



A Voice
in the Wilderness

Volume 2

Revival in the Wings

Dulan Garris

**A Voice in the
Wilderness,
volume 4**

Revival in the Wings

Dalen Garris

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

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*Published by Revivalfire Ministries
Cover design by Kevin Haislip
Cover photo by Christina Gottardi*

ISBN 13: 978-1-7342213-4-3

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First paperback printing September, 2020

Printed in the United States of America

Many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless women: for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come ...

Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

(Isaiah 32:10, 15)

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Signposts

Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; (Hebrews 6:19)

Our gaze into what lies before us is always clouded by Time. Our next few steps are all we can see clearly. There are indications and signposts that hint of the places we are heading to, but they lead in so many different ways that it is hard to know which path we'll be led down. But we must start walking anyway.

There are a lot of paths that I would like to travel down. One of them would lead toward having a place to gather young people so I could show them all the wonderful things I have learned in the Word of God over the years. Yeah, I like that one, but that signpost is faded, and I'm not sure to which direction, if any, it is pointing.

I see some other signs, bright and flashy billboards advertising all the different directions I could go to promote my business and make money, but they all have that garish Coney Island veneer to them and have somehow lost their appeal.

Some signs point one way and some point another; others are bright and clear but do not point in any particular direction at all.

The sign I would like would point to the reality that lies beyond the veil. The people of this world only see with their carnal eyes, and the reality of Eternity lies just beyond their grasp. They look at the evidence around them but fail to see the source. I would like to go down a path that would change that, but we don't always get to choose what we want.

There is one sign that doesn't point at all but beckons me to come and follow. The writing on it is blurred and hazy, and although I can't see what is written on it, it calls to me that this is the way to come.

What lies down that road, and where will it take me? Is there something exciting waiting for me down there? Are there some great open doors that will open to me? Or perhaps it will be just a continued walk of patience and faith through tribulation and hard times? Wherever the path leads, am I willing to accept what He has in store for me, even if it is not what I wanted?

Hearts are not changed by facts or fair speeches, by what we know or hope for, or by adherence to traditions. Only when we pierce through that veil

and touch the heart of God will we be able to see the reality of Life clearly.

It is only then that the writing on that signpost can be seen clearly.

To Conceal a Thing

It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings is to search out a matter. (Proverbs 25:2)

Everybody has those times when you just don't know what to do. It's easy for someone to just tell you to simply seek the Lord for your answers, but oftentimes that means entering into a very nebulous arena where there are few clear-cut signposts to show you the way.

You want an answer? Oh, well praise the Lord, just pray! Sounds so simple, doesn't it? But you and I both know it isn't always that simple. Sometimes the right answers are elusive and are found hiding behind shadowy rocks and vague shapes in a misty landscape.

The Lord does want me to do the right thing, doesn't He? Why doesn't He make things more obvious? Can't He just tell me what I'm supposed to do and leave it at that? Wouldn't that make things so much simpler?

Well, yes and no.

Sometimes, He just wants to see how much you really want that answer and how many obstacles you are willing to overcome to get it. Remember, He didn't say it is to those who try, but to those who

overcome that will eat of the Tree of Life. (Rev. 2:7) It really strikes at the heart of our willingness to carry the Cross.

Sometimes it is just a matter of getting us to realize how much we need Him. If everything were easy, there would be no reason to seek His face. After a while, the price that was paid on the Cross would not seem as big of a deal anymore. We could just snap our fingers and God would spring into action! God loves us, doesn't He?

Everyone would like a Gospel without a Cross -- that is why there are so many Prosperity preachers out there -- but there is no such Gospel. We are thrust into a war where the combatants are invisible, our choice of paths are often dictated by desires instead of sight, and the ultimate ends for our souls can only be taken by faith.

To negotiate the way before us we need a determination to resist the comforts that our flesh pulls us toward, and reach through to the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, fueled by the hope of righteousness above all things.

That's tough sometimes. And that's why the Lord puts us through those dark valleys that we must go through.

No, I don't like it either. But you know what? Above all things, I want to go to Heaven.

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

Swimming Pool

When I first got saved, it was like being invited to a party where they had a swimming pool in the backyard and not knowing how to swim. Once I overcame my initial reluctance and dove into the water, I found out how wonderful it was.

As a young Christian with all my new friends, I had the time of my life playing and splashing in all that water. We had so much fun! There were some, I noticed, who watched but would not dive in. And there were others who would dip in the water and get wet, but would quickly get out of the pool, and, after they had dried off, would not go back in. I have always had a hard time understanding that.

As time has gone on, I have been invited to a lot of backyard parties. Some had swimming pools; some did not. Many of the pools that I saw didn't have any water in them, or at the very best, didn't have enough to dive into. I could never figure it out. If you go to the trouble of having a pool in your backyard, why wouldn't you fill it up?

There is always a good excuse. Either it isn't the season, or the cost of filling it up with water is too high. Sometimes they just didn't know where the water spigot is or how to turn it on. There have even been some who had no idea that there was supposed

to be water in the pool. I guess they must have figured that having a pool in their backyard was enough in itself.

I miss swimming in those deep pools. I've tried to explain to people what it was like, but if you've never experienced an all-out Holy Ghost revival, you just don't know what you're missing. And if you have, nothing else will do. (And by the way, having a lighted marquis out front and scheduling God to show up at 7 PM is not a revival.)

I have watched our younger generation grow up without any idea of what it is like to dive into the waters of the Spirit of God. Oh sure, they've heard the stories, but it seems no one knows how to fill up the pool anymore. And those who do, have no desire to go through the effort.

Instead, they introduce videos, programs, seminars, and books to entertain their guests. It is like a vicarious salvation -- almost as good as the real thing. At least you get to watch it. That's fun, isn't it?

Is it a small wonder that we are losing our youth to the more exciting real-world temptations out there? This is the Coke generation -- they want the real thing. When you don't have it, they will look for it somewhere else.

Messages of peace, love and prosperity will not turn on the faucet. Only the strength of righteousness can turn that handle, and that only comes from God. You have to get up to the Throne of God to get that strength. How do you get up there? Reading and prayer – STRONG reading and prayer.

Unfortunately, not too many people even know how to pray anymore. And their reading consists of a few snacks from some “easy-reading” Bible mixed into a soup of TV, self-help books, and packaged programs at church.

Think I’m kidding? When is the last time you gathered at church for an all-night prayer meeting where you actually got up and stormed Heaven all night long, out loud and on fire, for God to send a revival? And kept on praying until you broke through to the Throne to get an answer? A real answer!

Yeah. That’s what I thought. Me neither.

How about reading? Does your Bible reading consist of devouring the Scriptures every day, searching for and finding those golden nuggets? Are you watching daily at His gates, waiting at the posts of his doors? (Prov. 8:34) Or are you sending in your “love offering” for \$29.95 to have somebody else do it so you can read their book?

Revival does not come cheap. (Read Joel chapter 2). There are no shortcuts, and there is no easy way out. But the price of failure can be seen on the faces of our young generation that has never experienced what the power of God can do.

The blame falls squarely on our Pastors. The Bible doesn't say "woe to the congregation that scatters the pastors". It says, "Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!" (Jer. 23:1)

It is, after all, their backyard.

Zion

Zion is and has always been the habitation of God.

At one time, that included all of Israel under David and Solomon, but when the kingdom was divided, Israel separated from Judah and worshipped a false imitation of the truth. Israel then became a people who had once known the Lord but had fallen to the spiritual adultery of a worldly religion.

Famine and drought and pestilence and war could not bring them back to a place of repentance, so they were given up to the terrible judgments of God. Had they sought the Lord, they could have returned to Him, but they did not.

Those who were in Judah were not grieved for the affliction of Israel. They felt that, in their prosperity, they were immune, and so fell into the apostasy that spelled out their own doom.

We exist in a similar situation. The Gospel that we hear preached in America today is not the same Gospel that once thundered over our pulpits. Our altar calls are no longer packed with sinners who came on bended knees to beg God's forgiveness, but rather, have become little more than pity lines for a new job, a new home, or a touch of the flu. The strong power and authority of God is no longer

found in many of our pulpits. Neither are we grieved for the lost. We are no longer the spiritual Zion we once were.

God has sent a spiritual famine for hearing the strong messages of the Word of God (Amos 8:11), and He has sent a spiritual drought for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost in our services. We are diseased with a spiritual pestilence that has spread through the world of Modern Christianity. We are at constant war with the dark secular forces of our society, and yet, what do we hear in our churches but singing and dancing, songs of love and blessings, and prophets of peace and prosperity. And we are not grieved for the affliction of spiritual Israel. (Amos 6:6)

While others preach a rosy picture for America and the gentler, kinder Christianity that we have chosen, I see the dark rumblings of judgment coming. We are about to see times spoken about in ancient prophesies that this world has never seen – worse than 9/11, worse than WWII.

It will not come because of the wickedness of sinners, but rather because of the apostasy of Zion. And they will blame the Christians – the real Christians – the ones who made a stand for the uncompromised principles of the Word of God.

It is written; it will surely come to pass.

There is a place of repentance that can be found only at the Throne of God. The call for repentance can still be heard from those who refuse to compromise the righteousness of God and who are grieved for the affliction of Zion, but it can only be answered by souls who hunger for the Truth.

A plumbline is set, the lines are being drawn, choices are being made, and a division is being made between the sheep and the goats. Multitudes are in the Valley of Decision.

Choose wisely.

*And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou?
And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold,
I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel:
I will not again pass by them anymore:*

(Amos 7:8)

Without a Vision

Without a vision, the people perish... (Proverbs 29:18)

I have listened carefully to the recent debates concerning gay marriage. Just by the fact there is even a debate about it causes me to despair about the future of our society. We are following the historic paths of the great societies throughout time that declined into moral degradation and ultimately perished.

The word is that the homosexual issue can be won by relegating it to social and legal arguments instead of moral ones. If we admit that homosexuality is merely a preference or a medical anomaly, then how can we deny them their social rights?

It makes for a difficult point to argue against if you take God out of the picture. After all, they are people too, aren't they?

Rambling on and on about statistics and studies on the effects of social change can go on forever without ever coming to a conclusion. Let's do another study! We don't know enough about it already. We'll just argue this thing to death by trying to prove our opinion with slippery facts.

How in the world did we get so far away from our roots? How did we allow ourselves to step off the bedrock of moral absolutes into the quicksand of relative truths?

It started when we left off to fear the Lord.

First, it was that the fear of God isn't really "dread" or trembling fear. It was just "awesome respect". Oh, that sounds so much better doesn't it? God really loves us, and He wouldn't be some old, austere, judgmental God, now would He?

Then it was just, "have a little talk with Jesus" and you got your ticket in! Hakuna Matata. You don't have to worry about it anymore. God is Love! Hooray!

Well, now that we have got that settled, we can slack off on our intensity to walk in extreme holiness and righteousness. Neither do we have to read and pray as if our lives depended on it anymore. We can just cruise on through. Or, as one old man put it, "just relax and be raptured".

Where did this all start? In the Seminaries and Bible Colleges. It took some time, but with a little here and a little there, Satan worked a perfect plan to take the guts out of the Gospel. We now have very well-educated ministers who know all about administration; they know all about Greek Lexicons; they're all read up on the latest "self-help" Christian

books, they're established in church doctrines, and they know how to "prepare" their sermons and balance the church finances ... but they've forgotten how to walk in the Spirit of God.

And there is no outpouring of the Holy Ghost in the land. It's been so long since we've had one that we don't even know what a revival is anymore, and we don't have a clue as to what it takes to have one.

And so, we are left with a sophisticated church that has no life in it. The tethers that tie us to that bedrock of Truth have been severed, because it is only through the Fear of the Lord that men depart from evil – nothing else. Take that away, and you slip off the Rock into quicksand.

The excitement that drives a revival only comes after a people realize their apostasy and come to a place of deep, brokenhearted repentance and begin to cry out to God with all their hearts. The blueprint for a God-sent revival is in the Book of Joel.

Without that, you don't have a vision. All you have is "church as usual".

Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to

anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

(Joel 2:12-13)

Titus

And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him.

(2Cor. 7:15)

I read this Scripture yesterday and it really stopped me cold.

I am always ready to talk about the Fear of God, and how the modern church has diluted it to a more socially correct definition of “respect”. The Fear of God is rarely preached today like it was generations ago, and as a result, our whole attitude toward judgment has deteriorated. God, who was once the holy, awesome Almighty before whom we stood with fear and trembling has now been relegated to a God of all-embracing Love who is our “Daddy” instead of our God.

I try to be quick to explain that God’s Love is contingent upon our continued walk in holiness. He loves those who keep His commandments, but He hates the workers of iniquity. (His words, not mine.) That’s not exactly “unconditional love”. Let’s face it, God is a Jew. He makes deals, and that is the deal.

Nevertheless, when I read in 2 Corinthians 7:15 how that they had received Titus, a minister of God,

with fear and trembling, I had to pause. What a different picture than what we have today!

Imagine receiving one of our popular televangelists today with fear and trembling. Or consider listening with great trepidation to one of our many prosperity preachers who expand the concept of Love into an art form for tithing. Imagine yourself hanging fearfully on every word from your Pastor. It's just not going to happen.

Why should we? Our Pastors are all nice guys, our prophets are wrapped in garments of peace, and our preachers entice us with loving messages. There is no room for those old Holy Ghost messages of hellfire and brimstone anymore. They're just old-fashioned, crotchety old men who just don't get it. We are too sophisticated these days for any such hard-edged Gospel as that. Today, it's all about Love.

We are missing those men of God who had real authority – the kind of authority that you can feel way down in your bones – the kind of men that, when they walk in a room, you can feel the power of God upon them. And, when they speak, everybody listens. What ever happened to those guys?

Well, we've dismissed them. We don't like that uncomfortable feeling we get when we listen to them, and we really don't want to give up our ideas

of personal independence and submit to reproof with abject humility. No, we like those other guys that tell us smooth things. They give us a Gospel that goes down a lot easier.

But God, in Heb. 1:7, says that He expects his ministers to be a flame of fire. (shudder)

Remember when the woman who had the issue of blood was cleansed when she touched the hem of Jesus' garment (Mark 5:33)? She fell down with fear and trembling. Why was that? Because Jesus had that powerful authority in God. And how did Jesus get that authority? The Bible says he was heard in that He feared! (Heb. 5:7)

It is the fear of God that gives you authority and power in God to stand as a true minister with the supernatural presence of the Holy Spirit upon you. The fear of God is wisdom; it is strength; it is confidence; it is true happiness; and it gives you holy boldness. Without the fear of God, you can only get skin-deep.

When a minister of God stands with that kind of authority in God, you will feel that same fear and trembling that the Corinthians felt. There is a power in his words and an anointing in his presence that can be felt way down in your soul. It is not the man whom we fear, but the power of God that is upon him.

But our values have changed. Fear and Hell have become four-lettered words that we avoid like ... well, ... like what they are.

There just isn't much of a market these days for ministers of fire, and, as they say, you get what you pay for.

Trust and Barry

I love hanging around Barry. Barry is a guy whose main desire in life is to serve the Lord. He doesn't care if he is rich or poor -- he just wants to seek the face of the Lord.

Now, when you have that kind of desire, you're always faced with the shortcomings of the flesh that keeps you from attaining to that place in God that you're striving for. It just comes with the territory. The Apostle Paul referred to it as his "vile flesh" that was always trying to hold him back. You want to get to that consecrated walk with God and be completely in the Spirit, but your flesh, of course, has other ideas. It's a struggle, but that's what keeps you going.

Barry was praying while watering his flowers the other day and out of frustration with himself, he asked God, "Why don't you just break me?"

And the Lord answered him on the spot, "Because you don't trust Me enough."

Whoa! That's a mouthful! But in that answer lies the essence of the Cross.

Now, my first thought would have been, "Lord, I'm not 100% sure I want to trust you that much." But I also know that if you ever want to be anything in God, you have to be willing to let Him take you through those valleys to break you and empty you

out so that He can fashion you into a vessel that is “meet for the Master’s use”. (2 Tim. 2:21)

All the ego and pride and all the desires for self and what you want in life must go. In its place there must be a willingness to humble yourself to a total surrender. Until you are emptied out and broken, God cannot use you in any great and mighty way. How could He? Your ego would be trying to share the glory with God.

But to allow God to break you, you have to trust Him. You have to know that you are right with God, that He is in control, and that you are willing to go through whatever comes your way for the glory of God.

That can be tough sometimes. Are you sick and afflicted? Are you broken and oppressed? Does everyone else seem to be cruising along in Life while you’re trudging along in the mud? Has Life dealt you a crummy hand and you seem to be left with the fuzzy end of the lollipop?

Do you trust God?

The Prosperity Prophets out there tell us that God is supposed to be fair, and He’s supposed to pour out blessings on us, but let me tell you, friend, God ain’t fair. If God was fair, we’d all be burning in Hell right now. If He was fair, Jesus Christ wouldn’t have had to die in our place because He didn’t do

anything wrong. No, God ain't fair -- and that is the mercy of God

This isn't about us – it's about others. The Cross calls us to a crucified walk in God that requires a brokenness in your spirit that doesn't come easy. It takes a deep, surrendered trust in God to be able to allow Him to take us there – a trust so deep that, as Job said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him". (Job 13:15)

God has a Plan, and if you want to be part of it, you must yield and let Him take control of your life. It's only when we surrender and trust Him completely that we will find that place of perfect peace that passes all understanding.

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. (Proverbs 3:6,7)

Revival vs. Reformation

There is talk out there in theological circles about the difference between the terms revival and reformation. (I won't bore you – look it up in Webster's)

A real move of God is usually neither. Real moves of God are almost always rebellion.

Biblical history records a repetitive cycle of apostasy, going all the way back to the Red Sea. First you have the heady excitement of being part of a great move of God, but after a while, however, the fire dies down and the people of God settle into complacency. (It seems we are aroused only under adversity.)

Complacency always slides into a worldly apostasy where the dividing lines between holy and profane become blurred, as in the issue over homosexual bishops.

At that point, God sends His prophets with warnings to repent ... or else.

The real job of a prophet is not to tell the future. Gypsies with crystal balls and Tarot cards do that. The real job of a prophet is to "stand in the gaps" and call the people of God back to a place of repentance. (Eze. 13:5) Their prophecies are merely a result of their call for judgment. Light and vain

prophets of prosperity, like we see today, are not true prophets of God.

Real prophets of God are almost always rejected, but the seed that they plant take root in the hearts of those who have a hunger for righteousness and Truth. Often, they do not get to see the results of their labor, but the seed does grow, and the next wave of believers will come forth out of it to reject the old system and establish a new move of God.

A new move of God always brings persecution. That, for some reason, is what fuels the drive and dedication that is needed to separate us from the dead carcass that was the Church of the previous age. You need look no further than the fiery beginnings of your own denomination to see this.

I do not see a reformation of the churches, per se. What I see is a rebellion that becomes a rejection of the old ways of the established Church and a rebirth of the original principles of the Word of God.

When the church is dead, it is dead, plain and simple. Ever hear of "beating a dead horse"? It is not going to get up and go anywhere no matter how hard you try to pump its lungs. No theological discussion will ever breathe life back into it.

The problem with dead churches is that they don't think they're dead -- hence, the persecution.

Look at the Army in the 2nd chapter of the Book of Joel. They don't sound like "church people" to me. Quite the contrary, they'd probably get thrown out of most of the churches today. And yet, this is the move of God that is coming.

Pray for it. Pray to see a fresh outpouring of the Holy Ghost and to see men of God that are really on fire -- something we haven't seen in a while. I want to see warriors stand up in the authority of the power of God to bring forth thundering messages of Holy Ghost Conviction in the Spirit of God -- not prepared messages of homogenized swill and conciliatory Pabulum to placate their congregations.

My point? High-sounding theological scholasticism is a carnal diversion. And to be carnally minded is death. Call it revival, reformation, restoration, rebellion, rejection -- whatever. Who cares what you call it!

A revival by any other name is just as sweet.

Surprise

And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. (Isaiah 25:7)

Picture this for a moment. World opinion has moved against Israel to the point that she has become a burdensome stone for the entire world. The only hope that world leaders have for a lasting peace is to subjugate Israel and force her to bend to their decrees of submission.

Israel doesn't want to do that. They flat out refuse. So, the world press paints a picture of Israel as a rebellious, renegade nation that, in the eyes of the world, makes Israel look like such a serious threat to world peace that she must be forcibly crushed.

The armies of the world join to surround and destroy her. Crowds cheer as they read that half of Jerusalem has been taken in ferocious fighting. The Jews' back is against the wall, the Death Knell has begun to ring, and victory is at hand.

And then, surprise, surprise! Jesus Christ splits the skies and descends to fight for His people in a fury that the world has never known and will never forget.

Oops!

Now they know. But how had they become so blinded?

According to the Scriptures, it is because they listened to their prophets. They had been convinced that they were executing a righteous cause in the name of Peace. They chased all the old-fashioned preachers from the pulpits because they didn't bring messages of peace and love, and they labeled the prophets that had called for the righteous indignation of the Lord as mean, divisive, and judgmental.

Didn't those hellfire and brimstone preachers understand that the only way to peace was to accept all religions into an ecumenical One World Religion? Didn't those hateful prophets understand that God was Love and all those divergent lifestyles were just a different way of approaching God? Why were they preaching Hate?

Well, I guess the only real answer I can give is because it is the Truth.

Real prophets of God are not nice guys – they aren't supposed to be. And if my Bible is correct, they never appeared to be very high on whatever the religious order of the day was. And some of them were pretty nasty about it. But Preachers of courage divide between sin and righteousness, and every

man that walks godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution as a result of it. (2 Tim. 3:12)

One only has to read the newspapers to see the march of radical individualism and unrestrained Liberalism moving us to the free licentiousness of Sodom and Gomorrah – and it’s considered a godly and loving thing. Boy, are we suckers!

But it’s all because we have chosen our own delusions, and we have allowed our prophets of peace and love to sell us a candy-coated gospel that seems so ...uh ... nice. It is the hour of temptation that will come to try the whole world. (Rev. 3:10)

It would be so easy to say that the way to see through this deception is to simply read and pray. However, if that is not mixed with the fear of God, your understanding will be superficial at best. Unfortunately, the fear of God is gradually being relegated to a four-lettered word and translated to a more acceptable “reverence” and “respect”, not that “trembling” stuff or that “dread” that is written in the old King James.

But when that covering is cast away, we will see Him as He really is.

And then we will know.

CIA Plot

NEWLY UNCOVERED EVIDENCE! CIA PLOT DISCOVERED TO BE BEHIND THE JESUS MOVEMENT IN THE 70'S TO DESTROY THE REAL GOSPEL!

(Yes, I really did read this.)

That's funny. I was there, and I never saw the CIA. But I sure did feel the powerful outpouring of the Holy Ghost and watched as thousands upon thousands of souls were miraculously saved. I tried doing the math once, and I came up with over 20,000 souls a year for several years that were saved in a little church with a sanctuary that was not much bigger than your living room. And that was just our church. Now how on earth did the CIA accomplish that?

I guess the conspiracy buffs have run out of new things to get all rustled up about. The Black Helicopters have vanished, the concentration camps for patriots never materialized, and Y2K turned out to be a joke. But hey, everybody's got to have a hobby.

Why are some people so enamored with getting the inside scoop on dark nefarious plots, secret political agendas, and cabalistic symbolism and numerologies? Does this stuff just excite their

overactive religious imaginations, or is it a narcotic that feeds their desire to “be in the know”?

I have no doubt that Satan has a plan for world domination in the last days, because the Bible says so, but some of these guys have turned end-time prophesy into a fulltime college curriculum. Perhaps they need to have a national convention like the Star Trekkies where they can all get together and get their daily rush from swapping the latest “newly uncovered plot”.

Many of them have the whole schedule of end-time events all figured out. They know who will do what where, and when they will do it. Golly, they even know when Jesus is coming back because it fits their schedule of the old Jewish feasts.

Flushed with their self-satisfaction of being so enlightened, they can’t help themselves from letting the rest of us know how knowledgeable they are. They would seem a whole lot wiser to me if they would just shut up and keep it to themselves. Even a fool, the Bible says, would be counted wise if he would hold his peace.

But they can’t help themselves because they are drawn by a very subtle lust to “make one wise”, the same one that Eve fell for (Gen. 3:6). These guys are so smart that they have become fools.

As for me, I'd like to stick to the basics and the "weightier matters of the law" – judgment, righteousness and mercy (Matt. 23:23) . The whole point of the Gospel is to walk in the Spirit of God and win souls, not figure out end-time conspiracies and schedule Christ's return. Of course, I suppose that's not very exciting to some, and it doesn't do much for feeding your ego.

And he said unto them, it is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. (Acts 1: 7)

Intensity

I have always lived my life in intensity. Everything always has to be so dog-gone important. Sometimes I feel like a helium balloon straining at the ropes bursting to take off.

There are times when I wonder if that is the way it is supposed to be, or am I just tripping? But I look back and see three things in my life that made me the way I am.

Before I got saved, I was tormented with the thought that there was no meaning to life. I refused to believe in God or any kind of life after death. It was a simple conclusion, really. If God was really up there, then, where was He? And why didn't He show himself to us? It did not make any sense to me that God would hide and leave us to figure it out for ourselves -- and if you didn't get it right, you went to Hell. If God was really there, it didn't sound like He was playing fair, and it didn't sound too smart. Hey, if you want us to believe in you and do the stuff you want us to do, then how about giving us a clue?

And yet, in the depths of my soul, I could feel that there had to be something more to life than what I saw around me, and it drove me crazy. I became intense in my search for Truth, Reality, and a reason for Existence.

When I finally found the Truth, it was like fireworks went off! I was so excited to find out that Jesus Christ was really the Son of God and that God was really there, that I quit everything else I was doing. I finally understood, and I was ready to pursue Him with everything I had.

The next thing that lit my fire was the scripture that commanded me to redeem the time because the days are evil. Man, you didn't have to tell me twice. I shoved it into second gear and hit the gas!

My early years as a young Christian were consumed with learning more and more about the Bible and what God was like. I was running up and down the streets telling everyone who would listen that Jesus Christ could save their soul. I was on fire!

As the years passed and I grew in understanding about the depth of spiritual warfare, a new challenge began to unfold, and with it a new intensity began to emerge. Active participation as a young, zealous Christian had taught me the personality of God, but now I was beginning to learn about the personality of Satan – something not to be ignored or underestimated.

The looming specter of demonic control and the widespread effects of satanic influence in every arena of life – both worldly and Christian – seemed almost overwhelming. To see this ominous cloud of

Darkness growing on the horizon and not have your roots sunk deeply in faith and in the Word of God, would have discouraged even the bravest of hearts. It is like seeing a wave of darkness that was coming from every direction, impossible to stop. I can understand it growing in the world of the unsaved, but it was altogether another thing to see its tentacles grow and fester in modern Christianity.

I would have looked for a way out, but it was too late. I had walked too many miles with God, had come through too many valleys and battles with Him, and had heard too plainly the trumpet call. There was no way but forward.

Man, I'm getting a little old for this intensity stuff, but the fire just won't go out. I'd love to just kick back and go fishing, send everyone a Postcard and wish them well. They're over 16; they're cognizant; they've got a Bible; they can read – "Hope ya make it!" But the reality of a burning Hell surfaces and I just can't sit there and watch as unsuspecting souls waltz right off the edge of the cliff into Eternity.

It puts some push in your step. So, I took a deep breath, girded up my loins like a man, and plunged into third gear.

Yeah, it's tough because people don't want to believe something that's not comfortable. They want to hear "smooth things" (Isa. 30:10) – they do not

want to hear about a crucified walk, and they sure don't want to hear that they're wrong about anything. When life is good, most people would prefer to keep it that way. Intensity is for fanatics that do not know how to take it easy and enjoy life.

In a way, I guess they're right. But then, maybe it is just that I have my sights set on a different world.

Oh well, there's no stopping now.

Now I'm wondering if there's going to be a fourth gear.

Simplicity of the Sinners Prayer

I am a great fan of the Sinners Prayer. I think it's one of the most wonderful things in life. What other simple set of words can change a person's life so completely so immediately?

I've known people that have read the entire Encyclopedia Britannica but are still lost to confusion. I've encountered scores of Ph.D.'s who are so educated that they can answer almost any question, and yet are still grasping for Truth. Multitudes of people immerse themselves in books and study until they are squinting through glasses as thick as Coke bottles, but they still haven't got a clue about reality, life, or existence.

They chant, they study, they analyze, they strain their brains until their faces look like prunes, but it seems it only leads them in ever-circling paths that never end.

And what are they left with for all their trouble? Nothing but pride and confusion.

But here is this simple set of words fashioned as a sincere prayer of the heart that instantly answers the deepest questions of Life. The problem for these theologians is that it's too simple.

Why is it that Truth, for so many people, has to be something hard and complicated, something

mysterious that has to be figured out? They stumble over the simple truth as being too easy in their driven pursuit to gain knowledge. The answer is pride – stupid, foolish pride.

Pride drives the wise into stupidity and vanity. All that effort, and they only end up as fools. But hey, at least they feel smart!

I get accosted on a regular basis because I have posted a simple Sinners Prayer on our website, *revivalfire.org*, along with the reasons why I believe in it. That riles them to no end. I guess they just can't accept that something so simple can find the answers they are so desperately searching for. They want something that is more theologically complex.

They run on and on with pages of doctrinal theories, scriptural references, and seemingly intelligent conclusions to debunk the simplicity of getting saved. When they're all done working up a cerebral sweat with their mental gymnastics, they settle back with a satisfied smile on their faces as if they have just proven some difficult problem in Geometry. If what they are saying is right, however, then only smart people will go to Heaven, while the rest of us dumb clucks will have to burn in Hell.

My answer is always simple – I'm going to go with what works.

I have seen literally tens of thousands of souls saved through the Sinners Prayer. I have watched their countenances melt as the peace of God descended upon them and then beam as the Light of Jesus Christ began to shine out of their faces. I have seen them stand up on their feet as a brand-new person proclaiming the praises of God with all their hearts.

I've seen more miracles at the altar of repentance than I have time or space to tell, the greatest of which being the remarkable, instant transformation of a lost soul crossing over from Death unto Life. Watching the overflowing joy of a newly born-again soul is exhilarating. Don't try telling them that they aren't saved simply because they didn't follow some complicated set of theological rules!

Regardless of what anyone's objections may be, apparently the Almighty God doesn't have any, because He thinks it is good enough for Him to pour out His Spirit in a tangible presence so thick that it can be felt.

And you know what? If the Sinners Prayer is good enough for God, then it's good enough for me.

In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes:

even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

(Luke 10:21)

Wisdom of Men

Lately, I've been breaking my own rules.

I've always said, "Stick to the basics. You can't go wrong with the basics." It seems God has a tendency to simplify things, while man always tries to complicate everything. God urges us to trust completely in Him and rest in Faith, while we set off to build a tower of Babel.

We want everything explained and figured out. I guess that makes us feel a bit more secure in our own knowledge and wisdom, and yet, the wisdom that God admonishes us to have is to simply fear God and keep His commandments. Unfortunately, that's too simple for most of us.

The struggle is best seen in the doctrinal disputes over the timing of the Rapture, Eternal Security, different Bible translations, and even the very existence of the Trinity. We want to know if God is a He or a She, and if David and Jonathan were homosexual lovers. The quest for the Knowledge of Good and Evil goes on and on and on.

Is it any wonder that Jesus spoke in parables to confound the wise?

Few Christians question their core beliefs. Most believe what they have been taught to believe. Ask anyone why they believe in the Oneness doctrine,

and they will most likely mumble some passage that someone told them. Question someone's belief in Eternal Security and they will relate an anecdote they've been taught about giving gifts. Challenge someone's belief in pre-tribulation rapture and they will point to some movie or a set of novels they have read.

Is that the point? Do we just believe what we're told because it sounds good? Or do we go to the other extreme and become completely wrapped up in complicated analyzations to prove our presupposed beliefs?

I believe that the tenets of sound doctrine are the bricks by which we build our house of safety to protect us from the storms of Satan. Each brick is important and needs to be laid straight and true, but it is only one brick in the wall. If enough bricks are out of place, yes, the wall will collapse, and Satan will blow the house down, but is that the main focus of our Salvation?

One of these modern theories caught my attention, and I made the effort to research all the points made by each side of the argument. (I know, I know, I should be immune to this already, but hey, I was curious!) After pouring over reams of intelligent suppositions, arguments, counter-arguments, and the ramblings of theological

gymnastics, one point became very clear to me – mankind is really stupid!

No matter how sophisticated we may be, let us never lose sight of the fact that God made us out of dirt – and that includes our brains. Paul was as educated as anyone, and he said he knew nothing but Christ Jesus, and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). He came “not with the enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power so that your faith would not rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:4,5).

The Bible tells us that the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Cor. 3:6). Instead of wresting the scriptures to match what we want to believe, or swallowing whole what somebody else tells us because it sounds good, why not give it to God and let Him reveal His Truth to us in His time? That’s the difference between Faith and Presumption.

I can just picture the Lord sitting up there watching all this scrambling around and shaking His head in disbelief.

Want to know what God’s opinion is?

He that winneth souls is wise. (Proverbs 11:30)

Esther vs. Mordecai

Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? (Esther 4:13,14)

We see in Esther a picture of the church. A relative of Saul, the king, she was brought to Persia in the captivity under the care of Mordecai, her cousin. She was pure in spirit and beautiful in her simplicity, and the king loved her and made her his queen.

But along with her purity and beauty, was a certain naiveté. As queen, she lived in the palace and had a life of prosperity and ease. Trouble outside the palace walls was not exposed to her, and when wicked Haman designed to destroy the people of God, she knew nothing about it.

Mordecai, on the other hand, is the picture of a very different kind of church. Here was a man who was committed to his God, uncompromising in his integrity, and who would not bow to Haman. He refused to bow, not because he did not understand

the way things were, but, because he did understand them and could see through the wickedness that had exalted itself in the palace. As a result, he bore the brunt of Haman's hatred.

Here was the afflicted church; the church that bore the shame and persecution of the Cross; the church that was about to stand against the assault of wickedness; the church that knew and understood the reality of war.

There are two vastly different Christian bodies – one, a church that is settled on its lees, relaxed and wrapped in the blessings of God, but completely oblivious to the wicked designs set against them, while the other is a church that is clothed in sackcloth and ashes, facing the onslaught of the demonic plans to destroy the Body of Christ, and seeking God for deliverance and restoration and the power to overcome.

The first, although beautiful, remains clueless to the subtle plans of Satan. Life is good, peace and love abound, and she hears no cry of oppression. To her, serving the Lord consists of showing up for church on Sunday. The dark recesses of demonic plots and the subtleties of Satanic influence are lost on her. She only knows that the sun is shining, and life is good.

Mordecai's warning to Esther is chilling.

He calls for her to boldly enter the Throne Room of God to intercede for her people and trust that the King will hold out to her the golden scepter. It is an endeavor that she does not feel called to but is willing to face the consequences for. If, however, she ignores the cries of the prophets to prepare for the spiritual war that will certainly come, she will find herself unprepared and vulnerable to the destruction that will surely fall upon her in spite of her protected position as queen.

The spiritual strength needed to stand in battle cannot be gotten through carnal endeavors. While our churches build recreation centers, plan social outings, and seek entertainment, Satan prepares war. While we seek self-aggrandizement through books and videos, the devil finds someone to write them. The strength needed to maintain our faith in the dark times to come can only be gotten from a desperate hunger to seek the face of God through His Word and prayer.

The Word of God builds our faith, but it is only through deep intense prayer that we can open the depths of God's Word to be able to receive it. Without that, we will be like those in Isaiah 29 who have fallen into a deep sleep and unto to whom the Word of God is sealed. They can read the words, but they don't understand what they say.

The warnings are clear. Those that have ears to hear, will hear.

Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are... (Luke 13:26)

How Great is God

I like praying at night.

When I stand out on my porch and look up at the heavens, it just seems like God is so much closer. I know that isn't really true, but it sure feels that way. There's no noise, no distractions, no lights – just me and God. It's not that He can hear me better with the lights turned down low, or that there's a lot less things going on that He has to pay attention to. I think it has more to do with me being able to hear my own heart.

Looking up into the night sky, you can see all these stars! Zillions of them! How come there are so many stars? And why is the Universe so big? Is just for us? It sure seems like God went to a whole lot of trouble just for decoration.

But then I remember Psalm 19:1 that says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handywork". He created them so we could see His glory.

Well, I'll tell you, I, for one, am impressed. That's a lot of stars up there. And to think God is bigger than all that.

I know from Physics that the energy released when you break chemical bonds is the same amount of energy it takes to put them together. And if just

splitting some of the atoms in a couple of rocks can blow up a whole city, think about how much power it took to create the Earth ... and then look up at the sky.

When God says that He is All-Powerful, that just puts my little pea-brain into tilt. I just can't get a grip around that. All Powerful. Not this powerful, or that powerful – ALL Powerful.

How small is our faith! Don't we understand that He promises us that whatsoever we ask for in faith believing He will do for us? Not only is it a promise, but Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, died and shed blood to establish those promises. Why is it we just can't seem to get it? If we did, we would be standing out there with long grocery lists in our hand, rattling off everything we could think of. But we don't, do we?

Faith is a funny thing. You can't catch it in a bottle, you can't put it in a box, you can't study it in a textbook, and it's not something you turn on like a light switch. We have to seek for it with our hearts. We have to pull ourselves out of the husk of this carnal flesh and reach forth into the Spirit of God to grasp that substance of things hoped for.

The world does not understand that. But our hearts do. When we reach through that Door that He has provided for us and touch the hem of His

garment, in our grasp we feel the evidence of things
not seen.

How great is God!

Little Children

I prayed through my 9-year-old daughter yesterday.

Talk about a thrill! There is nothing like seeing a little girl's heart open up wide with tears because she wants to be close to Jesus and walk hand-in-hand with Him.

I have to tell you how it happened. As we always do on Sunday morning, we were reading Bible. This time we were going through Psalm 147 a verse at a time. As she started asking questions, one right after the other, I could sense the Lord tugging on her little heart in a particular direction, so I just let it flow, watching to see which direction the questions would take.

Her heart was emptying out on the table with things that must have been lying in there for a while. It is always amazing to me how the Lord deals with little children. You may think that they aren't aware of a lot of deep spiritual issues, but never underestimate how much God loves these precious little souls. Some of her questions had me up against the ropes, but I answered them as honestly as I could, just as I would have explained them to an adult. (I just figured that if the Lord put the question in her heart, then He must have put the ability to

understand the answer in there also.) She understood each one.

Little kids really love Jesus, not like you would love someone on earth, but with something very different and very special. She not only wanted to go to Heaven, she wanted that special relationship with God that can only be realized through Salvation.

She also understood the concept of Hell. Don't let anyone tell you that they are too young to understand the severity of Judgment. They can understand it as well as anyone, probably better than most because they haven't complicated it with the intelligent complacencies we listen to.

What about Grandpa and Nana? Will they go to Heaven too? Understanding how the promises of God work was simple once it was explained. I was amazed at her ability to grasp that, if we gave ourselves to serving the Lord, how He would work for us toward our family. It was simple stuff to a 9-year-old!

When she was ready, we prayed. At the end of the prayer, when I was praising and thanking the Lord, she went silent. Immediately, I started wondering if it had really worked.

Stupid me.

Her hands went up, almost to touch the sky, and you could feel the Spirit of the Lord floating down

like fresh falling snow. I didn't dare disturb her, even though I was dying to ask her, "Did you feel it? Did you feel the Spirit of God wash you clean? Did you touch the Throne of God?"

I just waited as the tears flowed, her hands went higher, and her little face lit up with the glory of God.

But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 19:14)

A Voice Crying in the Wilderness

*He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness,
Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet
Esaias. (John 1:23)*

Encouraging words, aren't they? I'm surprised that they haven't taken this scripture and made one of those Praise & Worship songs out of it that repeat the same verse over and over.

Actually, although subtle, this was about as harsh a statement as John the Baptist could have come up with. It really shoved in it their faces. But then, John was not known for his finesse.

There was a pretty big uproar in the churches in those days over this weird guy out at the Jordan River that was baptizing crowds of common people, and the church big shots wanted to know what was going on. Everybody was abandoning the dead churches and heading out to the river.

Well, the problem was more than that they were losing their congregations. John was preaching repentance for the forgiveness of sins!

Whoa! Wait a minute! Who the heck does he think he is? He can't do that! They are supposed to bring a lamb of the flock to the priests to be sacrificed for their sins. They can't just have some crazy guy

dunk them in some water and ask God to forgive them.

If this thing was allowed to go on, there's no telling where it would lead.

For one thing, it would be the end of the power and authority that the priests and Levites held over the people, because they would no longer have to come to them with their blood sacrifices.

For another thing, regular common people might start thinking that they could preach the Gospel. We can't have that. You're supposed to have a theological degree to do that!

Well, John had news for them – the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world had come and would be the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. And yes, it would spell the end of the Levitical priesthood. The religious would end up being rejected, not only by the people, but by God Himself.

What's more, God would raise up men and women of power and authority in the Holy Spirit, and they wouldn't be getting their credentials from some stupid Seminary. God can speak through the mouth of a jackass.

So, who do you think you are, John? Do you claim to be the Messiah, or Elijah, or some big shot that can turn everything we have going in the church

upside down? You have no credentials, no degree, and no ordination papers giving you the authority to do this.

“No, I’m just a voice,” John answered.

But by quoting the prophesy that declared the spiritual landscape to be a wilderness, he was, in essence, calling these Pharisees backslidden devils that were on their way to Hell – in subtle terms, of course.

Here’s a chilling thought. That same prophecy applies to today just before His Second Coming.

Same situation, same cast of characters, same landscape, and same timing.

Subtle enough?

Hummingbirds

We put up a big red Hummingbird feeder in our yard this summer to watch those cute little hummingbirds come and fly around the back yard. It works so well that we have several different species buzzing around. It makes quite a sight.

Now you would have thought that with that big red bottle of nectar, there would be plenty to go around for everybody, but apparently that has not occurred to those hummingbirds. They fight and defend that feeder as if God gave it to them personally. I've watched as they dive bomb each other, chasing each other around and around, fighting for ownership to the rights to that nectar.

It's not like there isn't enough to go around for everybody. It has to do with ownership.

First one will claim it, then another will take it over, then the next one, and on it goes. They're not afraid of anything else -- not cats, dogs, other birds, or even humans. Nothing is as much of a threat to them as the idea that some other hummingbird will claim that feeder.

Sounds just like Christians sometimes.

Not too long ago, I was traveling when the van we were driving overheated. We just happened to pull off the road into a driveway that belonged to a

young Pastor of a small church in Mississippi. He came out, and we got along great together. While working on the van, we shared testimonies, experiences, and lessons the Lord had taught us over the years. We found that we believed the same things and could both recognize the Lord in each other. We had a wonderful time fellowshiping together – that is, until Grandma showed up.

Grandma decided that she was going to work me into a corner and determine if I was doctrinally correct or not. It didn't take long before I was told in so many words that I was going to Hell because I wasn't baptized correctly -- not to mention my wife who was little more than a brazen hussy with her short hair and Capri pants.

Needless to say, we made a quick getaway as politely as we could with the young Pastor standing there with a sheepish, apologetic look on his face, probably thinking that this must have been what Paul was talking about when he said that women should keep silence in the church.

All weekend long I wondered why the Lord had us stop in there of all places along the highway. After all, what in the world were we going to accomplish there? I sure wasn't going to unseat that old woman, and neither was I going to make much of a change in the folks who had gathered around.

Then I remembered the hummingbirds.

You know, I could care less how someone looks. They can tie up their hair in a bun, let their dresses drag around their ankles, and go out of their way to look plain and ugly. They can choose to believe that somehow all that stuff makes you holy. Fine with me. I'm a little embarrassed for them, maybe, but it's not my problem.

The problem is that many Christians get themselves stuck on one denominational thing or another, to the exclusion of all others. They get so stuck on a single scripture that they make a religion out of it and miss sight of everything else.

Now I am not a one-world church guy, and I do not believe in ecumenism where we are all supposed to unify our beliefs and become one. There is one Truth, and one Truth only, and I will not compromise my faith. But does it really have to do with how you dress, which words you said when you were baptized, how you interpret a prophesy, or how many angels can stand on the head of a pin?

There are some important issues that your salvation depends on, that is true, but there are a whole lot of others that are not. When we get hung up on issues that are meaningless, we forget the ones that are important. I figure there are enough commandments in the Bible without making up

some new ones. That's the mistake that the Pharisees made.

To me, the bottom line is always about what your personal relationship with the Lord is. Have you been saved? Are you washed in the Blood of Jesus, and are you continuing to walk in the Spirit of God? If your heart is not right with God, it doesn't much matter what your hair looks like.

Jesus said to be concerned with the weightier matters of the law: judgment, mercy, and faith. (Matt. 23:23) To get all hyped up on holiness of the flesh will make you just like those stupid hummingbirds.

A Whore's Forehead

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)

The Bible is full of judgment. We love to focus on the love of God and His mercies, but a much greater part of the Bible is about His wrath and His judgments against sin. I noticed something else - almost all of those judgments were against people who thought they were right with God.

Why do we always think that it is the other guy's fault? It's always somebody else whose perspective is slanted, while we are the ones who see things correctly. Oh sure, we wouldn't claim out loud that we are always right or that we have a better viewpoint than everybody else, yet deep inside, either as individuals or as a society, we harbor those secret feelings that we have a hold on a corner of Truth that others do not share.

I have found this is true, not only in people as individuals, but in societies, in cultures, in nations, and in races. It is a universal human attribute to want to be right. Nobody wants to be wrong.

Here's another thing that shocks me: I have found it in religious denominations more than

anywhere else. There is no one more righteous than the self-righteous.

Now, I'm not promoting ecumenism. Quite the contrary, I believe that there is one Truth, not 50,000 truths, and I believe God is a demanding God that requires us to follow that one Truth. He left a blueprint in black and white for us to follow, and if He wrote it, I would imagine He expects us to read it. It's not all that hard to understand; you just have to pay attention.

The trick isn't whether you know there is a God or not – the trick is in humbling yourself before Him in fear and trembling. You see, when you really, I mean REALLY, fear God, you could care less what you are or who you are, what you think, or what anybody else thinks, for that matter. You're just scared to death that you will offend the Almighty God. And that, the Bible says, is what makes you wise.

It also makes you right.

Isn't it funny that, in order to obtain the one thing that we want so desperately, we have to relinquish our hold on it. God is the one who gets the glory, not us, and He will not share it with another.

Give up your desire to always be the one that is right, and let God be the one in control. When you don't, you are like a whore in the eyes of God because

you refuse to admit you are wrong. And who is more guilty of that than our religious denominations?

No wonder there has been no rain.

I Remember

And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments: Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants. (Nehemiah 1:5-6)

I know how you feel, Nehemiah. It's been so long since we've had a real outpouring of the Spirit that we don't even know what it is like anymore.

How long has it been since you went to services knowing that the presence of the Holy Ghost would be there in such an electrifying power that the very air would be alive with the glory of God? Do you remember when you would be literally beside yourself, so caught up in the Spirit that you would feel like you weren't even on the face of the earth anymore? Or when the Holy Ghost would pour down so hard that it would literally "set your feet a-dancing".

I remember.

Can you remember a time when souls would be flocking to the altar night after night under the overpowering conviction of the Holy Ghost, just dying to get saved?

I remember.

When we talk about healing, do you think back to when the power of God would come down like a bombshell and people would be instantly, supernaturally healed? Or has it been so long since you've seen something like that that you don't really believe it anymore, and are content with a "gradual healing", settling for crumbs from the Master's table.

When someone tells you that the Lord spoke to them, do you figure that it was nothing more than some ethereal hint of an idea, or a "strong thought", or a whispering in the wind? Do you know what it is like to actually hear the direct voice of God?

Can you remember back to a time when the supernatural seemed natural? Or has it faded away like a tale that is told?

I remember.

But when I look around, I see Christians debating about points of doctrine and how they think things should be done to bring back revival. I see Pastors subscribing to videos and books and lesson plans in an attempt to ignite a resurgence of the power of God in their church. I see basket socials and basketball games to make church seem more fun to the unsaved. And all the while, they are missing the glory of God.

I am told that you can't go by feelings – that you have to go solely by the Word of God, but my answer is that the Bible says that the Spirit and the Word are one (1 John 5:7). Maybe they have just never felt what the real power of God feels like. If they did, they'd know what it is like to be under the Anointing, and experience that feeling that is more real than real.

My little girl asked me today if God did miracles today just like He did in the Bible. My answer was yes, He still does. Why then, she asked, do we not see them anymore? Well, maybe it's because we have forgotten.

Some of the old-timers will remember back wistfully, to a time when the Glory of God flowed through our churches, and sigh with regret, wondering if we will ever see it again. But there are others, especially our young people, who will see the promise, the possibility and the hope, and will cry out to God with all their hearts like Nehemiah did for a restoration of what we have been missing for so long.

Let me tell you that the promise is sure and the possibility is enormous, but the hope must spring from your heart.

Before we can see revival again, we must first realize that don't have one. The second step is to

want it more than life itself and be willing to believe
God for it. Our churches, sadly, have forgotten both.

But I remember.

And I still believe.

His Plan

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. (Ephesians 1:11-12)

I do not believe in the doctrine of Predestination; I believe in the Plan of God.

I do not believe that some of us were predestined to go to Heaven – no matter what we do. Neither do I believe that some of us were predestined to go to Hell – no matter what we do. If that was the case, then why did Jesus Christ die on the Cross? If there was not going to be any choice in the matter, then God could have just saved Himself a whole lot of trouble.

I do believe, however, that God sets in motion a predestined plan in every one of our lives. Before we are saved, the purpose of that plan is to bring us to Salvation; after we are saved, it is to glorify God.

Every individual needs something different. Many need to see the love of Christ shine into the darkness of their lives to bring them to Salvation, while others need to see the stark reality of Judgment and Hell to realize that, if they don't get right with God, they will be lost forever. God maps out each of

our lives to bring us to that point of decision. What we do after that point, of course, is entirely up to us. There is another predestined Plan that is set in motion once we decide to serve the Lord. The purpose of our lives is no longer for us; it is that we should be to the praise of His glory and the winning of lost souls. Our lives now take on a completely different focus. God begins to map out a different path for us, and sometimes that path can be rough.

In order to prepare us for the purpose that God has predestined for our lives, He has to take us through valleys and mountaintops to stretch us and deepen us, break us down and build us up, humble our pride and lift our faith, show us our strength in Him and the weakness in ourselves. When He is done, we will be ready to fulfill the calling that we were born for and be “meet for the Master’s use.” (2 Tim. 2:21) That is the Plan.

If we yield to the leading of the Spirit of God, He can accomplish great things through us, but if we resist and lean unto our own ways, He cannot use us. We are always left with that choice. The predestined Plan for our lives does not change – only our decision to follow it.

God is the Grand Chess Master and we are merely pieces on the chessboard of Life. He knows what He is doing, plans each move, and places us in

the position that He has predetermined for us. Everything that happens to us is for a reason. Nothing is haphazard. Some of us are Pawns, some Knights, some Bishops, and some Kings and Queens – and some of us don't know what we are, but we know we are in a battle that is directed by the King.

You may be going through some difficult times, and you may not understand why God is allowing this to happen to you. You may be heading down paths that seem to be leading nowhere and you wonder why God has left you to wander around in circles. Maybe you are itching to dive into battle, but God is making you wait. It may seem that everyone else is getting His attention, while you are left to sit unnoticed on the shelf. You may be praying your heart out, but you're not getting any answers.

Maybe Life isn't so good right now.

Trust God. He's just working His Plan.

Harry Potter

There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD... (Deut. 18:10-12)

Harry Potter. What an entertaining story! Kids just love it and have purchased the books by the millions. The movie is exceptional, and it has become all the rage. To listen to many parents, even Christian parents, it just another fascinating story about magic much like many of the fairy tales we grew up with.

I actually began to wonder if the controversy rising up around Harry Potter was not just much ado about nothing. I've seen many such controversies surround everything from Y2K to the water we drink. After a while, you wonder if a lot of people just get turned on by thinking the sky is falling every time some new thing pops up.

But when my kids brought home some Harry Potter books, I knew it was time that I looked a little

closer at the subtleties of these books and what were they really all about.

Here we have a seemingly innocent story of a good kid in a magical world of good and evil – he just happens to be a wizard. Now, if that's all it is, is there still cause for concern? After all, even the story of Sleeping Beauty has to do with magic. Or is there something more hidden in the weaving of this fantasy?

There is an ongoing war between God and Satan for the souls of mankind that, even though we can't see it with our eyes, is nevertheless the fiercest battle that has ever been waged. No war known to man has ever been fought with such intensity, nor with such a devastating outcome. The big difference with this spiritual war is the degree of subtlety that our enemy employs to lure us in to accepting him and dismissing his activities as being harmless.

I can tell you from first-hand experience that Satanism is very real and employs very real powers. As a young Christian witnessing on the streets of L.A., we had many encounters with witches and warlocks. We won very few to the Lord, but from those who did get saved, we learned just how overpowering and deceptive that dark spiritual world was. Once they were in, they were powerless to get out.

To introduce our children to this world as a harmless fantasy is to desensitize them to the horrors of sin and the demonic nature of the occult. The Harry Potter series, and its publisher Scholastic Books, lures its young readers into other satanic books and websites under the guise that it is “just for fun”, an excursion for their imaginations. Sin no longer appears as sin, and Satan becomes just a cute lil’ devil in a red suit, while the holiness of God becomes ponderous and constricting, and the Blood of Jesus Christ loses its meaning.

And all the while, Satan, like a Pied Piper, woos them in. What’s the harm in a little fun? After all, don’t we dress up our kids in satanic costumes for a little candy on Halloween, Satan’s High Holiday?

Harry Potter is a masterpiece of demonic subtlety. The story is based on real witchcraft but disguises itself as harmless fun. Kids will want to emulate the hero, as they always do, and obtain the same powers that Harry has, even writing to Warner Bros. with requests to attend Hogsworth School of Wizardry.

It may seem like fun, but it is a doorway to Hell. They may be waving a wand in the air today, but it will suck them into something much more serious tomorrow. Today it will be taking a lightning bolt of their forehead; tomorrow it may be the Mark of the

Beast – after all, if one is harmless, perhaps the other one is also.

If you just blow this off as just another wild-eyed controversy, and do not take the time to look into it, you may find out too late that you allowed the miscreant winds of satanic powers carry your children down a slippery path that will descend into an abyss from which they may not easily return.

The Lord Jesus Christ gave His life to free us from sin, not to dabble in it. His warnings throughout the Word of God are clear– this is a dangerous and powerful spiritual seduction to stay away from. To ignore God’s warnings is to show complete ignorance of the devices of Satan, or worse, to choose outright rebellion against His commandments.

God is not amused. You can’t minimize sin.

Plumbline

*And the Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou?
And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold,
I will set a plumbline, in the midst of my people Israel:
I will not again pass by them anymore: (Amos 7:8)*

They never saw it coming. Israel was at the very edge of destruction, but they just could not see it. They really thought that they were right with God and the prophet Amos was some crackpot.

It seems that is always the case. There is a tendency in human nature to believe that we are right. We see reality from the corner of our own perspective and measure everything else against that. People will generally believe what they want to believe in spite of the facts and will follow their own heart rather than hearken to reproof.

But God's perspective is different than ours. He says that His thoughts are not our thoughts, and His ways are not our ways. (Isa. 55:8-9) That means that we have to abandon what we think is right to follow a path that leads in an entirely different direction.

If we could see the end from the beginning, perhaps we would make different choices, but we can't. We can only deal with what we see before us, and therein lies the problem. God wants us to look past what we see before us and allow the Spirit of

God to take us down the paths that lead to Eternal Life. To do that, we must break our own spirits and surrender.

Now, I realize that is a mouthful. Many would like to follow God, but they want to do it their way. That is precisely the reason you see so many different beliefs. Oh, they believe in God, but they are not willing to face their own death, break their ego, and surrender to a broken, crucified walk. You see, to take that step, you have to fear God and submit to Him. That entails the humility of abandoning that element of personal pride that always wants to be right.

You will never figure out the secrets of the ways of God as long as you are breathing. The mysteries of God can only be received, not figured out. And that can only be done in the Spirit. (1 Cor. 2:14)

Ah, but how does one get in the Spirit of God? That requires a humble heart and a contrite spirit that will repent of its own ways and reach out to God for deliverance. But if you are not willing to admit that you are wrong, then you cannot repent, and therefore cannot be saved.

It seems that the idea in our society today is that as long as you believe in God and go to church, you will be saved. That is a perfect example of believing what you want to believe despite what the Word of

God says. But that is so hard to admit, isn't it? You just don't want to admit you are wrong.

It's so much easier to assume that just believing in God will save you – that way you can escape the price that must be paid. After all, our pastors rarely challenge us beyond that, so it must be OK. And so, we slide into a lukewarm apostasy ... just like the Israelites of old.

As a result, a plumbline is set in the midst of us, dividing the sheep from the goats. The time for repentance is drawing to a close, and the Lord is about to make a last call.

Where you spend Eternity will depend upon how you answer that call.

Vain Jangling

Charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do. Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which 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 1:3-7)

I heard an interesting story the other day about a man who had considered himself a fairly good Christian. He was at church whenever they opened the doors, was active in all the church functions, and led what he considered a good Christian life for years and years.

He got very sick and died in the hospital. His son told how the monitors went flat-line for 20 minutes and how he watched as his father's skin color turned blue. He was dead.

But as they wheeled the body out on a gurney into the elevator, suddenly, the color came back into his skin and the man awoke. The first thing that he told his son was, "What a fool I have been all my life!"

He experienced something very few of us get a chance to see. He saw himself die and carried up to meet the Lord. As the angel that carried him up approached the Door, permission was granted to enter in – permission that is only granted to those who are washed in the Blood and are obedient to God's Word.

He found himself there with little to show for all the years that he had been a Christian. In all that time, he had only won 5 souls to the Lord. Now that he understood the only true reality of Life, he was so ashamed of himself that he begged for a chance to go back.

Needless to say, in the next 5 years remaining to his life, he was a fireball of a soul winner.

When it is all said and done, will it really matter what theological wisdom or knowledge you have? Does it really matter how many degrees you have, or what religious position you have? Does anyone care beside you?

I read the weekly vain janglings by supposed enlightened theological teachers from throughout the Christian world. We are bombarded with articles, books, and videos to invent new perspectives, new doctrines, and new ideas about the Gospel. We spend so much time developing new programs to edify the Church that we have become

too busy to reach the lost. The Bible says that Jesus Christ came to earth to save sinners. Not satisfied with that, however, the wise and intelligent have decided to improve on it. But as the Bible says, "Knowledge puffeth up; charity edifieth". (1 Cor 8:1) Professing ourselves to be wise, we have become fools. (Rom. 1:22)

And all the while, lost souls are dropping off into Eternity without Christ.

Paul's admonishment to Timothy stands just as valid today as it did then. When you cross over into Eternity and stand to face the Judge of all the earth, will you bring your theological credentials with you to justify yourself? Will you present all your great ideas to gain "brownie points" with God? Or will you point to the souls that you have won that bear witness to the testimony of the power of God in your life?

The litmus test in Christianity is the winning of lost souls. It is supposed to be your whole purpose and commission as a Christian. You take nothing else with you when you die.

You may not get the same chance as that man who died to see the stark reality of what is really important, but it is all written clearly in God's Word.

But then, just as Jesus said in Luke 16:31, if you won't believe that, you wouldn't believe it if someone came back from the dead to tell you.

Judgment Coming

Set the trumpet to thy mouth. He shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law. (Hosea 8:1)

While there are those that use the judgments of the Lord to prove the doctrine of Replacement Theology, I believe that God uses those judgments against Israel as more of a warning to us all.

God's Word is forever. The judgments that He has spoken are not for a particular point in time that then fades into oblivion because we now have a new covenant. Those warnings still apply because human nature has never changed.

How foolish to think that we are only supposed to read the Old Testament 10% of the time! The warnings of the prophets are more important and relevant now than ever before. Christianity has become the Zion of today, and like the Zion of old, we have fallen into the same traps and snares that brought their downfall.

Like the children of Israel, we have the same tendency to choose a religion of convenience, a faith that is comfortable, and a message of unconditional love. But we no longer fear the Lord.

Judah refused to believe that Babylon would breach the walls of Jerusalem because they rested in the belief that God loved them and would deliver them from the enemy. The intense warnings of the prophets did nothing to bring them to repentance because they really didn't think that they applied to them. They were, after all, the people of God.

Today, we trust in the same walls of religion and church to save us, and while modern-day Babylon amasses outside the gate, we cannot conceive of the destruction being able to breach our walls. But the judgments of God have not changed.

Hosea says a spirit of whoredom has entered the church that has caused us to err in judgment. (Hosea 4:11-12) We heap to ourselves prophets of peace and stock our shelves with "Christian" books for positive thinking and prosperity; we flock to preachers of entertainment and allow an ecumenical move to accept all beliefs; we wag our finger in the air with a Howdy Dowdy grin and chant that Jesus loves us while we sway back and forth to repetitive songs of blessings ... but we have left off to fear the Lord.

Just like Zion of old, we cannot see our apostasy and can therefore no longer repent. The warnings of the prophets that God has sent us are rejected because they are too critical and judgmental. One

woman told me, “the Bible says we are not supposed to offend anybody”. How nice.

And all the while, the wheel of judgment slowly turns.

There were those of us who gave the warning that 9/11 was coming ... and we knew why. Predictably, the Christian world turned for a while to seek the face of God, but once the specter of judgment faded, they quickly turned back to their old superficial ways, just like they did after Josiah’s death. “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” (Eccl. 8:11)

There’s another judgment coming. This one will be far more severe than 9/11. It will breach the walls that we have trusted in and destroy our city of Zion. But in that judgment, there will be the seeds of a true revival, and God will raise up stones in our place that will fearlessly declare the glory of God and will march forth in the fear of God to victory.

Be careful that you don’t miss it.

Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. (Revelations 3:2)

Miracles

Did you ever wonder about prayer lists?

I get lists of prayer requests emailed to me every day. Sometimes it feels like the lists are so long that they seem endless and almost overwhelming. You wish you could just snap your fingers, and everybody would be healed, everybody would get saved, and everybody would be happy.

Yesterday in particular, I got one in which there was so much desperation and anguish that it choked me up. Instead of taking a moment out as I usually do to add my instant prayer to the daily list, I looked up and asked God why. Why is there so much suffering and so many unanswered prayers?

Ask any pastor why God heals some people and not others, and he will probably tell you he doesn't know. There are purposes that God works out in our lives in many different ways that are hard for us to understand on this side of Eternity. God uses trouble as a tool to work out those purposes just like He uses spiritual valleys to shape us into something that we could not do ourselves.

That's a good answer – and it's true – but it doesn't satisfy a desperate soul.

Another answer is that we are in a time of spiritual drought, just as the Bible has prophesied

that would come in the last days. There are outpourings and healings here and there, just as it was prophesied in Amos, but a flood of spiritual power has not really been seen in generations. Where are the local Faith Healers? Any in your church?

There are basic principles that must be applied to receive that kind of powerful anointing, and modern Christianity has not had the guts, the drive, nor the desire to pay that price. We're too satisfied with "church as usual".

Well, that kind of answer explains a lot, spiritually speaking, but it doesn't do a lot for a person who is in anguish for a miracle. What does it take to get a miracle from God?

There have been times when I prayed over someone and the answer was instantaneous. No work, no sweat, no handwringing, no wrenching of the soul. Just lay on hands and pray, and they were healed.

And then there's other times, when you work your guts out in prayer, but see no results. You may feel the Spirit come down, and you know that God has heard you, but you didn't get the healing you prayed for.

Real faith cannot be turned on like a light switch. It is something that you build over time through

walking in the Spirit of God. Hope and Faith are sisters, and Desperation is a distant cousin. Faith incorporates Hope but travels far beyond it. Hope, on the other hand, comes from Faith, and may be the very last thing you have when everything else is gone. It will, however, keep the door of Faith open to the very last crack.

Although Desperation retains the same family resemblance, it doesn't come from the same seed. We may be desperate for an answer from God, but if we are not walking in the same principles that build Faith and Hope, it remains an empty cry. And yet, there is mercy with God.

Desperation can re-ignite Hope, which can rebuild Faith, and God does hear such cries of the heart. Faith, when it does come, however, dissolves Desperation because it initiates a broken submission to the Will of God. If you have real Faith, you will trust in Him all the way in all things. No longer is it about what you want, but Faith turns the focus on what God wants.

And in that lies the real miracle.

Simplicity of Faith

Bring Zenus the lawyer... (Titus 3:13)

Scheesh! Wasn't it enough that Paul had to wrestle and fight with everyone from the heretics to the pagans that he also had to have a lawyer?

He was in a constant struggle with those that were called the Circumcision, with the Jews who didn't believe in Jesus, with the Greeks that wanted to debate, with those who wanted to mix the Gospel with a license to sin, and, to a lesser extent, the local authorities. And he needed a lawyer also?

The simplicity of the Gospel has always astounded man. We just can't seem to leave well enough alone – we have to complicate it, sophisticate it, and make everything more intellectually appealing. It seems that we just can't believe Truth if it is too simple.

Faith is not based on knowledge, neither is it understood by the carnal mind. That is precisely why Jesus said you must be born again of the Spirit. Only when the Spirit of God is in you can you ever expect to grasp Truth.

You can read the Bible until they award you a Ph.D., but if you're not in the Spirit, it is nothing more than another theological document, because

“the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.” The book is sealed unto the learned – they cannot understand it (Isa. 29:11). And so, they debate, argue, and wrestle the Scriptures to their own destruction.) The flesh wars against the Spirit.

Neither is faith based on believing. The Jews in the Wilderness certainly believed that God was there -- they ate manna every morning and drank from the Rock – but they entered not into the Promise Land because of “unbelief”, not “disbelief”.

So where does the essence of Faith come from?

God gives each of us a mustard seed of faith to reach out and believe the Gospel. It is just enough to realize we are lost without God and that, if we take that step of faith, He will save us. But then what?

Faith is empowered by blood – not the blood running in your veins, but the blood of a crucified walk with Jesus Christ. Only when we deny our fleshly ways, can we reach into that which is beyond the veil to grab hold of the substance of faith, the evidence of things hoped for. (Heb. 11:1)

As we break our spirits to seek after the Spirit of God, we begin to see and we begin to hear, not with our eyes and ears, but with our hearts -- “Faith cometh by hearing ...” (Rom. 10:17) – and God begins to show us great and mighty things that we know not (Jer. 33:3).

We read the Bible, not to learn “stuff”, but to eat of the manna of God and feed our souls.

We pray, not to get something free from God, but to enter into spiritual realms with our Savior and seek the face of God.

We fast, not to empty our body of poisons, but to break our spirit and peel away layers of the carnal so we can be more in touch with the leading of the Holy Ghost.

We labor, not to do our own works, but so that we can enter into the rest of the Sabbath and cease from our own works, as Jesus did when he wrought the greatest work of all time when He rested on the Cross.

Ahh, the simplicity of the Gospel! How wonderful it is to accept Him with the simplicity of a little child!

...and therein lies the secret to real Faith.

Feel the Spirit

There is one question that I have never been asked: “How do you know you are saved?” Really, no one has ever asked me that. That amazes me.

I’ve been challenged why I believed certain things, and, as the Bible commands us, I have studied so I can give a good answer for them. I certainly don’t want to believe something just because somebody told me so. I did that when I was a kid, but I learned that grown-ups aren’t always right – and, surprisingly, even teen-agers aren’t always right. No, you have to let God reveal His Truth to you through His Word so you know for sure what is right.

I’ve also been told that I’m a lot of things – some not so good. Well, that kind of goes with the territory when you take a stand for what you believe is right – that is, if you’ve got the guts to make that stand

But nobody has ever asked how I knew that I was really saved. Why is that?

Maybe it’s because the proof of my salvation does not lie in religious expositions of theological nonsense, or a piece of paper that says I have been “confirmed”, or an adherence to a tradition of showing up for church every week, or even that I

said a prayer once upon a time at the altar. To me, that's not proof of anything.

I know I'm saved because I can feel the Spirit of God.

That's it. It's just that simple. I can actually feel the Spirit.

I may not be floating around on some ethereal cloud all the time, but when I go to the Throne of God in prayer, the Spirit of God responds. Jesus said the Spirit was like the wind, and that makes sense to me – you can't see it, but you can feel it.

When I read the Word of God, there are times when He will open up a scripture with what you can only call a supernatural revelation. Is that so hard to believe? Paul talks about it happening in his churches all the time. And let me tell you, when that happens, you know you just heard from the Lord!

There are other times when the Lord has literally spoken to me. I'll tell you what, when that happens to you, no one can tell you that you are not saved! Now, I realize that something that out of the ordinary is a tough for some people to swallow, but what can I say? That it didn't happen? It's not like I'm the only one that the Lord has spoken to or shown a vision to. Lots of folks have had that happen to them.

I know some people will immediately say that you can't go by "feelings", but that you have to base

your faith on the Bible because it is the ultimate authority. True, but the Bible plainly says that the Spirit and the Word agree. If you're in the Spirit, you will line up with the Word, and if you're in the Word, you'll be in the Spirit. What's so hard to understand about that? If you don't feel the Spirit then maybe you need to read and pray more – and try your hand at some fasting while you're at it. There is a price for anything that you want to receive from God, and you get what you pay for.

I'll tell you how important I think this is – if I did not feel the Spirit of God, I'd be scared to death. Although there are times when you have to go through “faith walks”, you always come out of those valleys with increased faith, and the Spirit of God is always right there to pour out on you when you come out. But, if I didn't feel the Holy Ghost, I would feel like I was cut off, and that's worse than scary.

I have something real to base my faith on. I know I'm right with God because He is right there with me and I can feel His Holy Spirit, and that is enough to sustain me through anything. It is the Shekinah Glory that makes me know that I am in the Spirit of God.

If you know what it is like to actually feel the Holy Ghost, then you know what it is like to have communion with God and to know that you know

that you know that you are right with Him. If, however, you don't know what I'm talking about, you're missing out on the most wonderful thing in Life. The Spirit of God gives you a life and an excitement that actually makes you glow from the inside out. Without it, though, all you've got is religion -- and religion can't save your soul. There is a difference that can be felt.

Maybe that's why I've never been asked that question. It must show on my face.

Sunset Strip

Jesus Christ is coming back to Earth again. Repent or perish!

I still remember standing there on Sunset Strip hearing these hippies telling me to repent. Long hair, raggedy old T-shirts, and patched jeans -- straight out of the drug culture of the 60's.

I gotta tell you, I was a little put off.

I thought Christians had to have a wife and kids, a two-car garage, a 9-to-5 job, and carry a briefcase. What was this? This wasn't what I thought a Christian was supposed to be. Even their Bibles were worn and tattered. Weren't they supposed to all nice and pretty?

And what was all this stuff about repentance and a burning Hell? Who did they think they were telling me I had to repent? After all, I knew about God and had plenty of theories of my own. I didn't need anybody to tell me about God.

But there was this fire in their eyes and intensity about them that riveted me. I had never heard a message preached like this before. Everything I had heard was about how much God loved me, so I figured that if there was a Heaven, everybody was going there ... unless, of course, you were really, really bad.

But that's not what they told me. They spoke about being "born again" and feeling the Spirit of God save my soul. Huh? Where'd that come from? I never heard that in the churches I went to when I was a little kid.

And then there was always that line about keeping the commandments of God. It seems that the only way that I would be able to do that is if I got saved first.

Well, I had news for them – I didn't want to keep the commandments of God. I was having too much fun, and I did not want to become a Christian. Besides, if God loved me, then what was the big deal?

But it was a big deal. And these people would not quit.

I don't know how many of these Jesus Freaks I blew off with my philosophies about God, but no matter how smart I thought I was, there was no denying that they had some kind of fire burning inside them that I couldn't figure out, and I just had to know what it was.

Now, at this time, there were all kinds of freaks running around with new "spiritual" ideas, and you really had to sort through some crazy stuff. Some of them were so whacked-out that they would run around chanting and playing tambourines in orange robes with their heads shaved (except for a pony tail

that God was supposed to grab to pull them up to Heaven). If that's what you had to do to get to Heaven, then I was ready to take my chances with Hell.

Others floated around like they were in some dream (or on some drug – I never could figure out which), and everything was “beautiful”. Yeah, in your dreams.

Another group was started by a well-known science fiction writer. Oh boy, that really made sense, didn't it! Apply all these science fiction principles to your life and call it a fancy name. Thanks, but if your foundation was built on science fiction, then so were your ideas about God.

Then there was the “Children of God” who preached that God's Love meant you could do anything you wanted – have free sex, take drugs, whatever. Well, then what was the point? I was already doing that, so why did I need God to tell me it was okay.

But these other guys were serious about the Gospel, and that's what made them stand out in the crowd. There was something different about them, and if they were right, then I wanted to know. I figured that if they were just on another trip, then I would know when I went to their services. (Besides,

they served a free meal after services, and I was hungry.)

It did not take but a few minutes after walking in the door before I knew that they were for real. I didn't hear some new trip about God – I heard an old-fashioned Gospel and found myself at the altar asking a God that I wasn't sure about to save my soul.

Now, if that had been all there was to it, I'd have walked out after services and kept on going my own way, but it wasn't. Imagine my surprise when I felt the Spirit of God come down and wash away all the sins that I didn't even know I had committed. Something incredibly supernatural happened to me right then and there, and I knew I was a new creature in God. I didn't understand what happened, but I knew I was saved!

That was over 50 years ago, and that Gospel is just as strong today as it was back then. That's why I don't preach a Gospel of ideas or theology, but a Gospel of power.

If you don't have that, then maybe -- just maybe -- you're missing out on the most important thing in life. If the fire of God is not burning in your heart, then maybe you need to find out why. Maybe you need that same supernatural experience of Salvation.

There are a lot of paths to take in Life, and many of them sound good, but only one leads to the Cross. There may be 50,000 philosophies about God in this world, but only one of them is the Truth and has the definite power of God to change your life.

That's the one I have chosen ... and it has made all the difference in the world.

Where is Wisdom?

Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. (1 John 4:13)

Sounds simple to me. You know you're really saved when you can feel the Spirit of God.

Maybe because I had to learn the hard way that all the complicated stuff serves only to get you all twisted up in knots. God had to take me to the ol' woodshed quite a few times to knock the stupid notion out of me that somehow I was smart because I had learned a few things.

Well, maybe it was more than just a few times.

The reason it took me so long was because I didn't want to give up the idea that if I just read a few more books, or listened to a few more seminars by other guys that thought they were smart, that I would become wise. It seemed like a good plan at the time, but it sure didn't hold any water with God.

Pride is the invisible sin. You can see it in everyone else but yourself. It is also the most painful one to get rid of – or shall I say, it is the most painful one to have the Lord rip out of you. He has to run you through a threshing floor where you are trampled, beaten, knocked around, and crushed under a great stone wheel that runs over you until

the chaff in your heart is loosened up so it can be blown away.

I did not go willing to that threshing floor – or so I thought. I do remember, however, praying for God to give me wisdom and to take the pride out of me, and a few other things. Had I known what I was really praying for, I might have been a little less zealous.

I can just picture God hearing those prayers, and with a beaming grin saying, “OK. You asked for it!”, as He commences to roll up His sleeves and start to work on me. It’s funny now, but it’s not all that funny when you’re going through the fire that you just called down on yourself.

But if you really want to serve the Lord, you have to be willing to go through the fire.

After a while, it seemed like the more I learned, the less I understood. While that may seem like a contradiction, actually it is the first requirement to getting wisdom. When you get to the point where you realize that you don’t know anything, then you’re entering into a level that boasts of some world-class heavyweights in God.

But it takes time. It took Moses 40 years in the backside of the desert. I can remember an old warrior in God telling me that when you reach 10 years in the Lord how you begin to think that you’ve

arrived – and then it takes another 10 or 20 years to realize how stupid you are. And then another 10 years or so until you no longer care ... and that is when God can finally use you.

There's a price to pay for it also. It cost Paul all his years of theological education, followed by years of persecution to reach the place where he stated that he knew nothing but Christ Jesus, and Him crucified. The road to wisdom leads downward first to the valley floor before it ever leads up to the mountaintop.

Salvation is not predicated on religious status, knowledge, or position. Neither is wisdom determined by how much you know or have learned. Rather, they are determined by how much of your ego that you have allowed to be stripped away until you have nothing to rely upon but God.

It is not about what we have made of ourselves, but about what He has taken out of us so that He can refashion us in the image of His Son. It is not how we view ourselves, but how we see Him.

But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? ... Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding. Job 28:12, 28

Wet Wood

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (Isaiah 40:3)

If there is anything that is sure to give me the blahs, it is going to a church service that is boring. I have always believed that church was supposed to be exciting. Maybe that's just an old-fashioned idea that went out with the Brush Arbor Revivals, but church without the Spirit of God burning in it just isn't church to me. When I come out of services, I want the message to have lit a fire in my soul that keeps burning, but sadly, too often our services are so dead that, five minutes after we've crossed the doorway, we have forgotten the message.

Is it me? Am I expecting too much?

Is it our pastors? Have they lost their fire?

Or is it our congregations?

Perhaps our preachers have toned down their messages because the match that lights revival is that deep-seated, brokenhearted repentance, and a congregation that is not ready to receive that is like wet wood. Wet wood will not catch on fire no matter how many matches you strike.

If you want to start the fires of revival, you need dry tinder and someone to strike the match. But today, even if John the Baptist were here, he would be hard pressed to find enough dry tinder to start a revival. Our wood is wet, and until it dries out, we will have the same ol' boring church services that we have always been used to.

The prophet that Isaiah spoke of in chapter 40 was a voice crying out in the wilderness. The wilderness is not a lush oasis with well-watered fields and thick vegetation. It is a dry and barren land, but it is a place where revivals start. We have to be dry, dusty, parched, and dried out to the point where we are hungry -- no, starving -- for a move of God, for the excitement of the Spirit of God in our church services, for the salvation of lost souls, and for a Holy Ghost revival. Until then, we are just wet wood.

Elijah walked across the lush, green valleys of Israel to tell the king that there would be no more rain. It would take 3½ years to dry them out, but that is what it took to bring Israel to repentance on Mount Carmel.

John the Baptist, who had the spirit of Elijah, stood in the wilderness of Jordan and he also called Israel to repentance in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. Although the churches rejected him,

the common people heard him gladly and came in droves to be baptized for the remission of sins.

It will happen again. The spirit of Elijah is scheduled to return just before the great and dreadful day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5). It will be a voice crying out in the wilderness to forsake the lush green landscape of a sedate, comfortable church, and come to a place of thirst and desperate need.

Although the wet wood of our churches will reject any move of God that calls them away from the comfort of their religious oasis, the spirit of Elijah will stand in the wilderness calling to those who want the fire of God burning in them.

That is always where the Spirit of God burns brightest – in the wilderness.

Secret Place

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty ... because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation. (Psalm 91:1,9)

When I get up in the morning, I usually take the cup of coffee my wife has brought me, stumble out onto the landing outside my bedroom, and sit down gazing through the glass doors at the stirrings of a new morning outside. I'm not quite awake yet, but it's enough for me to close my eyes and gently slip into a secret room outside this world where I can be alone with God.

There may be times when I pray ferociously, but this is always a quiet time, close and personal. It's my secret place with the Most High, and He meets me there every time, always there waiting for me to come in.

It is a special time, just Him and me. I can tell Him everything –all my worries and fears, all my wants and desires, and all the things that I am trying so hard to understand. I don't always get answers to my prayers – this isn't the time to contend and battle to the Throne for a move of God – but there is this sweet anointing that surrounds me that makes me

feel special that He took the time to actually sit and listen to me.

I am amazed that God would meet with someone like me in such a personal setting, but He does. He says in Proverbs that His secret is with the righteous, but it is God who gives you the power to be righteous just so He can commune with you in that secret place.

Man, it just doesn't get better than that.

I know there are conditions to keep that place open for me. I have to make Him my refuge – in other words, I have to place God as the One that I look to in times of trouble instead of seeking a solution from myself or from what the world offers.

I also have to make God my habitation. I have to live in Him – eat, drink, and breathe God. The Lord has to be the main focus in life, my reason for being alive, the prime motivating factor of my life. What does the First Great Commandment say? “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength”. I guess that says it all.

I reckon if you keep those two conditions, you can expect to find Him in that secret room, just waiting for you to come in and meet with Him face to face.

Wow, doesn't that sound good?

Eulogy to Dad

...because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.

*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.
(Ecclesiastes 12:6-7)*

My father died this morning.

There is something sobering about dealing with death face to face. Suddenly, the little things that seemed so important in our daily lives become minimized in this new stark reality. Going to the grocery store, catching the game on TV, cleaning the house, going to work in the morning, suddenly all seem so temporal. Careers, goals, and our plans for next week all dim with the crossing over to our long home.

The most important point of our lives is Death, and our final passing is ushered in with a somber silence as we contemplate the meaning of it all. There will be no more times of laughter or sorrow; no more conquests to conquer or petty arguments to resolve; no more songs of entertainment; no more accomplishments in this life. No more; no more.

The reality of Eternity now looms, and our very reason for existence now stands in sharp focus. What was man created for? And to where does the soul fly? What were our lives all about, and is God really there?

As Solomon said, there is hope for the living because the living will lay it to his heart (Eccl. 7:2). God has placed this very poignant event before us all so we may consider our ways and understand that we will not be here forever, but that we must all eventually return to Him. We will carry naught in our hands but the testimony of our lives as we approach our final destination.

The resolution of our entire life is distilled into this one moment. Have we walked with God and followed His path in our lives, or have we discarded all considerations of Eternity and filled it with the stuff that has made up our daily fare?

Solomon summed it all up well: "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, all is vanity" (Eccl. 1:2)

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." (Eccl. 12:13)

Pass on sweetly, Dad. I will see you again before long.

Wisdom of Fools

Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labor to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea further; though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it. (Ecclesiastes 8:17)

I am amazed at the length some people will go to defend their beliefs, no matter how untenable they may be.

In thumbing through a certain science magazine, I came across some disdainful reviews of Creationism by many of the magazine's contributors. Creation Science was decried as a something one would find at a traveling carnival, but not sustainable in the vaulted halls of modern science. Ah, the lofty heights to which we aspire!

To these pseudo-intellectuals, Humanism no longer needs empirical evidence to establish its verity, and Faith is dismissed because you can't prove or disprove it with scientific experiments. As I watch them tuck their thumbs under their lapels and rock back on their heels in satisfaction, I am constantly amazed at the blindness of the intelligent and learned.

I love the way the Apostle Paul puts it in Romans 1:22, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools".

I have seen this same arrogance in the religious so-called theological scholars, and the spiritual avatars who desire to establish new religious beliefs. It is relatively easy to establish a semblance of truth by quoting from a list of obscure scholars, unenlightened philosophers, and archaic rabbinical studies, none of which ever saved any souls nor can boast of the power of God. But, to the uninitiated, it all sounds so...uh ...intelligent.

I would suggest that if Evolutionists come off the right branch of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, these theological scholars come off the left branch. Same tree; same fruit; same results; same author.

You will never figure out God; you will never comprehend Eternity; you will never analyze Truth; you will never pierce the veil of the spiritual with the carnal. You must receive it, not figure it out.

Did you know that God has engineered it this way on purpose? Sad to say, not everyone is going to Heaven. Most will choose Hell because they refuse to surrender their sovereignty to God. The mystery of Life has been set to filter out the self-reliant, the dominant, and those who think that they

can master life through the strength of their own carnal endeavors. In other words, those who don't need nor trust God.

But to those who take Him at His Word, God sends the very presence of His Holy Spirit (1 John 4:13), which not only bears witness with our spirits of the reality of God, but leads us and guides us so that we can be called His sons and daughters. Whew! Heavy stuff!

Now, excuse me, I know I ain't all that sophisticated 'n' stuff; and I ain't got all them highfalutin' degrees on fancy paper hanging on the wall – shucks, I'm lucky to figure out how to tie my shoes -- but I'll tell you what, I sure know what the Truth is! You know why? Cause I can feel the power of the Holy Ghost, that's why!

Somebody tell me why that is so hard to figure out. You would think people as intelligent as these mental Goliaths would stop and consider something like that, but I guess that would mean they would have to give up their desire to be wise – scientific, religious, or otherwise.

(Sigh) It sure seems like a lot of work just so you can be smarter than God.

Failing

The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth.
(Joel 1:10)

Last week, a neighbor spoke to me about checking out another church to go to. It seems he just can't find a good one. The person standing next to me when I heard that whispered, "They're failing us. The churches are failing us."

I hear that same complaint from all over the U.S. Everywhere I go, I find people that are hungry and searching for a good church, but as the prophets Joel and Amos both said, they have no pasture (Joel 1:8 / Amos 8:12).

Those who are content with the mediocrity of their lukewarm church do not see a problem, neither do those who lean upon their theological scholasticism. Only those who hunger for a real outpouring of the Holy Ghost are actively searching for something more.

A church that is burning with the fire off the altar of God attracts souls. Look at the Azusa Street Revival, or the Welsh Revival, or Billy Sunday's revivals, or Wigglesworth's, or Aimee Semple McPherson's, or the Brownsville Revival. Souls that are hungry for the Spirit of God can smell the smoke

and feel the heat that blazes from a church that is on fire for God. And they come.

If we had churches like that, people would not be looking – they’d be running! They’d be packing the altar; their cries would roust the Gates of Heaven; discarded crutches would be piled up outside; faces would be beaming with excitement to tell everybody about Jesus; and the power of God would be flowing in our streets instead being a faded tale that is told.

Instead, we have excuses like one I heard from one denomination that was proud of their 10-year plan that netted a 2% increase of new souls. 2% is not even keeping up with the natural birthrate! In other words, we can’t even keep our own kids, and you don’t think the church is failing?

It’s failing because we let it fail.

Before being asked to preach at any church, I want the Pastor to first ask his congregation if any of them have been fasting and contending in strong prayer for a revival. If not, then I’ve got nothing to say to them. There is no revival without repentance. If you want a harvest, fallow ground must be broken up before seed can be planted in it.

The Apostle Paul said that perilous times would come. They are here. The real danger is in the fact that we don’t recognize how perilous it is. Rather, we are satisfied with the lukewarm, homogenized

mush we are being fed every week instead of being challenged by courageous men of God to bring us to a place of brokenhearted repentance.

God hears prayer, but it is desperate prayer that He answers.

Sun Tsu

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (Ephesians 6:12)

I am thinking about buying the book, *The Art of War*, by Sun Tsu. I was thumbing through it at the bookstore the other day and was impressed with the parallels to how we are supposed to fight in spiritual warfare.

The book, written by a Chinese philosopher/warrior centuries ago, describes every aspect that must be taken into consideration when faced with the cold, hard reality of war. He deals with every terrain, condition, and territorial position and explains how to campaign effectively in each for a victory. He even goes over the psychological condition to be considered, from the men that are fighting to the generals who are commanding.

Every Christian should read this book. War is a reality of life that is not going to fade away as we become more civilized. If anything, it is getting worse. But there is another war that rages around us that is even more vicious, cold, and relentless than any battle ever fought by mankind – it is the one that

has been going on since the beginning of time between the powers of light and darkness.

God and Satan are in a deathly struggle for our souls while we wander around through our daily activities, never realizing the whirlwind going on around us. We can't see it, so it becomes difficult to visualize, and after a while, difficult to believe, and yet it is more real than the things around us.

Most folks would like to ignore the whole issue and choose the easy path of least resistance in their lives. Even Christians, although they are aware that there is a dark side to the spiritual world, often turn their back on spiritual warfare simply because they do not see the reality of it. Little do they realize that, by not paying attention, they are tipping the scales in favor of the enemy.

Sun Tsu would tell you that if you turn your back on the enemy or attempt to ignore him, he will kill you, and so will Satan if you think you can ignore him and get away with it.

There can be no retreat, no compromise, and no deal with the devil. All three of those will lead to defeat. To win you must go on the attack by claiming the victory that is available to us through the Blood of Jesus Christ and the power of the Spirit of God.

Understanding all these strategies of warfare, however, will do you no good if they are not applied

to your Christian life. A sword that is not unsheathed in battle is useless; and so is the Word of God if it is not an active part of your daily life. Armor cannot protect you if it is not put on, and neither is prayer if it is left to some other more convenient time. Sitting on a church pew is not going on the attack; it is waiting to be attacked.

All victories that are won, all mountains that are moved, all great moves of God, and all deliverances are fought and won in only one place – the prayer room. The place to serve the Lord is on your knees.

Fight like a warrior in the prayer room, and you will win great and mighty battles in the Lord. Shrink from the battle, you will find that you will not have the strength to stand in a battle that will sweep you away into Eternity.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. (2 Corinthians 10:3-4)

Beasts Groan

How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; (Joel 1:18)

The Spirit of the Lord crashed down in services yesterday. Wow, it was great!

Some folks had never felt anything like that before; others have been waiting for so long that, as one person put it, it made them angry. There were some there that could remember back to when the Spirit of the Lord flowed in churches, blind eyes were healed, the crippled walked, diseases were wiped away, chains were broken, the oppressed were delivered, and souls were saved. But that was a long time ago.

But on Sunday, there was a ray of hope. And yet, this was only a small touch of what God has done in the past, and nothing in comparison to what He will do.

How long, O Lord? We have been dry for so long that few people even expect a refreshing anymore, and fewer still have contended before your Throne for a resurgence of the power of God that we once knew. And yet it is written that it will come.

But where, Lord? And how will it come? Voices have been crying in the wilderness to make straight

the way of the Lord, but only the rocks and sand have listened. We have been content with the mediocrity of church, the entertainment of Praise and Worship songs, and the complacency of our preachers, but we have not been hungry enough for the real thing, and so the candlestick has passed us by.

Pastors that have not preached with the piercing cry for repentance have been content with dead church services. It's easier that way, and a lot less trouble. No conflict, no controversy, and no guts.

I believe an outpouring of the Holy Spirit is coming, but it is not going to rain on ground that has not been broken up and prepared. Harvest does not spring forth out of fallow ground; and neither will God send precious souls to people who don't care. You have to be ready, and we have not been ready.

To receive and then sustain a revival, it takes strong prayer. As it says in Joel, we have to be groaning for pasture -- so desperately hungry for it so that we are willing to cry out to God with all our hearts, day and night, contending before the Throne of God for a fulfillment of His promise, and bold enough to claim victory and refuse -- absolutely refuse -- to be denied!

Oh yes, and one more thing: to stay in that place of repentance before God.

Are you that committed? Are you desperate enough to storm the Throne of God for lost souls? Or are you so unconcerned that you think that revival will just fall out of the sky on your church as if you won the Lottery?

Sorry, but with God, the only thing that is free is Salvation – everything else has a price, ... and you get what you pay for.

Woe to them that are at ease in Zion. (Amos 6:1)

Boy Scouts

“For as the body without the spirit is dead” James 2:26

When I was a punk kid on the streets of Jersey, I joined the Boy Scouts with several of the other kids off the streets. We had a great time playing basketball and fooling around. Every once in a while, they would send us to camp just to get us off the streets. We had no interest in the Boy Scouts motto or doing good deeds; we just wanted to have fun.

One day they brought an official to visit us who asked us why we had joined the Scouts. Thinking I was supposed to give some kind of proper response, I spouted off a phony high-sounding answer that I thought was pretty intelligent.

“Very nice”, the official answered. “Anyone else?”

One of the guys quipped in response, “Yeah, we just want to go camping and have fun.”

Forty-five years later, I am still struck with the honesty of that kid’s answer. We weren’t there to become model citizens – we were just there to have fun.

When someone asks me today why I have chosen to serve the Lord in spite of all the challenges it brings, I think back to that kid's answer.

I could give you all sorts of correct answers. I could quote a long list of Bible proofs; I can enumerate intricacies of prophetic fulfillments; I can list all the consequences of sin and the wonderful rewards for righteousness; and I can fill an evening with high-sounding theology; but none of those are right.

The truth is, I just want to have fun.

I would have never become a Christian if it were simply a matter of right and wrong. I didn't want to be good – there didn't seem to be much point in it – and I didn't care that somebody had died for me. Besides, I didn't believe in God anyway, so why would I even entertain the idea of becoming some sour-pussed “goody-two-shoes”. Sin didn't seem so bad to me, and the world offered so many enticing opportunities that serious Christianity shunned. I honestly could not figure out why anyone would want to be a Christian.

But then I got saved.

I didn't know what “saved” was, and had never heard of being “born-again”, but something drew me down to the altar that night to give my life to Christ. I had no idea there was a Spirit of God, never mind

being able to feel it, but when I went through that old-fashioned prayer of repentance and the heavens opened up, I actually felt the Spirit of God come down and save my soul. I tasted of the glory of God in that moment on my knees, and nothing was ever the same again!

So why do I serve the Lord? Because it feels so good! Why do I read and pray so much? So I can walk in His Spirit and feel the Holy Ghost. Nothing fancy; nothing high-falutin'; nothing sophisticated and proper – I just love that feeling! There is Life in the presence of the Spirit of God that cannot be duplicated by anything in this world, and I, for one, am hopelessly addicted to it.

When I walk into a church that is not alive with the Spirit of God, there is a deadness in the air. It's almost as if they are going through the motions, but don't know why. If there is no Spirit of God, then there is no Life, and if there is no Life, then why bother? They have a body, but no spirit; it looks like the real thing, but it is dead; they go to church and call themselves Christians, but they just go through the motions and are missing out on the whole reason they got saved in the first place.

... and I think back to that kid's answer so many years ago.

I want to be in a church that is alive with the Spirit of God; not some tomb that has all the right answers, all the proper theologies, and all the correct traditions, but no life. I want to taste the Glory of God.

Nothing else will do.

Supernatural

I love supernatural stuff. It really lights me up.

You know, there was a time when I didn't believe in God at all. It was the stuff of fairy tales to me. Heaven ranked right up there with Neverland, and Hell had to be right here on Earth. There was no way you were going to get me to believe in a God that I couldn't see, feel, or touch.

Then I had a supernatural experience with God back in Boston. (As a matter of fact, I had two, because I didn't believe the first one.) I really thought I was going nuts there for a bit. I mean, c'mon, are you serious? God is really there? Like, a real, alive, sees-whats-going-on, sits-in-the-heavens, created-the-world type God? Oh boy, I knew I was in trouble.

After several months of searching, I found others who believed in a supernatural God like the one who had showed Himself to me. Whew! I wasn't alone! There were others! I wasn't crazy! (Well, at least not that crazy.) And if there were others, then God was really there and this was all real.

That was good enough for me, and I threw myself into serving the Lord and learning everything I could about Him. Boy, there was a lot of stuff! Did you ever see how big that Book is? That was okay, I

just started at the beginning and headed toward the end.

I learned to expect to receive something from God when read His Word, and I learned to pray as if He could really hear – and answer – my prayers. Simple me. I just believed God. And guess what? It worked!

It was not a surprise for me to enter into a personal relationship with an Almighty God who not only could speak, but could show visions, perform miracles before your eyes, heal the sick, and reveal incredible truths to you. This was better than the circus!

But then I was introduced to church people.

I found out that my hair was too long and I didn't wear the right clothes, I didn't pray the right way, I didn't sing with the right 4/4 tempo, I wasn't baptized in the right name, I didn't go to church on the right day, I didn't believe the right way, I didn't do this the right way, I didn't do that the right way ... etc., etc. Scheesch! What's a poor guy supposed to do?

But then we would go to services, and the power of the Holy Ghost would crash down again like it did the night before, souls would get saved, and the Spirit of the Lord would flow through us like electricity. I didn't care what all the spiritual giants

that were stuck in their denominational bubbles thought of us. God thought we were pretty good, even if they didn't.

I have a real love for brothers and sisters in Christ, but I have to tell you that I have developed a real disdain for denominational thinking. To be trapped in a bubble that urges you to believe what you are told instead of seeking the face of God for answers is most certainly the easy way – or so it may seem -- but I want that supernatural walk in God. I want to hear from God, not some stupid Doctor of Theology. I want power in God, not some theological degree. I want to touch the Throne of God!

I guess I haven't changed all that much because I still don't believe in a God that I can't see, feel, or touch. My faith is built upon a supernatural God that is real and alive and full of power. I'm not satisfied with crumbs off the Master's table or a church that no longer is alive and vibrant with the power of God. If God doesn't show up at your church, neither will I.

If the Spirit of God isn't flowing in your church, then you are ... how else do you put this? ... dead. And if you are satisfied with that, then that's what you'll get.

I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the

things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

(Revelations 3:1-2)

Wineskins

No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.

Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved. (Matt. 9:16-17)

Lately, I have listened to several desperate prayer requests that have come from Christians who had been leaders in the Body of Christ – really good people that had some really bad tragedies. But even as the requests were brought to me, I can hear this note, not of faith, but of desperation that says, “I know You can do this. I just don’t know if you will. Please, please, please God, give us a miracle.”

Something is wrong here. This is not what I read in the Bible; it is not the way it is supposed to be. Why are there not more miracles? Why are there not more healings? Why is there not more evidence of the supernatural power of God at work in our everyday lives? I had to ask God why are we missing out on the promises of God?

Gideon once asked the very same thing, and the answer is the same now as it was then. God didn’t forget us; we forgot God.

The Lord answered by reminding me that not all that long ago, there was a tremendous moving of the Holy Ghost in America and miracles such as these were not just commonplace – it was expected! But just like the Israelites of Gideon’s day, we allowed the enemy to move into our land, and we no longer insisted on separating ourselves from the carnality that the world pushed upon us because we didn’t want to be extremists or too “religious”. Like the Israelites who chose Saul over Samuel, we wanted an earthly king.

Jonah said that when you regard lying vanities, you forsake your own mercy (Jonah 2:8). That’s exactly what we have done, and like Gideon, we wonder what happened.

Unfortunately, we are reaping what our last generation has sown, and since God’s judgments cover the entire nation, many good people are left kneeling in the dry dust of this spiritual famine, hoping against hope for rain, but do not see a cloud in the sky.

With very few exceptions, there has not been any real stirring of a Holy Ghost revival in a generation, and yet, we still think we are okay with God just like we were back then. We don’t get it! We cannot see our own falling away from that deep, hungry crucified walk in Jesus Christ that we once had.

It's to the point now that we think that our current state is normal, and we no longer cringe at the worldly intrusion into our churches, our so-called "Christian" pop music, our Christian "self-help" books, or our anemic church services. We try to cover up the reality of Hell and excuse away the righteous judgments of God. We have allowed ourselves to be sucked into a worldly faith.

Rushing into the vacuum left by our departure from the depth of the Spirit of God, are all sorts of crazy new doctrines, philosophers, and snake-oil salesmen posing as preachers. And we just meekly accept them as "other brethren in the Lord". Puh-lease. What happened to our guts in God?

And you wonder why we hardly see any miracles anymore? Why should we expect God to perform for us when we have chased Him away? We have been in the famine spoken about in Amos chapter 8, Joel chapter 1, Isaiah chapter 32, 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, and so many other places ... and we brought it upon ourselves.

And yet there is hope, but be assured that it will not come through our present churches that have left us lying in a spiritual desert, and drained us of the strength and victory that we could have had. You can't patch the modern church up. Trying to sew a new patch on the old garment of denomination will

rip that old cloth; putting the new wine of revival in an old “churchy” winebottle will burst it at the seams!

God is going to move in a new fresh way that even our evangelical churches will not be able to understand nor contain. They may try to put it in their little box, but it will burst it in pieces.

God is going to use new people who have the courage to pierce the old draperies of religion and claim victory in a new outpouring of the Spirit of God. People that are not content with “church” or satisfied with the homogenized swill that we have been fed are not going to be satisfied with anything less than the real thing – they want Jesus! They want the power of the Holy Ghost live and in person! They want a manifestation of the power that is felt, not imagined! ... And they will not be denied!

A new move of God is coming, and when it comes, you will see all the healings, the miracles, and the answers to prayer that we have been missing all these years. It’s coming.

And when it begins to rain, it is going to pour!

Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.

And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.

(Joel 2:23-25)

About the Author

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



Some newspaper columns followed, for which he has written over 700 articles, which have been published in local newspapers and Christian magazines in several countries. He has also written several books and booklets.

Since 2004, he has been lighting the fires of revival in churches spread across sub-Saharan Africa. During the course of 17 years, he has preached in over 1,000 churches and has seen hundreds of them set on fire and explode with growth, and hundreds of new ones planted across Africa. Hundreds of people have been

supernaturally healed and tens of thousands have been saved. And the fires are still burning.

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

Dr. Garris currently lives with Cindy, his wife of 43 years, in Waxahachie and is still heavily involved with churches across Africa. His pressing hope is in seeing this upcoming generation be the Gideon Generation that will usher in this last, great revival that he has preached about for so many years.

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

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Publications

Books by Dalen Garris:

Four Steps to Revival

Fire in the Hole

The Kenya Diaries

A Trumpet in Nigeria

A Scent of Rain

Into the Heart of Darkness

Fire and Rain

Do You Have Eternal Security?

Standing in the Gap – True and False Prophets

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A Voice in the Wilderness, vol. 1, the Journey Begins

A Voice in the Wilderness, vol. 2, the Early Years

A Voice in the Wilderness, vol. 3, Prophet Rising

- Available at: www.Revivalfre.org/books/