.

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## Christmastime

It's Christmastime again!

Houses are lit up and dressed, Christmas trees are being decorated with their traditional gaudy drippings of tinsel, and there is a magic in the air. There's just something special about Christmastime.

For years, I've listened to the objections from Ebenezer nay-sayers about Christmas, and after deep consideration, I remain unconvinced.

Yes, I know that Jesus was not born on Dec. 25<sup>th</sup>. As a matter of fact, he wasn't even born in winter. If you want to get technical about it, you can track the time from John the Baptist's birth, which had to be during the time of his father's ministry (he was of "the course of Abia"), and do the math. He was born during the Feast of Tabernacles. Besides, the shepherds were guarding their flocks by night ... outside. The cold of Winter would not have been a good time for that.

Then there is the objection out there of why the date of Dec. 25<sup>th</sup> was chosen. Because it was a Roman Catholic compromise with a pagan holiday, many feel that in itself pollutes it.

Besides, they say, Jesus never asked us to celebrate his birth, only his death. Well, to be quite technical again, if you'll excuse me, he didn't even ask us to do that. It was the Last Supper that he asked us to celebrate.

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And it goes on and on, including those that think that what we should really observe are the Jewish feasts in the Old Law – and boy, is that another long story!

Maybe I'm just getting too old for all this stuff, but for me, Christmastime still holds its magic. What is it about that feeling in the air that pervades only this season? No other time during the year can you feel that spirit of peace settling upon the earth like a soft snow drifting down. People all over, believers and non-believers alike, get that warm feeling deep in their hearts like hot spiced apple cider on a cold, blustery day. There's just something different about Christmas.

An old Holy Ghost preacher once told me that, even though it is not the exact day that the Savior of all mankind came to Earth, Christmas is still a moment that, for one short time of the year, the Spirit of God descends upon humanity to remind them of the Love of God and His gift to them.

God honors Christmas with His presence. And that, my friend, is good enough for me.

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## Ho, Ho, Ho! Merry Christmas!

I sure hope Santa Claus made it to Heaven. Of course, they say he is still alive and living at the North Pole. It may be waterfront property up there, but, man, you have got to really love Christmas to weather that climate. But then, if you are just going to show up once a year, it's probably the best place for seclusion -- plus you've got a lot of room to store all those toys.

What I'm afraid of is that Santa is surrounded with all those elves. Where the heck did the elves come from? All those weird little scooters with the pointed ears and funny voices. I never saw elves written in the Bible, so I can only wonder if they are some kind of form of fallen angels or something. If that's the case, Santa's in trouble.

Even if they don't cause Santa to fall into sin (and let's face it, there isn't a whole lot of trouble he can get into at the North Pole), it can be just as bad, maybe even worse, if they cause him to forget the real reason for Christmas. That's like getting hired for a job and forgetting to show up for work.



Come to think of it, I don't remember Santa ever saying anything about Jesus, the virgin birth, much less Salvation, which is the whole purpose of Christmas. Did he forget what Christmas is all about? Heck, I can understand if he doesn't wear a "Jesus T-shirt" up there in the snow, but his sled doesn't even have bumper sticker with a fish on it! Scheesch! What kind of a Christian is that?

Then again, if he did, the ACLU would put a stop to his deliveries real quick, throw him in jail, and accuse him of being a religious bigot. That would really ruin Christmas, now wouldn't it?

So, Santa is relegated to an ever-present "Ho, Ho, Ho". Kinda fuzzy and inoffensive, but hey, he's an old man, probably senile by now, and too tired to make a case about it. Kinda like the rest of us.

After all, Christmas is for kids, isn't it? Or is it? Somebody help me out here – I think I'm getting as senile as Santa, and I'm afraid that I've forgotten.

Still, I really like the old guy in the big red suit, and I love all the lights and glitter that go along with the season. Call me a heathen, but I have a Christmas tree in my living room full of gifts underneath. I just wish there was a little more Christ in Christmas, and a little less Ho, Ho, Ho.

I'll bet it's the elves' fault.

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## About the Author



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

## DALEN GARRIS

Since 2004, he has been lighting the fires of revival in churches spread across sub-Saharan Africa. During the course of 17 years, he preached in over a thousand churches, has seen hundreds of churches set on fire and explode with growth. He has prayed with hundreds of people who were instantly supernaturally healed and tens of thousands who have been saved. And the fires are still burning.

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

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

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

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