

# THE CHURCH

*That Might Save The World!*

Promoting The Spiritual Progress Of Your Local Church

**MATTHEW G. NEEDHAM**

## **THE CHURCH THAT MIGHT SAVE THE WORLD**

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For more information contact: [findsalvation@hotmail.com](mailto:findsalvation@hotmail.com)

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The Devil Is Defeated! (Romans 16:20)

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# INTRODUCTION

**Jesus said, “I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18).**

We are going to be looking at how to develop overcoming churches that prevail against the kingdom of darkness. These are the churches that shake the world and win multitudes of lost unbelievers for the Lord, as well as train, equip and disciple their congregations for the high call of God. This message has been written specifically with church leaders in mind, but the principles are true for all believers. We need everyone who considers themselves to be a Christian to press on in God, to have an onward vision of God’s purposes and to fulfil their part in building up the body of Christ.

To begin with we need to turn the spotlight on ourselves and be honest about why we are so often failing. Why is there no revival in most churches? Why do so many believers backslide? Why are the prayer meetings so often empty? Why is it that many Christians can sing to God for an hour, but sit them down to pray and they will soon become restless? Have we been blinded by a compromised version of Christianity that is holding the church back from becoming all that Christ has called us to be?

No one wants to hear that their church is spiritually dead, but that is what Jesus said about a group of believers who had a reputation of being alive (Revelation 3:1). No one wants to think that their church is lukewarm and about to be spat out of Jesus’ mouth (Revelation 3:16). No pastor wants to consider that his church is only an outward shell and that Christ has removed its lampstand (Revelation 2:5). No one wants to confess that sexual immorality is going on among the members and that Jesus is ready to come and fight against the church with the sword of His mouth (Revelation 2:14-16). Yet judgment begins with the family of God, so that all the churches will know that Jesus searches our hearts and minds, and repays each

person according to what they have done (1 Peter 4:17; Revelation 2:20-23).

Jesus is mighty in His church! We must have the wisdom of God to discern His dealings in our lives. He comes with a refiner's fire to burn away the dross from within His own people and to purify those who are in the ministry (Malachi 3:2-3). God's own children, and even those who are in positions of church leadership, are often destroyed due to lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). They become satisfied in their Christian walk and do not continue to study God's word and grow in their relationship with the Lord. The problem is that many believers are happy as they are and that is why they plateau in their spiritual life. To go on with the Lord there are going to be things you'll need to give up; areas in your life you need to change. Are you willing to allow the Lord to do a deeper work in your heart? Are you hungry enough for God to take you to the next level?

What has the devil to fear other than a God-anointed, prayer-powered church? Jesus is building His church, but so often we are the ones who get in the way. Do you love Jesus more than the world and are you willing to let Him purify and refine you like never before? Are you willing to deny yourself, take up your cross and really follow Him? Do you need to renew your prayer life? Do you need to wipe the dust from the cover of your Bible? Do you need to repent and completely humble yourself before God and be restored to Him? Are you really filled with the Holy Spirit or are you spiritually empty? Are you willing to let God show you where you need to make changes in your life? If you desire a mighty revival in the church, are you willing to let it start with you?

What kind of converts are we making and what kind of churches are we really building? My prayer and hope is that the following messages will strengthen your ministry and take your church to the next level! This isn't for the purpose of tickling your ears, but rather for challenging you to make sure that you are building upon the rock solid foundation of Christ. Having found peace with God, we must make war on all that is godless. Church-goers should never leave a meeting

visionless and passionless! They should be set on fire for God. Jesus never intended His church to be a refrigerator; rather He intended it to be on fire. We need a quenchless zeal for saving the lost and for anointed prayer and preaching that sets people ablaze for the glory of God.

*“This is what the LORD says: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?” declares the LORD.*

*“This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word’ (Isaiah 66:1-2).*

### **DO YOU TREMBLE AT GOD’S WORD?**





1)

# THE DREAM

I was blessed to have an interesting dream that opened to me a new perspective and a more in-depth appreciation for how Jesus is preparing His church to reap the unreached harvest fields of the world. Without this dream I would not have had the idea of writing this book. This dream relates to what God is doing in and through us, as Christ builds His church out of the lives of those who commit themselves to Him. It has allowed me to look with greater faith at what the Lord wants to accomplish in my own personal life and what He can do through the onward spiritual growth of the believers. God is at work in more ways than we realize or give Him credit for; but through God's word our spiritual eyes can be enlightened and our faith can be increased to walk with the Lord in a closer way.

## **CLEAN UP THE MESS**

After a wonderful day of praying with people to accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, I felt a strong presence of the Holy Spirit, and then during the night I had this impacting dream. I saw a newly constructed room which was built as an extension or an enlargement for a Bible College, to cater for the increase of new people that were coming into the church fellowship. Obviously revival had come, the church had grown and many were being called for ministry. Yet even though the newly constructed room was fully built, there was still a large amount of dust, sand, dirt and bits of old wood on the floor that had been half swept up into piles.

To my mind, these piles of debris in this newly constructed room stood for the unfinished work or the sin that still needs to be cleansed and removed from our lives. Then I heard an

older lady tell me to start sweeping up the rubbish, and with a broom in my hand I was sweeping. As I was trying to move around the piles of old wood and dirt, I had the feeling that the lady who had told me to do this work was a special lady for the kingdom of God and that I was not to underestimate this person. It gave me the thought or feeling that she was a wonderful person for God's kingdom and that I should never underestimate those who give the command to do God's work. There is a sense in which they are the Lord's mouthpiece and they speak on His behalf.

As I was sweeping up around the dirt, I then moved into the prayer room, and inside this room I kept working because there remained a small amount of rubbish. But looking back, I could now see that the floor of the Bible College was almost full of these swept up rubbish piles, yet in the prayer room there was only a small amount of waste at the entrance of the door and down one side of the room. I had the feeling that the small amount of dirt in the prayer room may have helped to cause the large amount of dirt in the Bible College. The fact that there is a lack of prayer in so many churches is a main reason that believers are being pulled back into the ways of the world and the full nature of Christ is not being developed within them (Galatians 4:19).

As I continued sweeping in the prayer room, I then heard the voice of a man preaching. It is interesting that I heard his voice after being in the prayer room. To get the most out of one's time when being trained for the ministry, the student should devote himself to prayer. The voice of an old wise man was preaching a message about why the Corinthian church was the most significant church of the New Testament. Sad to say, I have forgotten the first part of his message, but I clearly remember him saying these exact words, "The Corinthian church was the most significant church of the New Testament."

I then woke up from this dream and immediately thought that the most significant church of the New Testament should have been the Antioch church, being the church that God used to thrust out into world-wide missions; and certainly in the area

of missions the Antioch church has been recognized as the most effectual church (Acts 13:1-3). The church of Jerusalem had most of the great apostles; surely they should have been the most important fellowship of believers. Yet now my interest was aroused to take a fresh look at the Corinthian church.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF DIFFERENT CHURCHES**

Having a quick skim through my Bible, I then began to see the importance of the different churches: Paul gave praise and thanks to God the Father because he had heard of the growing faith and love for all the saints in both the Colossian and Ephesian churches (Colossians 1:4; Ephesians 1:15-16). The faith of the Roman church was also being reported all over the world (Romans 1:8). Growing faith among groups of Christians develops significant churches and that is why the Colossian, Ephesian and Roman churches had many members who were very spiritual and pressing on in their walk with the Lord.

Paul said of the Thessalonians that their faith in God had become known everywhere and that they were used by God to have a great impact in spreading the gospel all over Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thessalonians 1:8). The Philippian church fulfilled an extremely important partnership in the gospel. Paul commended them for this in his prayers, for they had sacrificially given to support his ministry (Philippians 1:5; 4:15-16). The Galatian church had some problems, but this allowed God to confront those who were leading them to a false gospel. Impostors, who were compelling the church to go back to obeying the ceremonial laws of Moses, were causing them to fall away from God's grace. Therefore, Paul had to reinforce the true gospel and teach them what it really means to receive salvation through faith in Christ (Galatians 1:7; 5:4).

From these churches and from the letters of the apostle Paul to them, we can see that God used each church in a different way to form the New Testament message. In fact, God used all of these churches to form a large amount of the Scriptures that are given to instruct and teach us today. All of these churches had great significance in different areas and in

different ways, so that God, in one sense, could confront the devil and establish the church that Jesus Christ is building. Churches can have their good points and their weak points, but most importantly we must continue to allow the Lord to speak to us and lead and guide us according to His will for each fellowship. We can't look at what any other church is doing and automatically decide that we are going to follow them. We must seek the Lord for His particular calling and the work that He wants us to fulfil.

### **THE BURDEN OF THE LORD**

I was staying with a pastor in Fiji named Conan Hatch. One day he shared with me an amazing experience he had with the Lord. These are his words:

“I was in prayer with some of the youth from our church. We were praying all night and early in the morning, around half-past four, we gathered together as a group and we met in a circle. As we were praying I saw very clearly a vision of a big heart and it was alive and pumping. From that heart I could feel the heartbeat of God and I could sense His tears. His heartbeat was for just one thing and it was for souls. Immediately I saw the laxity of the body of Christ. I saw our laziness and the sin of the Church by not having a vision for the harvest. I began to weep and I asked the Lord for forgiveness. I made a commitment to Him that morning and I said, ‘Father, as long as I am alive, I will use everything in my strength and in my power to preach the gospel.’

A few weeks later I was again praying for the harvest. As I was praying it came to me very clearly that with the number of people we have saved and with the number of people going out into the harvest, the harvest is too big for the workers and we are unable to complete the job. I had this heaviness in my spirit and again I began to weep before the Lord. I was saying, ‘Lord, how will we accomplish the task? It's too big.’ Then suddenly I saw the globe of the earth in front of me and I saw a figure of a man, whom I knew was Jesus Christ, with arms opened wide as if He was giving me something and pouring it

out. I immediately knew what He was doing. He was pouring out the Holy Spirit.

I knew God's answer to me was that as we are faithful in preaching the gospel in whatever way we can, the Holy Spirit will go ahead of us. As we go into an area the Holy Spirit will be poured out into other areas. Our task is to go and God will pour out His Spirit into other areas as well. We have to concentrate on what we can do, and He will do what He can do, for He is the one who will equip us for more effective ministry. I felt so much relieved to realize that we are not working alone. We are working with the Holy Spirit."

### **WHAT MAKES YOUR CHURCH SIGNIFICANT IN THE EYES OF GOD?**

I now come back to the main point of my dream in which I heard a man boldly declaring that the Corinthian church was the most significant church of the New Testament. I began to think about what was so great about the church in Corinth. I asked myself, "What area of significance really makes the Corinthian church stand out?" and secondly, "How has this raised up the ministry and the work of Christ even more than the other churches?" We will study this in relation to the believers of Corinth, but also keep your eye upon the local churches of your area today. We want each church to have fulfilled their calling and purpose. What will make your church stand out significantly on the Day of Judgment, so that you receive the eternal favour of God? The church has a big task. Our only hope is to walk in unity with Christ, having His heartbeat for lost souls and for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

### **ARE YOU WALKING IN UNITY WITH CHRIST?**



2)

## A LIGHT SHINING OUT OF DARKNESS

When you first look at the Corinthian church you quickly notice that it was full of all kinds of problems. The lives of many of the people were in a mess and of all the churches they were the most outwardly sinful, so much so, that many of them fell sick and died through being judged by Christ when they shared the Lord's supper (1 Corinthians 11:30-32). Their sin and wickedness was rebuked as even being worse than that of the pagans (1 Corinthians 5:1-2). Yet a closer look at this church soon reveals its incredible potential to shine God's amazing light into the darkness of this lost world. In his second letter Paul actually says it like this, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' referring to God's beginning work in creation and applying it to the light of Christ in the hearts of believers (2 Corinthians 4:6). This is what God did in shining His light out of the darkness of the Corinthians to make them into a church that would reach the world and save sinners. This is what true redemption is all about.

### EXPOSING THE DARKNESS

Many things can stunt our spiritual path to maturity. If new-born Christians don't grow, they will either die, which means that they will be lost back to the world, or they will become spiritually deformed and always need people to take care of them. Many believers are still likened to spiritual infants. To expose the darkness, the apostle Paul had to appeal to them to sort out the divisions and the quarrels that were going on (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). They were divided over following different men, arguing and even having lawsuits among themselves; therefore, they could not be addressed as spiritual but as

worldly – mere infants in Christ (1 Corinthians 3:1-4; 6:1-8). They were still spiritual babies.

Another big issue exploded in this church through the sin of sexual immorality. The apostle Paul called for the one continuing to live in this way to be removed from the church and even handed over to Satan (1 Corinthians 5). Paul had to continually warn them that the sexually immoral will not inherit the kingdom of God and he specifically warned them not to go to prostitutes (1 Corinthians 6:9-10,15-18). He commanded them by the word of the Lord that a wife must not divorce her husband and a husband must not divorce his wife (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). When divorce is rampant in the church there are major problems. God Himself says that He will be a witness against the person who breaks faith and divorces the wife of his youth (Malachi 2:14,16). I know there are different circumstances that cause divorce and because of the hardness of people's hearts divorce is sometimes unavoidable, but there has to be deep repentance instead of making excuses for one's failure and weaknesses.

It's not easy to bring correction when it is needed. When I started pointing out areas where there needs to be repentance in the church, I was accused of being a wife basher, in that I was beating the Bride of Christ. My response was to ask the person, "Was Jesus a wife basher when He called His Church to repent?" Jesus constantly exposed the sin within His church and warned of harsh consequences if His own people refused to sort out their lives (Revelation 2-3). The moral breakdown and decline in the spiritual health of a nation shows that the light of the church is diminishing. This must be of concern to all believers and especially to those who are called to declare God's Holy Word. The prophets of the Old Testament had this deep concern, even while they strenuously denounced the people's sin. They had to go against the crowd to stand for righteousness.

Problems within the church have to be addressed. To solve other areas of compromise, the apostle Paul warned the believers not to use their freedom to cause others to fall (1 Corinthians 8:9-13). He also taught them to have order in their



church services because their meetings were getting out of hand and were doing more harm than good (1 Corinthians 11:17; 14:40). Then Paul had to go back to re-iterate the very basics of the gospel because some of them were even denying the resurrection from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:12). The world sleeps in the darkness while the church often sleeps in the light. The apostle Paul had the wisdom of God to give both believers and unbelievers the right message. The church must be filled with the true light, so that those in darkness can see the glory of Christ.

### **HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE THEIR PASTOR?**

From a natural point of view, all of these church problems didn't make it look too promising for the Corinthians. Outwardly they looked like a group of backslidden believers you would want to stay well clear of. Everyone would agree that whoever volunteered to pastor such a church would have a tough road ahead of him. Yet as we look deeper we will find that the Holy Spirit brings forth tremendous hope and reasons to believe for the work of God to go forward mightily. Let this encourage those in ministry: no matter what difficulties you are facing, if you persevere you can overcome and the kingdom of God will be marvellously extended.

The spiritual darkness within the Corinthian church brought forth some of the greatest teaching and instructions ever written to lead the church out of sin and into the fullness of Christ. Paul taught about unity in the body because they were divided. One part cannot say to another part that I don't need you (1 Corinthians 12). He taught about love because they needed a deeper outworking of this fruit of the Spirit in their character (1 Corinthians 13). He taught about marriage because of their sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 7). He taught about the worthlessness of idols, so they would know what to do in an idolatrous culture (1 Corinthians 8:4-13; 10:14-22). He taught the necessity of giving towards the work of the ministry because they had been neglecting this responsibility (1 Corinthians 9:7-14; 16:1-4). He taught about the resurrection body to pull down the

false teaching that had spread among them and was causing them to be led astray (1 Corinthians 15).

One thing we as preachers have to learn is to give the right message at the right time and truly address the spiritual needs of the people. That is what the apostle Paul continually did. The state of the Corinthian church brought out the very best compassion and care of Paul to really lead these precious saints into the fullness of truth. Most of the letters to the other churches were only small, but for the Corinthians we have two very detailed letters to really instruct them in how they should overcome. To save them from their sins and equip them for the work of the ministry, Paul brought forth these glorious teachings, warnings, encouragements and a deeper message in the word of God. Out of sin came more of God's grace, for as the Bible says, 'where sin increased, grace increased all the more' (Romans 5:20). Out of darkness, God truly brought forth His light.

## **MINISTRY CAN BE TOUGH**

Being a pastor is not easy. They often face a lot more stress and challenges than people realize. The pastor needs to know a definite call of God upon his life and the Lord's leading to the particular church he is pastoring. Pastors need to have a solid foundation in their walk with the Lord so they can overcome times of discouragement. One of the hardest jobs can be dealing with disgruntled, uncooperative church members. Pastor's wives can face different kinds of pressures also. Many pastors leave the ministry due to spiritual burnout, contention in their churches or moral failure. Pastors need to be men of prayer and stay focused on developing their relationship with the Lord. They need to be careful not to drift from God's perfect will through having unnecessary distractions.

I met a nice Christian young man on the mission field who had been sent by his home church, along with his wife, to plant a new church. I had lunch with him and things seemed to be going well, even though he admitted that the church was

moving ahead very slowly. Sometime later I found that he had left the mission field and had returned home. I trust that his home church really got behind him and built him up, and also encouraged his wife not to give up ministry. Many missionaries give up after their first year. Often there are language problems, financial pressures and family pressures, besides trying to plant a church or start a new work. How do you handle it if you have to go through a time of serious illness? There are many obstacles to overcome and to plant a new church you need to go into it with a lot of perseverance.

What do you do if you find yourself pastoring a church such as in Corinth that was full of sin? You have to seek the Lord for His wisdom and grace. You need to get your strategy from God, as to how you are going to move the church forward, step by step. The light of God has to shine through you and slowly more and more people will come out of the darkness of this world. There are so many issues to deal with that our only hope is to be constantly going deeper in our walk with the Lord. Do you want your church to be saved and satisfied, or saved and sanctified? The cycle of revival is repentance, prayer, evangelism and discipleship. How can you implement this in your church? I was blessed to have some time living with a pastor from Malaysia. He was a man of prayer and a preacher of righteousness. Find other men of God in your area that you can pray with and can encourage you and help you along. But first and foremost remember that the Lord is at your side. Press on and never give up!

**DO YOU HAVE THE ABILITY TO PERSEVERE AND  
WIN THE VICTORY?**



3)

## THE PRICE OF REVIVAL

*'Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God' (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).*

The strength of any church depends on repentance and faith; how deeply the members have turned from darkness to light, from Satan to God, and whether or not they are willing to walk in righteousness and holiness. I was staying with a pastor and his wife, Sam and Rozina, for a couple of weeks so I could do evangelism in their area. The pastor's wife shared her testimony with me and her message is so needed to help young people to make a solid decision to walk on the right path, in regard to keeping oneself sexually pure for marriage. Here is Rozina's testimony:

"I am the youngest of seven children and I grew up in an environment where we faced a lot of temptation. There was always a lot of entertainment. My Mum was a very godly woman and she always cared that we kept God's holiness and she cared that we live by example. I thank God that not only did my Mum speak but she had the prayers to back up her words. I remember her saying to me when I was about 16 years of age, 'Rozina, please be careful because there's so much temptation out there. You know it's always the greatest pride for a Mum to see her daughter walk up an aisle without being touched. You will bring me big shame if you came back home carrying a child without being married. Please promise

me something: never allow a man to take you to bed before you have got married.' I looked at her and said, 'Ok Mum, I promise you I will do that. I will not allow that to happen in my life.'

Leaving home and coming into city life, I started going night clubbing. I started to meet up with friends and associate with city kids and temptation was really strong. I remember meeting up with guys and I would build up a relationship and kind of like them. I thought I would build a good relationship but after a short period of time one of them would ask, 'Can I take you for the night? Can I take you to bed?' Because I feared my Mum being hurt I would say, 'You just made the biggest mistake of your life. This relationship is going to be broken right here. If you are going to invite me to your bed now, how many others are you going to invite to your bed? I'm sorry. I'm not going to allow that to happen. You can go.' I would break the relationship right there and then.

As time went by I faced one difficult situation. I met up with this guy who was a doctor. He was a really nice fellow and I thought I could trust him, but after going out for some months the same invitation came from him. I just looked at this guy. I knew I was going to break my own heart, but I said, 'I'm sorry. You just made the biggest mistake of your life. This relationship is ending now.' For me that was really difficult but because I loved my mother and I never wanted to hurt her feelings, I broke the relationship. I thank God for my praying Mum who was there to pray for me and the Lord gave me the strength to stand against the wiles of the enemy in that area of my life. I thank God that at the age of 19 I gave my life to the Lord. I never regret making that choice to be a blessing to my parents and above all to be a blessing to the Lord, to have a good marriage and to have one man in my life, to be blessed with my husband and our children.

I would like to encourage mother's out there. You might have young daughters that you are beginning to worry about because they are growing up and they will face life. One of the greatest weapons of the enemy today is to pull down the lives of young girls and to destroy God's gift in their lives. I would

like to encourage you mothers. You can advise your children but remember that it is not by might, it is not by power, but it is by the Spirit of God that you can breakthrough (Zechariah 4:6). As long as you back up your words of advice in prayer, God will see you through. God is the protector of your child. God's hand will never be taken off your child as long as you are the mother covering that child in prayer.

Through my mother's prayers I have brothers who quit alcohol and smoking. Two of my very rough brother's become pastors, all through the prayers of a faithful mother that found her strength on her knees before God. I want to encourage you that if God can do that for our family, He can do the same for you. You could be a mother who could even save your community's children's lives, by giving them words of advice that will bring them to the Lord and save them from the wiles of the enemy."

## **REPENTANCE FROM SIN**

To stop us from inheriting the kingdom of God, the devil seeks to pull us onto the path of evil. Paul gave the church a list of sins that will stop believers from being saved. Paul gave this warning because these were the sins of Corinth. If you have any of the following sins in your life you need to make sure that you are delivered from them through looking unto Jesus for complete salvation. Christians are warned not to be deceived and not to backslide. The following people are those who are lost:

**1) The Sexually Immoral** – This is referring to the sin of fornication, which is engaging in a sexual relationship without the blessing of God through the covenant of marriage. Many people today in the western world think that they can live together without getting married. They are going against God's will and they will not inherit a place in His kingdom. The heavyweight boxer, Mike Tyson, used to boast about how many beautiful girls he had committed fornication with, but on the Day of Judgment he will not be boasting at all. Many

television programmes are downright wicked and abominable because they promote sexual immorality. Unfortunately there are Christians who sit there watching it, content to feed themselves on the filth of the world. This blocks and hinders revival.

**2) Idolaters** – It is a religious deception to worship idols. There are no idols in Heaven and God commands that we do not make idols or bow down to them on the earth (Exodus 20:4-6). There is a spirit of idolatry behind the Roman Catholic Church. They set up images of the saints, Mary and Jesus, in direct disobedience to God's word (Deuteronomy 4:15-18). To become a true Christian you must have turned away from all idols (1 Thessalonians 1:9). One of the hardest things for a Roman Catholic is to acknowledge that they are an idol worshipper when they bow and pray to statues. They made excuses for their sin instead of repenting. Have nothing to do with Hindu, Buddhist or Animist idols, for these are the false gods of the heathen.

**3) Adulterers** – Why do people cheat on their spouses? It is because they do not have a true fear of God and they do not believe the reality of His eternal judgments. I went to a particular city to do some street witnessing and to hand out tracts. As I was standing outside a restaurant, out come a man who attended the same church as me. He was surprised to see me because he was holding hands with a younger woman who was not his wife. Thankfully he seemed to heed the word of God so that at least his marriage was saved.

**4) Male Prostitutes** – Female prostitutes are bad enough, but how terrible it is when male prostitutes are walking around. I was at a big Christian conference and I met a young guy who began telling me all about all the visions of Jesus he had seen. I longed to see the Lord the way he had. His grandfather was a great man of God and I had no doubt that Jesus was calling this young man to also become a preacher, but instead he



went into the entertainment business and he became a male stripper. A spirit of prostitution had entered him.

**5) Homosexual Offenders** – Corinth was an extremely immoral place, just like much of the world today. As an evangelist preaching the gospel on the streets, I was occasionally approached by homosexuals who were outright rude and blatantly evil in making sexual advances. They are filled with demons of lust. I remember one homosexual saying to me, “I truly love my partners.” Disgusting! Their minds are depraved and their lives are an abomination to God. They are heading straight to the eternal fires of Hell unless they repent!

**6) Thieves** – My warning to thieves is that they are under the curse of God (Zechariah 5:3-4). Where they live is cursed and everything they do is cursed unless they repent and return what they have stolen. In some cases that can be difficult. When I was at Bible College a friend admitted that while he was working for a particular restaurant he used to steal money from them and over time this mounted up to huge sum. He thought he would never be able to repay the amount he had stolen. My advice in that situation was to go to the restaurant and confess his sin and see what their response was. That’s hard, but it’s better to try and put things right now than to take your sins with you to the Judgment Seat of Christ.

**7) The Greedy** –.I preached in a very small church and afterwards the pastor asked me if I could raise money for their new building. What I didn’t know was that the pastor had built for himself a three storey house and had sent all his children overseas for their education. What he didn’t know was that I was a simple evangelist with virtually no money at the time. Why was the pastor looking to me to raise money for his new church building? His request sounded very noble, but really he was spending most of his ministry money on the expensive needs of his own family. Jesus said, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed” (Luke 12:15).

**8) Drunkards** – We have a society of drunkards. I was annoyed with the New Zealand government when they lowered the drinking age from 20 to 18 years old in 1999. Lowering the drinking age only allows the problem to grow worse. A person I often tried to share the gospel with killed himself through drunk driving. New Zealand has a problem of binge drinking among the youth. No drunkard will enter the kingdom of God, yet we are raising up a generation who are addicted to the bottle and have to go out partying every weekend. What do sinful people do just prior to judgment? Like King Belshazzar, they seek to drink it up and party (Daniel 5:1-31). Suddenly they are destroyed.

**9) Slanderers** – The devil loves to speak against the things of God and to mock the name of the Lord. Referring to the Antichrist in the last days, the Bible says, ‘He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven’ (Revelation 13:6). Those who take the Lord’s name in vain and mix it with swearing and cursing are condemning themselves (Matthew 12:37). They will not be able to dwell in God’s perfect light.

**10) Swindlers** – A swindler is someone who seeks to cheat other people out of their money. I have printed testimony booklets in many languages around the world and have a good idea about the costs involved. I was invited by a pastor to speak at a large meeting. Behind my back, he was telling my friend to charge me an extremely high amount in order to make a huge financial profit when printing my booklets. This was his advice in how to cheat Christian foreigners of their money so they could build their own ministries. The devil’s shortcut is to lead pastors to seek after money, rather than to seek after God through prayer. Are you seeking money or seeking God?

**WASH YOUR SINS AWAY**

Before coming to the Lord, the Corinthian believers had been involved in these sins. When they came to Christ they were washed clean, sanctified and justified by the Holy Spirit. There is hope for anyone who is willing to acknowledge they need help and they want to come out of the filth of an ungodly life. You can be saved and you can become a new person. The grace and mercy of God is for you. It's an amazing miracle that a person once deep in sin can be washed so clean and become so pure that they qualify to be a part of the Bride of Christ. My heart's desire is for people to be saved. I don't preach against sin to condemn people, but I preach in the hope that they will acknowledge the error of their ways and repent. The Lord checks us and we know when we are doing something wrong.

One of the pressures and difficulties in the ministry is to uphold God's standards. Many people want you to bring God's standards down to their own level of compromise. This leads people to Hell and there are many churches that are leading people to their eternal doom. You cannot expect to walk in darkness and go to Heaven. There is no place for you in the kingdom of God if you continue in these sins we have just looked at. This message should either break a person's heart or it will harden their heart. The person who wants to be saved will have a broken heart over the fact that they have sinned. The person who doesn't care about the state of his soul will not be concerned that he enjoys these sins and that he wants to continue in them. Brokenness of heart is what leads to salvation, yet I don't see much brokenness today in many who are supposedly responding to a gospel presentation. Their conscience hasn't been shaken sufficiently in order for them to come into deep repentance.

How do you know if a person is saved? They can say a sinner's prayer and then go out and live the same, but a person who is truly "born again" will be transformed from within. If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old is gone, the new has come! (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15) An unchanged person is unsaved. Sometimes people need to feel miserable before they get properly saved. They need to come

into godly sorrow before they know what true repentance is. Anything that is not like Jesus in our hearts needs to be changed. Unbelievers and backsliders need to be so shaken and convicted that after hearing our preaching they may go home to sleepless nights, until their souls are broken in repentance. Millions of people have a moral disease without any longing for healing. They are seeking happiness instead of holiness! The way to revival is simple: “Is your heart right with God?”

If a church won't accept the hard hitting message of repentance and call “sin” sin, then an evangelist may need to shake the dust off his feet and move on (Luke 9:5-6), yet the pastor needs to gather whoever is willing for prayer, fasting and weeping until there is a breakthrough (Joel 2:12-17). This type of prayer meeting may need to begin in the pastor's house until the church is awakened to respond. The problem with much of today's ministry is that it is not producing a sufficient level of deep repentance and therefore the main programme of the church goes on while the devil is tearing people apart. I've just been in a certain country where a particular sin seems to be rampant among the believers. The sin is not addressed. The church life goes on the same, but there is no revival. As the evangelist Leonard Ravenhill used to say: “There are two types of people in the world: those who are dead to sin and those who are dead in sin.” Which one are you?

**ARE YOU WILLING TO PAY THE PRICE FOR  
TRUE REVIVAL?**

## 4)

# THE DANGER OF SPIRITUAL IGNORANCE

There are three matters of which the apostle Paul warned the Corinthians they were not to be ignorant about. These three topics show us what we have to be well grounded in, so that we have a right understanding of God's calling upon our lives:

1) We are not to be ignorant of Israel's history; 2) We are not to be ignorant of the spiritual gifts, and; 3) We are not to be ignorant of God.

New Christians need to be taught these important principles found in God's word so they can grow quickly in the faith. If older Christians are ignorant of these things, it brings great shame upon the church (1 Corinthians 15:34).

### THREE AREAS OF GOD'S WORD YOU MUST CLEARLY UNDERSTAND

**1) The History Of Israel And The Judgments For Their Backsliding** – *For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert.*

*Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan*

*revelry.” We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did – and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test the Lord, as some of them did – and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did – and were killed by the destroying angel.*

*These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!” (1 Corinthians 10:1-12)*

I don’t know how anyone can read passages of Scripture like this and then believe the false doctrine, “Once saved always saved.” These Israelites were saved by God but later they were cut off due to their unbelief (Hebrews 3:7-19). They heard God’s voice but they turned away from the Living God and became hardened and unbelieving. They enjoyed the deceitfulness of sin and God promised that those who disobeyed would never enter His rest. The sin of unbelief will shut the gates of Heaven on any person who may have once believed. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first (Hebrews 3:14). All of the warnings of the Old Testament Scriptures can be taken to warn the church not to backslide. If a person doesn’t continue in the gospel, they have believed in vain (1 Corinthians 15:2).

A person can confess their faith in Christ, be water baptized, baptized in the Holy Spirit, partake of the spiritual blessing in Christ and still die in their sins and go to Hell (Hebrews 6:4-6). Believers can fall from grace and that is why we are warned not to take the grace of God in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1; Galatians 5:4). How does a person lose their salvation? The same way a person fails to get salvation, which is by denying Jesus (John 8:24). You are deluded if you think you can live in sin and go to Heaven. If you reject the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour and die without repentance of this sin, you will be classed with the unbelievers and God will reject you forever.

Jesus said, “Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the

vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned” (John 15:4-6). A person remains in Christ by faith in Him; just as a person is broken off from Christ if they deny Him through unbelief. You cannot reject Jesus and still be saved. Jesus has promised to provide a way out of every temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13), but you must make the choice of going that way. This is the lesson we must learn from the history of Israel. Most of them died in their sins because they did not continue in their walk with God. This strong warning is for us!

**2) The Importance Of The Spiritual Gifts And Their Operation Today** – *‘Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant...*

*Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues’ (1 Corinthians 12:1,7-10).*

Christians cannot be ignorant of the spiritual gifts. To press on in God we must do so in conjunction with the Holy Spirit. Now is the time when the Holy Spirit is upon the earth and His presence is manifested through us as we step out in faith to operate in the spiritual gifts. When the church is ignorant of this, they will deny themselves of a greater awareness of God’s awesome presence and power. Sad to say, many churches are ignorant of the spiritual gifts due to their willful negligence of the Holy Spirit. Paul gave the Corinthians wonderful enlightenment about the power of God’s eternal Spirit because they needed it. We need this teaching even

more today. The nine gifts of the Spirit can be divided into three groups (three sets of three):

### **The Vocal Gifts**

**i) Gift Of Prophecy** – Declaring what God has to say to encourage and build up the faith of others. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Revelation 19:10), so this gift should always encourage people to follow the Lord and know His wonderful hand guiding them.

**ii) Speaking In Different Kinds Of Tongues** – The ability to give a message in an unknown language that was not learnt naturally. Jesus told His disciples that signs will follow those who believe and they would speak in new tongues (Mark 16:17). On the day of Pentecost the disciples amazed the people by speaking in at least fifteen different languages (Acts 2:6-12).

**iii) The Interpretation Of Tongues** – An interpretation of a message which has already been given in an unknown tongue so that people can understand what has been said. The apostle Paul taught the church that anyone who speaks a message in an unknown tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says (1 Corinthians 14:13).

### **The Revelation Gifts**

**i) The Message Of Wisdom** – A word of guidance at the right time on how to deal with a situation, which gives understanding as to what is right to do. Jesus had a word of wisdom how to answer the Pharisees about the tax issue (Matthew 22:15-22).

**ii) The Message Of Knowledge** – A word about a situation that you did not know naturally. Jesus had a word of knowledge about money being in a fish's mouth (Matthew 17:27).

**iii) The Distinguishing Between Spirits** – Reveals the spiritual forces or type of spirit that can be affecting a person or situation. Jesus discerned the spirit behind Peter's words and said to him, "Get behind me, Satan" (Matthew 16:23).



## The Power Gifts

**i) Gift Of Faith** – The ability to believe and know for certain that the impossible will happen. Jesus delayed His journey because He had the faith that He would raise Lazarus from the dead (John 11:6,11,43-44).

**ii) Gifts Of Healing** – The curing of the body without medical assistance. Jesus continually healed people throughout His ministry (Matthew 8:14-17).

**iii) Miraculous Powers** – Power to change or alter circumstances and bring about something supernatural. Jesus fed over 5000 people from five loaves and two fish (Matthew 14:19-21).

To come into these gifts you need to receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit. This happens when the Spirit of God comes upon you and you are clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). Many Christians do not remember the time or date when they were first saved, yet a person cannot receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit without being able to say when it happened. It is a definite experience. The word of God is clear that the Spirit of God will be with the believers forever (John 14:16). The Great Commission has not yet been fulfilled (Mark 16:15-20). Therefore, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are available for us today in order to manifest the power of Jesus Christ and to confirm the preaching of the gospel. Let God arise (Psalm 68:1).

It is written: 'Dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit' (Jude 20). Praying in tongues edifies the believer and builds them up stronger in their faith (1 Corinthians 14:4). You should therefore pray in tongues frequently. Every believer can also learn how to bring an encouraging word of prophecy. As you step out in faith God will give you further words and bring you into other gifts. We must eagerly desire the spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 14:1), meaning that this must be a priority in our prayer times as we seek a greater manifestation and move of God. It is written, 'Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with

contempt' (1 Thessalonians 5:19-20). Ignorance hinders action and paralyzes the believer from stepping out. Yet the Holy Spirit comes to set us on fire so that the church becomes a place of God's manifest power.

**3) The Difference Between Being Religious And Really Knowing God** – *'Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God – I say this to your shame' (1 Corinthians 15:33-34).*

The first letter to the Corinthians can be summed up by Paul calling the Corinthians to come back to their senses, warning them to stop sinning and laying out the shame of those in this church who were ignorant of God. Why were the Corinthian believers still ignorant of God after they had been given so much? This speaks to me of lazy Christians who are too busy to study the deeper truths of God's word. Most people sin out of some form of ignorance, which comes through a lack of spiritual knowledge (Hosea 4:1-6). People destroy themselves because they do not pursue the deeper knowledge of God. This ignorance is a willful ignorance, because it is possible for everyone to know the truth. Unbelievers 'are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts' (Ephesians 4:18). To go on with God you must have a soft heart.

God can speak to people, but you won't be able to hear His voice unless you are in tune with Him. One of the signs of the last days is that people would be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God (2 Timothy 3:1-5). Living for one's own pleasure hinders a person from growing spiritually. Unbelievers and backsliders want to be ignorant so they can escape the uneasy feeling of being convicted of their sins. If they brought their whole life into the fullness of God's light, their own conscience would convict them and they would know that they are lost and un-done. People cannot be saved until they know that they are lost. I always go into the work of evangelism with

that thought in mind. People need to understand why there is a barrier between them and God.

The depth of a person's conversion is often determined by how deeply they are convicted of their sins so they see the necessity of receiving forgiveness from Christ. The natural result, or sign, of receiving salvation is then an enormous love towards Jesus for His mercy and grace. When the burden of sin has been lifted from a person's shoulders they will feel the relief of being saved. A person will often have a weak conversion if they have no idea of how their sin has offended God and how close they were to being destroyed by His wrath. Salvation is being saved from God's righteous anger towards their sin (Colossians 3:5-6). The wrath of God is eternal just as the love of God is eternal. The Lord cannot tolerate wickedness and evil. The wrath of God burns against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness (Romans 1:18).

A believer, who repents and places their faith and trust in Christ alone for their salvation, comes into God's eternal love. As they continue in that love they will develop a closer friendship with God. An unbeliever, who refuses to repent and believe the gospel, is storing up wrath against himself for the Day when God's righteous judgments will be revealed. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil (Romans 2:5-9). We cannot afford to be ignorant of God. The consequences are too great. Those who are cast into the lake of fire will find themselves in torment day and night forever and ever (Revelation 20:10).

The good news of salvation is that even though God hates sin so much, He Himself provided the sacrifice for sins and the means of our forgiveness and restoration. For this reason God the Father sent His one and only Son as the perfect and sinless Lamb of God. Jesus went like a lamb to the slaughter and shed His holy, righteous blood to atone for the sins of the world. To appropriate this sacrifice you must believe that Jesus died for you and that on the third day He rose from the dead. That is the only provision for the salvation of the world that needed to be made and has been made. Those who

believe come into a right relationship with God, while those who refuse to believe remain ignorant of God.

The plan of salvation is very simple. A little child can understand it, but a great professor can't unless he humbles himself at the foot of the cross and admits that he is a sinner. There is a big difference between preaching forgiveness and preaching salvation. Everyone wants a free ticket to Heaven, but have they got a new heart and a new spirit? Have they put off the old man and put on the new man? There is no forgiveness without repentance. Being religious will not save you unless your religion is rightly found upon a true and intimate walk with Christ. Jesus is the Saviour of the world and those who have been saved know His presence.

### **A BALANCED VIEW OF GOD**

Within the Corinthian church many still desired to enjoy the pleasures of sin and this was a major reason why there was a lack of spiritual understanding and growth in their lives. Many believers don't progress and they remain as mere infants in Christ because of willful ignorance. People remain unlearned because they do not love the deeper truths of Christ. Don't be a naïve Christian who is satisfied with areas of ignorance and a lack of understanding of God's ways. Do you have an onward vision of God's purpose for your life? If not, you need to earnestly seek the Lord to bring you into His greater light. Be diligent to study God's word; be earnest in prayer and be faithful until the end.

At the end of the first letter, Paul says these horrific words, 'If anyone does not love the Lord – a curse be on him' (1 Corinthians 16:22). Paul was saying these words to Christians. Do you really love Jesus? A lack of love for Jesus is what causes the church to backslide and to be under a curse (Revelation 2:4). That curse is only broken through repentance and restoration to God. Churches can prophesy about a coming revival for twenty years, but unless they prevail in prayer they are still on the brink of judgment. We must study and teach the Bible thoroughly so that believers are not ignorant of God's word,

God's will or God's ways. We must heed the warnings of Israel's history. We must earnestly desire the spiritual gifts and we must grow in our relationship with God and really know Him intimately.

We must preach the true way of salvation because it is an extremely narrow road and only a few find it (Matthew 7:13-14). It can be a long journey to Heaven and without a true fear of God people don't continue on the right path. Without allowing the power of God to be demonstrated through the church, we are hindering the Holy Spirit from distributing His gifts according to His will. We must have a right balance in our understanding of who God is in regard to His love and His wrath; His mercy and His righteous indignation; the salvation of those who believe and the eternal damnation of those who refuse to make peace with Him. We must know both the kindness and the sternness of God; kindness to those who continue in Christ but sternness to those who fall and persist in unbelief (Romans 11:22-23).

Many people are ignorant of the greater treasures of God's word and of the tremendous joy of walking in His presence. The world has such a grip on them that they are missing the fullness of God's love. We have to go on with the Lord and press into all that He has for us. We are living in the last days and we don't have time to waste. You have the choice of watching television night by night, or getting deeper into God's word and intercessory prayer. What you do each day either bankrupts or enriches your soul. It's a sad state of affairs when the church is pursuing the things of the world more than the things of God. You cannot remain as a baby Christian; you have to grow into maturity. The church has to press forward. Jesus said, "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love" (John 15:10).

## **ARE YOU RECEIVING OR REJECTING GOD'S LOVE?**



## 5)

# EVANGELIZE OR FOSSILIZE

We have to move into the forefront of the Lord's battle; out of the nursery of spiritual immaturity and into the armoury of being equipped for the battlefield of saving souls. We don't put on the full armour of God so that we can sit comfortably in church (Ephesians 6:10-18). We put on the armour of light so that Christ can be seen through us (Romans 13:12). We don't light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Rather we must let our light shine before men, that they may see our good deeds and praise our Father in Heaven (Matthew 5:14-16). Jesus never intended His church to lose spiritual truth and go through the dark ages. He wanted to lead His people from glory to glory. Today Christians seem to come to church to polish their armour, rather than to be trained how to confront the enemy in evangelistic outreach and personal witnessing.

We have to fight the good fight of faith because there is so much opposition to the gospel. Some opposition is blatant, but most of it is very subtle. The end result is that the devil has blinded the minds of unbelievers so they cannot see the glory of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:3-6). In the spiritual realm we have all kinds of strange doctrines, heresies and people seeking to deny the Lord, yet Jesus is the power and the wisdom of God. He is also the righteousness, holiness and redemption of those who are faithful to Him (1 Corinthians 1:24,30). Jesus is the Saviour and the Judge. The warnings of judgment are often not well accepted and even church leaders can be reluctant to have anyone declare them from the pulpit, yet the power of the Lord Jesus is present to judge sin and to purify the church (1 Corinthians 5:1-13). The church has to be cleansed before she is useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work (2 Timothy 2:20-21).

## **GOD'S VESSEL TO SAVE THE WORLD**

Many in the Corinthian church had fallen, yet Christ was there to pick them up, give them a second chance and make them into vessels of honour to reach the world and save sinners. They were equipped with every spiritual gift in order to manifest the presence of Christ, so that those who were lost and ignorant of the gospel could be saved (1 Corinthians 1:7). They had incredible potential. If they would overcome in the areas that Paul had addressed with them, the power of Christ would be released through their lives to reach the multitudes. According to how they responded to Christ, the Corinthian church would become the centre of revival or if they continued in sin they would continue to be judged. Revival or judgment? The choice is ours.

Paul said of their meetings, 'If an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!" (1 Corinthians 14:24-25). The presence of Christ would be so manifested in this church that unbelievers would fall down in repentance. This is the kind of church God is looking for. The Lord was doing a deeper work to purify this church so that He could reap a harvest from among the lost. The strength of Christ's presence among His people would save sinners.

Every church is called to be a witnessing church and Paul pleaded with the Corinthians to 'stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain' (1 Corinthians 15:58). Every Christian needs to understand the blessings of witnessing and know that such labour in the Lord is never in vain. It produces a great reward (Daniel 12:3). To save the world we must give ourselves to going out and actually doing the Lord's work; otherwise the work won't be done. Paul illustrated this by the example of his own life: 'I have become all things to all men so that by all possible



means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings' (1 Corinthians 9:22-23).

It seems that very few Christians have a burden to save unbelievers. Therefore they are not praying about it or searching for the means to save other people, but everything Paul did was for the sake of the gospel. Paul called the Corinthians to be men of courage and to be strong (1 Corinthians 16:13). You can't shake your town with the gospel when no one has any courage and no one wants to go out to witness. Courage overcomes fear and enables a person to become a strong witness for Christ. Paul warned the church not to refuse to accept those who carry on the work of the Lord and he calls them to submit to those who join in the work and labour at it (1 Corinthians 16:10-11,16). Evangelism is hard work. We need a deep appreciation for the importance of the work of the Lord and of those who are doing it, so that we can also aid them and join them, according to our talents and spiritual gifts.

## **THE BATTLE OF SAVING SOULS**

The strength of the Lord's work going forward is largely determined by the unity and understanding of God's people in regard to seeking and saving the lost. In evangelism we have to know what it means to really labour to win souls for the Lord. This begins in the place of prayer, goes out to the streets, workplaces and schools, and brings new souls into the church. The ministry of the evangelist has been given by God to equip the believers to reap the harvest. Every church needs this ministry. As I have been doing missionary work in different countries, I have been blessed to meet great men and women of God who have dedicated their lives to the task of reaching this world with the gospel. It begins with a burden or concern for the lost multitudes, which caused them to be willing to leave the comforts of home and to speak in the name of the Lord.

Every Christian needs to gaze upon eternity before they come back to the reality of this earth. The average life expectancy for the world's population is about 66 years –

higher for some countries, lower for others. The world's death rate at the time of writing this is about 56 million per year, 153 thousand per day, 6390 per hour, 107 per minute, 1.78 per second. These figures will increase as our population increases, but it is safe to assume that over the next 70 years more than 6 billion people will die. Every moment another soul is falling into Hell. They will be separated from God forever if they did not repent and believe the gospel. There is only one way to save them. Every Christian needs to be sharing their faith and leading people to Christ.

Churches are weak in evangelism because they are weak in prayer. They lack grief for the salvation of the perishing and they have no sorrow at how the world insults the Living God. When Hannah was barren she wept (1 Samuel 1:6-17). When Rachel was barren she cried out, "Give me children, or I'll die!" (Genesis 30:1) How can prayer meetings be so empty when the church is so barren? Is it because we're satisfied with saving ones and twos while the majority are going to Hell? When the churches produce backsliders how can the believers not weep? How often do you ask God to give you His burden for the lost? How often do you contemplate the fact that a large portion of mankind will be thrown into the lake of fire? (Revelation 20:10-15) In my own life, why is it that I've been able to give up possessions and often spend all I have to preach the gospel? It's because I've seen the lake of fire, not with my physical eyes but with my spiritual eyes. I've seen people falling into Hell and that's why I must seek to save them.

God will not change His opinion about how evil and wicked people are when they reject His precious Son. God's wrath remains upon them and they are going to a place of never ending torment, where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:42-48; John 3:36). You cannot reject Jesus and not go to Hell. You cannot die in your sins and bear the holiness of God's presence. Therefore, how can a person say they believe the Bible and have no burden to save the lost? That is the purpose for which Jesus came: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10). It is

the reason Jesus left the glory of Heaven. It is the focus of Christianity. The church must evangelize or it will fossilize.

## **PLEADING WITH UNBELIEVERS TO BE SAVED**

God has committed to you as a believer the ministry of reconciliation: 'We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God' (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). God has to make His appeal to an unbeliever through you and me, and how well we make that appeal may determine that person's eternal destiny in Heaven or in Hell. Paul would therefore "implore," which means "earnestly beg," people to be saved. The whole church needs to be awakened to the intensity of the spiritual battle we are in for the salvation of souls. We won't be able to pull people out of the lake of fire after the Day of Judgment, but while we're living on this earth the Bible says 'snatch others from the fire and save them' (Jude 23). Unbelievers can't see the fire, but we have to see it wrapping around their bodies so we snatch them away from eternal damnation.

Do you have a broken heart over this lost world? If Christians have a lack of concern for the salvation of souls, how can we expect unbelievers to have any concern? Get to the place where you cry out to God, "What is Your burden for me and what can I do for You?" If God wants to give you a job to do for His kingdom but you are unwilling to receive it, if you get to Heaven you will find that someone else is wearing your crown. Jesus said, "I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown" (Revelation 3:11). If you don't obey God's calling for your life, God will have to give it to someone else. You will see someone wearing a crown forever and ever that you should have had. If God has given you a burden to do something you need to make sure you do it. For some time there has been a burden on my heart for the Tibetan people. Therefore I am now getting a salvation booklet translated into the Tibetan language, so it can be distributed to them.

If God has given you a burden to pray for a certain group of people, you need to make sure you travail and prevail in prayer for them until you know there is a breakthrough in the spiritual realm. Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matthew 9:37-38). What kind of workers will God raise up for the mission fields? Workers who don't know how to preach? Workers who are too afraid to witness to anyone? Workers who have no power? Jesus wants to raise up young men and young women who have a passionate love for Him, who are not bound up by their own reputation and those who are willing to become fools for Christ so they can proclaim the wisdom of Heaven.

What God needs today is not just servants but slaves. A servant can start at a certain time of day and finish at a certain time of day, but a slave is fully devoted to his master. The reason that many believers don't want to be actively involved in evangelism is because they have never become low enough to be a slave of Christ. It's too humiliating. Many Christians don't witness because of fear of man and fear of rejection, yet witnessing is a key means of spiritual growth (Philemon 6). Who wants to earnestly beg for the salvation of hardhearted unbelievers? Who wants to be mocked and ridiculed for the Lord? It's easy to preach in church, but who wants to really battle for the salvation of lost souls out in the open harvest fields of the world? Who really wants the fire of evangelism to burn within them? Is there anyone here, anyone reading this book, who really wants to go all out for God?

## **A BURDEN FOR SEEKING AND SAVING THE LOST**

Millions of people are at this moment lost and without hope. Can God reach down into our meetings and pick us up and distribute us around the world as flaming evangelists with a message that can melt stony hearts? Do we really know the Christ who is above every other religion and able to save completely all those who come to Him? There are always reasons to delay, but I'm not waiting one day more to preach

the gospel. I am taking it to them now. Life is short. Millions are perishing and the one thing we must do is preach Christ. People will be saved from eternal damnation when there are brave believers who go forward in Jesus' name. Think of this: eternity is eternity. There is no hope of saving souls after the Day of Judgment. Therefore we must warn the people now and win souls.

Have we any pain in our hearts at the thought of people perishing? Will no one sound the alarm? We only have one mission and that is to save souls; yet all around us people perish! Think of them! Millions, hundreds of millions of eternal souls, without eternal life, dying in their sins. The horror and the tragedy! Millions walk in darkness because they can't see the light. Have we as believers been adequately trained and equipped to lead souls out of darkness into light? Are we giving time for people to be trained for this most important work? Do we have any concern for our perishing neighbours across the street? We cannot sit back and watch this generation perish, being mere spectators, doing nothing as the devil sweeps multitudes of souls into everlasting darkness.

One man's prayer for revival was this: "If God can't do something with us and through us, then please, God, do something without us!" It is better that we don't stand in God's way than to be a frozen army of ice-blocks. Ice can never make fire and fire can never make ice. We need the fire of God to burn within our hearts in order to melt our lack of faith away. God then meets fire with fire, for the more fire in the pulpit the less burning in Hell-fire. The apostle Peter warmed himself by a fire on the night he backslid and betrayed the Lord (Luke 22:55-57), but when he got the fire of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost he never had to warm himself with someone else's fire (Acts 2:1-4,14-21). Do you have a spiritual fire burning within you? Are you prepared to let God call you to be a missionary or to any other ministry?

Satan delights in causing people to become doubting, disobedient, drunk and then damned. All those who are outside of the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit are in the kingdom of darkness. The gospel is veiled to those who are

perishing (2 Corinthians 4:3), yet blessed is the preacher who is filled with urgency and passion for the work of saving souls. Faith comes by hearing and that is why God's word must be proclaimed loud and clear (Romans 10:14-17). As evangelist Leonard Ravenhill used to often say, "Men go to Hell-fire because the church has lost Holy Ghost fire." John was called a lamp that burned and gave light (John 5:35). We need ten thousand John the Baptists today to prepare the way for the Second Coming of the Lord. Jesus said, "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning" (Luke 12:35).

**ARE YOU A FROZEN BELIEVER OR  
HAS THE WORD OF GOD SET YOU ABLAZE?**

## 6)

# SUPPORTING THE MINISTRY

*'Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more?*

*But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ. Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel' (1 Corinthians 9:7-14).*

When I knew that God had called me to become a preacher, I believed that the Lord had commanded that I should earn my living from the gospel. Over the last twenty years I can say that I have seen the hand of God in raising up all kinds of means for my support. I have had to go through a few difficult patches and there were times when I had to get secular work, yet time and time again I have had God's wonderful blessing of provision. In the early days of my ministry I can remember telling a man of my future plans to preach the word of God. He looked at me and said, "How are you going to finance

yourself?" I had no idea, but I looked back at him and said, "God will provide." He wasn't very impressed with my reply.

To develop a successful evangelistic ministry you have got to rely on God for His provision. To reach the multitudes there are times when you need more than what you yourself could earn by working. In times like this there needs to be a cry in one's heart to God for a release of finance. The problem is that many people do not spend time before the Lord, haven't applied themselves unto wisdom, and instead of being patient for the Lord's provision they take things into their own hands and they begin to look to man instead of looking to God. They are unable to accept difficult times and when they do come into financial blessing they spend it upon themselves rather than to extend the ministry. They store their treasures on earth rather than in Heaven. What is a dollar really worth? In fact, it is only worth what you use it for.

### **WHAT DO YOU HAVE IN HEAVEN?**

There was a man of God who had to visit Lebanon to work with a certain missionary organization. They had invited one hundred and fifty wealthy Christian businessmen in Beirut, Lebanon, to a breakfast banquet of Arabic food. Beirut was at that time a very wealthy city. Then came the time when the president of the missionary organization stood up to address these businessmen. He said, "I come with a burden. You are very wealthy, but I want to tell you a story about a German businessman who was very wealthy before World War II. He was a Christian, but he was not accustomed to giving.

Somehow a German missionary to the Amazon got in to see him in his office. The wealthy businessman said to the missionary, "Well, what do you need?" The missionary said, "In order to go from village to village, I need a mule." So the businessman said, "How much does a mule cost?" It was certainly less than a secondhand car. It was so much deutschmark, so the businessman wrote out a check and said, "There you are."



A short time later war broke out; the Second World War. The allied forces bombed and obliterated his factory and at the end of the war the value of the German deutschmark just disappeared, and so this man was almost penniless. He came to a Full Gospel Businessman's meeting and gave this testimony, "I was wealthy." When people say they were wealthy they mean they were wealthy. He said this, "What have I got for my wealth? One mule! In Heaven my wealth is one mule."

As the president of the missionary organization gave that testimony in Lebanon, he continued by saying, "I come with a burden. You men have got a lot of money, but you are not taking advantage of your money to advance the kingdom of Heaven. I implore you. I have such a burden upon my heart to implore you that you give." Afterwards they took up a collection for the church in Lebanon but they didn't get a lot. The message went on deaf ears.

Some months later Beirut was destroyed in a kind of civil war there and all those wealthy men at the banquet, what have they got in Heaven? What kind of reward will they have for the few dollars they had given in support of the church mission? They were unwilling to make any major sacrifice for the sake of the gospel. We should be very careful to store our treasures in Heaven as Jesus has commanded (Matthew 6:19-21). Riches have wings and they fly away. If you have the opportunity, you should make the most of that opportunity now.

There are many lessons that we need to learn during the journey of life and if we don't learn them the consequences can be tragic. One lesson we need to learn is to support the work of God through financing missions and evangelism. The prime responsibility of the church is to make sure the gospel is preached to all creation (Mark 16:15). How can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? (Romans 10:14-15) The church has a responsibility to pray and fast in order to listen to the Holy Spirit in regard to who should be sent from this place to proclaim the word of God (Acts 13:2-3). What we do now will determine our rewards in Heaven.

## A PLACE OF PROVISION

We need finance, but God spoke to one of His servants, saying, "Money is one of your least resources." Money is a resource, but God wanted to bring his attention to the fact that there are many other resources besides money that are of more value. One of the great provisions of God that I have had throughout my ministry has been the wonderful families that I have been able to stay with. They have helped take care of me in a number of practical ways, which have enabled me to concentrate on prayer, study, writing and the preaching of God's word. The Lord has also provided me with the right ministry contacts that have enabled me to have marvellous open doors in many parts of the world. Another great blessing from God has been the blessing of time. Many people are so busy that they have little time to find God's will, yet God has blessed me by giving me time to seek Him and to serve Him. Time is a tremendous resource and can often be more precious than money.

One reason why I have lasted as an evangelist for the last twenty years is because I have kept my possessions relatively small. If I had spent money in others ways I could not have remained in the ministry. God has raised up people and churches to help me at key points of my life. I have benefited from the fact that my home church would take up special missionary offerings. I have always regarded what has been given as God's money and not my own. I have sought to spend it wisely and with a clear conscience, so that when I stand before God on the Day of Judgment it will be seen that I have not buried my talents (Matthew 25:14-30). There have been times when I have sought God with much fasting, yet right from the beginning I have received a promise of provision which has been fulfilled. In missionary and evangelistic work you have to come to the place where you rest in God and He provides.

In many ways we cannot bring the promises of God into being by our own works. We must trust God to work on our behalf and bring His promises to fruition. We cannot be lazy, for certainly God does not pay a high salary to lazy workers,

yet on the other hand we do need to know how to rest in the assurance of God's provision. This is easily said when things are flowing well, but very frequently in order to lead us forward into His perfect will, God allows us to face financial difficulty. During such a difficulty you may be offered an easier path with a sure salary, but you need to make sure that is God's perfect will for you. You should pray, "God, is this Your will? Can I accept it and what will the end of the matter be? Will this bring me closely to Yourself and will I be successful in Your eyes?"

### **CHECKING OUR OWN HEARTS**

Everybody wants prosperity but very few people can handle it. Many who have gained financial success have done so at the cost of becoming spiritually poor. This can be said of both individuals and entire churches. We are going to be tested. Sometimes you don't see what is really in a person when they are going through difficulties, but when they get to a place of authority and financial abundance their heart will be revealed. Then it will be seen how well he or she truly lives for God. The church will be judged for how it uses its finances and how it collects its finances. I've been in churches where the message on giving has come from a wrong spirit and it actually puts you off from giving. We need God's provision to do God's work, but this has to come from right motives. Sad to say, many things that people are giving towards are not really benefiting God's kingdom, even though they may be charitable. We need to ensure that the things we do are truly effective in extending the Lord's kingdom.

The main cause of anxiety in the modern church setup is often money. Yet that which troubles the modern churches the most, troubled the New Testament church the least. This is because their focus was on praying rather than paying. Quoting Leonard Ravenhill again: "When we have paid, the place is taken; when they had prayed, the place was shaken!" "We need true prophets to warn of false profits" (Mark 8:36). When the Lord sent Elijah to stay at Zarephath, He did not put him in a great hotel, but rather commanded him to stay at the

house of an impoverished widow! (1 Kings 17:7-12) It is often the poor who have lasting treasures in Heaven, while those who are wealthy limit what they have to fleeting treasures on earth. Let's realize afresh who we are really serving: the awesome Lord of the universe; the one who tests the hearts of all mankind!

Jesus said, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15). The spiritual life of a church or ministry does not depend on having an abundance of possessions. First and foremost you have got to use what you have already got. Why should God trust you with more if you are unfaithful with what you already have? I have worked with churches that have not wanted to go forward in the work of evangelism because they are bound by financial considerations. I have also been with churches that were extremely poor, yet they stepped out in faith to proclaim God's word. Which kind of church will be entrusted with the treasures of Heaven? We cannot afford to be gripped by materialism, coated over with a few Bible verses. Every church leader needs to make sure their heart and the heart of the church is right before God in regard to their financial situation.

**CAN YOU BELIEVE GOD FOR MIRACLES OF PROVISION  
AND BE FAITHFUL WHEN IT COMES?**

## 7)

# DEVELOP LOVE

*‘Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails...’ (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)*

Love is the key to Christian ministry. The apostle Paul constantly affirmed his love for the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 16:24; 2 Corinthians 2:4), for the love of God was the compelling force in his life. Paul explained it this way: ‘For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again’ (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). The love of God is what compels us to surrender our lives for the cause of Christ. There can be many driving forces that influence us, yet the only one we really need is love. Make sure that everything you do for the Lord comes from pure motives. ‘Do everything in love’ (1 Corinthians 16:14).

## INTIMATE LOVE FOR CHRIST

A pastor I was staying with in Fiji spoke of how he had a personal encounter with Jesus, which was a real encounter with the Lord and it changed his life. He said:

“When I began to pray I felt that Jesus was actually there in the room. The words I began to speak to Him were really intimate, close words. I began to say, ‘Lord, I love you,’ because He began to fill me with His love, a love that I had never experienced before. It was amazing.

That same night we were asked to pray for a lady who was simple. She had a mind of a little child and her face was twisted. We went up to her family, having never seen that lady before. When we were singing some songs she was hiding in the room. As we began to pray, part of my mind was on that person inside the room because she didn't want to come out.

We stood up to pray and her parents called her to come out of the room. As she came out she didn't come to the parents. She almost came running towards me. Normally I would be very guarded and careful with people with any kind of problems like that. But as she came towards me I felt the love of God and I opened my arms. This grown woman came right into my arms and I hugged her. I felt such amazing love and I felt the power of God flow into her body. I could feel God's love for her and I could understand how Jesus ministered.

Jesus walked this earth with love and compassion. He had compassion for the people and healed them all. It is so important for us to realize that the more we come to Christ the more the love of God flows through us. I have been asking the Lord, 'Lord, I want to experience more of Your love.' Let's draw near to Jesus and really get close to Him. Let's pray that God will give us His heart of love."

## **THE ATTRIBUTES OF LOVE**

In his description of love, the apostle Paul mentions sixteen attributes that need to be developed and outworked in our lives:

**1) Love Is Patient** – Patience is a necessity of life. Everything takes time and in the meantime you have to be patient. Being patient with another person, especially when they don't deserve it, is an attribute of love. We must learn to be completely humble, gentle and patient, bearing with one another in love (Ephesians 4:2).

**2) Love Is Kind** – There must be proof of a person's love and this can be shown by acts of kindness (2 Corinthians 8:24).

Love needs to share and to give, but it also needs to receive. Love grows when it gives kindness and when it receives kindness. We are called to live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God (Ephesians 5:2).

**3) It Does Not Envy** – Love looks out for the best and for the good of others. Jealousy and envy reveal a lack of love in a person's life. We need to be content with what we have and give room for God to promote us as He desires. We should rejoice when those around us are blessed. As we bless other people, we will also be blessed.

**4) It Does Not Boast** – There was no boasting whatsoever in the life of Christ. He had the greatest power, the greatest miracles and the greatest relationship with His heavenly Father, yet He never spoke proudly of His talents. The love of Christ is so deep that it surpasses knowledge (Ephesians 3:18-19). We should seek the Lord for every aspect of His love.

**5) It Is Not Proud** – Human love can be very superficial if we have not allowed God to fill our hearts with His divine love. Friends can become enemies over one small ordeal if their relationship is based solely on human love. Pride will come in and cause an unwillingness to change or to bring restoration, yet God's love produces humility. Husbands and wives must have divine love for each other (Ephesians 5:25).

**6) It Is Not Rude** – People who are rude, mean and abusive are on the wrong path. Their hardened hearts need to be melted by the love of God. The words we speak have great impact. If we speak nastily we need to recognize the error of our ways. We need to offer ourselves up to God as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1), which means that we must be willing to allow God to change us. We should have an abundance of mercy, peace and love (Jude 2).

**7) It Is Not Self-Seeking** – I recently overheard a man shouting, abusing and swearing at a person while using a public telephone. He was seeking to get some money that was owed to him. As he was seeking his own interests, he had left behind any trace of love. We have probably all been self-seeking in some kind of way, but this is why we need to contemplate the sacrificial life of Christ. Denying ourselves and taking up our cross produces love.

**8) It Is Not Easily Angered** – Love enables us to forgive those who have turned against us and to be merciful towards those who have spoken unkind words behind our backs. If you have a burning anger towards someone, you need to pray that the Lord will remove that and replace it with His love. The love of God is with us when we live in peace (2 Corinthians 13:11). Love and forgive your enemies.

**9) It Keeps No Record Of Wrongs** – If you have a desire to keep bringing up some past fault or wrong doing, you need to realize that love covers over a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8). Let the love of God fill your heart so that it washes away people's sins. We are entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). Therefore we must seek to see people restored in their relationship with God and with one another.

**10) Love Does Not Delight In Evil** – Those who have the love of God cannot delight in that which is clearly wrong. We should never delight in the tragedies or the moral failings of others. We should love righteousness and hate evil (Hebrews 1:9). Many have fallen away from God because, while they have loved righteousness, they have also loved evil. Their love has not been purified and it has become contaminated by compromise.

**11) Rejoices With The Truth** – God's love is made complete in us as we obey God's commands and walk in the truth (1 John 2:5). The truth sets us free to love one another as



God has commanded. 'If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen' (1 John 4:20). Lies produce hate, yet truth produces love. Those who walk in the truth find it easy to love God and for God's love to fill them.

**12) It Always Protects** – There seems to have been a deterioration of moral standards in many parts of the world. Tragically there have been cases of parents killing their own children and children killing their own parents. They didn't receive the true love of God in their hearts and in their homes. God sends His prophets with the mission of restoring love between parents and children (Malachi 4:5-6). Love is what protects the family.

**13) Always Trusts** – To keep yourself in God's love you must trust the Lord (Jude 21). Jesus has entrusted us with His words and with His ministry. The Lord Jesus entrusted Judas with the money bag (John 12:4-6). The reason Jesus did that was because He loved Judas. Even though Judas was going to betray the Lord and hand Him over to be crucified, the Lord loved him until the end and even called him His friend (Matthew 26:50). When all else seems to fail, God is trustworthy and His love will see you through.

**14) Always Hopes** – The hope of salvation comes through loving God. I have found that loving God gives me strength and increases the hope I have of a good and eternal future. When you love a person you must believe for the best for them. My hope is that people will turn to the Lord and be saved. The love of God compels me to preach the gospel for that purpose.

**15) Always Perseveres** – The root of love is commitment and that is why true love is able to persevere. It is written: 'Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God

has promised to those who love him' (James 1:12). Love towards God is what enables Christians to persevere under trials of their faith. Life on this earth is a test. To pass this test we must allow the Lord to make our love increase and overflow (1 Thessalonians 3:12).

**16) Love Never Fails** – Because of the increase of wickedness, the Bible says that the love of most people will grow cold (Matthew 24:12). Their commitment will fail, which shows that there was a lack of true love for God. Maybe they had human love but not divine love. Jesus has warned us that in the last days there will be a lack of love even among those who profess to be His followers. That is why many will backslide and fall away. Trials and difficulties in life are ordained by God to test our commitment to the Lord. Are you going to be steadfast in your commitment to Christ? God is looking for those who truly love Him and we are ordained to be filled with the love of God. A true love for the Lord Jesus does not fail; it produces eternal life.

**WILL YOU ALLOW THE LOVE OF GOD TO TRANSFORM  
YOUR LIFE?**

## 8)

# THE RIGHT FOUNDATION

While giving this teaching to the Corinthian church, the apostle Paul had to show them, remind them and even fully convince them, that he was their spiritual father and that they were his dear children. This is brought out more clearly in his second letter, where Paul was compelled to prove and to enforce his apostleship because of the false apostles. But in the first letter he mentions this – ‘Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel’ (1 Corinthians 4:15).

Children are commanded to honour their parents so that they may live long in the land, and fathers are called to bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-4). The degree to which the Corinthian church would obey Paul’s training and instruction would largely be determined by how they viewed and accepted him. Therefore, they needed to see him in Christ as their spiritual father. Because the Corinthians had been so easily led astray, like children who rebel against their parents, it became necessary for Paul to point to his position of spiritual authority over them. For a better understanding of this, we need to look at how Paul gave birth to the Corinthian church and how he became their father through the gospel.

## THE BIRTHING OF THE CHURCH

When the apostle Paul first came to preach the gospel among the Corinthians, his message and preaching was not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that their faith would not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power. In his preaching Paul focused

upon the crucifixion of Christ and the fact that the power of God comes through the message of the cross to save those who believe (1 Corinthians 1:18,21; 2:2-5). Many miracles, manifestations of the spiritual gifts and demonstrations of the Spirit's power took place in Corinth, yet in the book of Acts these miracles were not recorded, probably because Luke was not travelling with Paul at that time.

What we are told is that Paul went to Corinth after leaving Athens and to begin with he worked as a tentmaker alongside Aquila and Priscilla, who later also joined Paul in missionary and discipleship work. Every Sabbath Paul reasoned with the Jews and Greeks in the synagogue and tried to persuade them to follow the Lord. When Silas and Timothy came, Paul then put aside his tent making and devoted himself exclusively to preaching. Preaching was Paul's main work. Tent making missionaries who hardly have any time for preaching need to rethink their strategy.

We have to preach, teach, testify, reason, plead, persuade, proclaim, declare, debate, warn and witness to people, for this is what pleases God in order to save those who will then believe. Paul said, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:16). If you are on the mission field and you are so busy with other jobs that you don't have much time for actual preaching, evangelism or discipleship, you need to take a good look at what you are doing. Souls are saved through the preaching of the gospel and that's why the devil hates it. Paul knew that God's judgment would come upon him if he didn't preach. Maybe God wants to speak to you right now so that you take these words very seriously, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" God spoke these words to me quite early on in my ministry and that is why I have not been easily distracted from preaching.

You have got to focus upon the perfect will of God for your life. Many things can be good, but they are not the things we should be focusing upon. We have to focus on that which is really going to accomplish something for the extension of God's kingdom. Are we bringing forth the fruit that God is looking for? We don't need snack-bar sermons to appease the

impatience of the modern believer. We shouldn't be hunting for mice when there are lions devouring the land. Spiritual vegetarians don't stand in the time of adversity. We need the solid meat of God's word. The sin-mesmerized multitudes will be moved to God only as the Church is moved by God for their lost condition. Life is very short and our eternity is going to depend on it. God Himself awaits us in eternity. Do the preachers of this day have such an anointing that a godly fear comes upon the people? Judgment must begin with us preachers!

### **DO NOT BE SILENT**

While in Corinth the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision during the night, saying, "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to harm you, because I have many people in this city." So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God (Acts 18:1-11). We cannot let the fear of persecution stop us from speaking the truth. Many potential evangelists have done a little bit of witnessing, found it hard going, and have then given up or have become less confrontational, to the point where they are bound. But we can't sit back and let the devil win. Pray for wisdom and pray for new, exciting ways to present the gospel, so that you will be encouraged to keep up a regular time of witnessing among the lost.

This vision came to Paul because he had to persevere through the tremendous spiritual battle for the birthing, well being and onward spiritual growth of this church. If he had stopped speaking, the battle would never have been won. It was in Corinth that Jesus gave Paul this vision to encourage him not to give up. After being rejected, Paul just went next door and the ruler of the synagogue's entire household was converted. Then many Corinthians who heard this man's testimony believed and were baptized. All those weeks of Paul reasoning in the synagogue and sowing the seed paid off, for a harvest was brought in even among a hostile people who then made a united attack against him. They stood against him

because they feared that he was persuading the people to worship God in ways that went against their interpretation of the law, but their attack completely failed because Jesus Himself stood at Paul's side (Acts 18:7-18).

This was how the church in Corinth was founded: Jesus visited Paul in a vision to encourage him to keep on going, and for one and a half years the Corinthians were able to sit under Paul's direct teaching. The Bible says that 'Paul stayed in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila,' and then onward to Ephesus. Another great spiritual battle then took place for the birthing of the Ephesian church. Apollos, still in the early stages of developing his ministry, was discipled by Priscilla and Aquila and then he continued the work back in Corinth (Acts 18:18-19:1). Paul said, "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow" (1 Corinthians 3:6). The Corinthian church was certainly given a good start; all the more reason why their spiritual decline was so tragic.

## **A METHOD OF EVANGELISM**

The power of the Holy Spirit touched my life when I was sixteen years old and from that moment my priorities were changed. Almost immediately I felt I had to start sharing what God had done in my life with other people. I had been a quiet person who had often kept to himself, but now I felt Jesus calling me to go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. No one gave me any lessons on how to share my faith. I just went out and made up my own method. I would walk up to people saying, "Excuse me," and they would kind of stop. Then I would ask them my golden question: "Do you know it's true that Jesus died upon the cross for your sins?" Straight away I would know if they were completely anti or if they wanted to listen. You might be surprised, but the majority would listen.

I did get the occasional person who threatened to knock me out, but overall my method worked and enabled me to share the gospel with thousands of people. I do recall though the

time when I was standing on the side of the road and a man was walking my way, so I asked him the golden question. He lifted up his tightened fist and threatened to punch me out if I ever said anything about God to him ever again. I admit I did get a few angry responses, but for about six years I stuck to my golden question method. To those who were willing to listen, I would explain the gospel quickly and simply, and then finish up by giving them a tract about Hell – normally a testimony about someone who had a near-death experience and had really been there.

I figured that evangelism was basically offering a person God's love through the cross and then I gave them a warning not to go to Hell in case they reject God's love. That was my simple approach to evangelism – God's love on one hand and God's wrath on the other. I soon found that people didn't like the Hell side of witnessing very much. I well remember a lady I was sharing with outside a night club saying to me, "Why don't you preach about Heaven instead of Hell?" I thought in my mind but I didn't say it to her, "Because you are not going to Heaven." But I tried my best to show her that she needs to believe the warnings about Hell. If you are having doubts whether there is a Hell or not, simply believe it and get saved. Believe in God's love and God's wrath, and then you will have the right balance.

The more I went out for street evangelism the more convinced I was that the unbelievers were rejecting Christ and driving themselves to Hell, so I just became stronger in warning them about this, even making more and more Hell cassette tapes to give out on the streets for people to take home and listen to. I was still quite young in that period of my life and since then I have developed other methods of evangelism, but at the same time I realize I should never let the reality of Hell's eternal fire fade from my mind. We have to snatch people from the flames (Jude 23). The kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it (Matthew 11:12).

Right from the early days of my evangelism work God laid it upon my heart that there were two doctrines that I have to

preach and defend. The first one was the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and the second was the reality of eternal punishment for sin in a real place called Hell. Those two doctrines are what I still proclaim today. People still don't like the Hell one, but if any ministry denies one of those doctrines they are in serious error and in danger of sending people to Hell. One day you will stand before the lake of fire and you will either be a sheep or a goat. You had better make sure that you are not a goat.

**HAVE YOU DEVELOPED AN EFFECTIVE METHOD OF  
EVANGELISM?**



9)

## SPIRITUAL FATHERS AND MOTHERS

In Second Corinthians it is affirmed that the preaching about Jesus Christ was done among them by Paul, Silas and Timothy (2 Corinthians 1:19). Other Scriptures show us that Apollos also preached there (Acts 19:1; 1 Corinthians 3:6). Every accomplished preacher needs to train other preachers and develop the ministries of those under his or her care. The apostle Paul imparted his life and vision into Silas and Timothy, so that they would be faithful co-workers in winning the world for Christ. Paul was a spiritual father to them, especially Timothy, whom he referred to as 'my true son in the faith' and 'my dear son' (1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2).

With the help of these men and many other co-workers who were trained over time, Paul testified to the Jews and Gentiles that Jesus is the Christ, just like we have to testify to Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Atheists and Agnostics to persuade them to believe that Jesus is the one and only, truly magnificent, Son of God. The mass majority of Muslims have no idea what the true gospel is and how can they when very few Christians have any concern to be trained and equipped to share with them? The Jews opposed Paul and became abusive, so Paul warned them that he was clear of his responsibility and their blood was on their own heads. We have to fulfill our responsibility; otherwise the blood of many lost souls will be upon us.

### **RELEASING SPIRITUAL SONS AND DAUGHTERS**

After talking about being their spiritual father through the gospel, Paul then continues by writing, 'Therefore I urge you to imitate me. For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my

son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church' (1 Corinthians 4:16-17). The problems within the Corinthian church required stern rebukes and these kinds of situations have to be handled with care. Paul had confidence in Timothy that he could handle the situation properly. Timothy was Paul's most trusted friend and faithful co-worker. There is so much worldliness in the church, but if you don't rebuke a believer who is falling deep into sin, you share in their guilt (Leviticus 19:17).

The life of the apostle Paul is an example of what it means to follow Jesus. Paul imparted himself into Timothy, so that the Corinthians would be able to see Christ through Timothy's hard work for the Lord. It is interesting to look at the life of Timothy to see how Paul trained him and prepared him for the ministry. Paul gave Timothy plenty of personal advice, cautions and timely counsel. He wrote two epistles to give him specific instructions. He warned Timothy not to be ashamed to testify about our Lord (2 Timothy 1:8), and to not give in to youthful lusts (2 Timothy 2:22). He encouraged him to be strong and to pass on the teachings that he had learned to reliable men (2 Timothy 2:1-2). He commanded Timothy to preach the word, to think wisely, to endure hardship, to do the work of an evangelist and to release the duties of ministry to others (2 Timothy 4:2,5).

None of Paul's other companions are so warmly commended as Timothy was for having proved themselves faithful in pursuing the interests of Christ (Philippines 2:19-23; 1 Corinthians 16:10-11). Many of God's people have disqualified themselves from the ministry because they are seeking their own interests. It's shocking to see how many enter the ministry with motives of greed. They need to get converted themselves before they seek to convert others. We have to learn to surrender everything to Christ. Timothy had a genuine care and concern for people. Paul could say of Timothy, "You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings" (2 Timothy 3:10-11). Paul had made himself fully

known to Timothy, so that the virtues of his life and purpose could clearly be understood.

Paul was a spiritual father to Timothy and this is what it takes to develop future leaders and equip the church. We also have to do this to promote spiritual growth and bring people to maturity in their faith. This quality of discipleship is needed to release spiritual sons and daughters who can do great exploits for the kingdom of Heaven. The good qualities that Timothy developed in his life are what the Lord is looking for before promoting them in ministry. When you are doing something for God, you have to be diligent and apply yourself to it. If you have a call of God upon your life for ministry, you should study the life of Timothy and the epistles written to him by the apostle Paul. Allow God to do a deep work in your heart to develop the virtuous qualities that will enable you to go the distance and to fulfil your ministry.

## **THOSE WHO HAVE HELPED ME GROW IN FAITH**

I want to mention a few men of God who have really helped me to focus on the call of God and to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. In one sense I was discipled through their writings or through listening to audio messages of their preaching and they are my spiritual fathers:

**1) Evangelist Charles G. Finney (1792-1875)** – Right from when God’s power hit me when I was 16 years old, I got into reading books written by this great preacher and revivalist. In those days they were hard to find and I often had to order them through the local Christian bookshop and wait for ages before they arrived. The two most helpful books for me were his “Lectures on Revivals of Religion” and his autobiography, which spoke of his powerful conversion and the amazing move of God through his ministry. Finney’s principles of revival are worth going over again and again ([www.charlesgfinney.com](http://www.charlesgfinney.com)).

**2) Leonard Ravenhill (1907-1994)** – Being interested in revival I soon came across the book, “Why Revival Tarries.”

Later I listened to a lot of his audio preaching and was blown away by his passion for God and his call to pray for awakening in the church. He was a prophet raised up by God to warn and rebuke pastors and their congregations for their lack of seriousness in the place of prayer. You may have noticed that I have included a number of quotes by this evangelist in the writing of this book. I would recommend that every pastor needs to listen to his preaching with a repentant attitude ([www.ravenhill.org](http://www.ravenhill.org)).

**3) Richard Wurmbrand (1909-2001)** – Richard was a Jew who grew up with prejudices against Jesus, yet after his conversion he had a natural ability to lead people to the Lord, whether it was through casual conversation or deliberately following a person to witness to them. He was a radical for God. He also had to suffer immensely for the Christian faith, being imprisoned and tortured in communist prisons. His wife, Sabina, also has an amazing story and life of sacrifice for the sake of the gospel. They founded a ministry that became known as “The Voice Of The Martyrs,” for the purpose of taking the gospel to communist nations and later to help believers who are persecuted in Muslim nations ([www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com)).

**4) Dr. Brian J. Bailey** – I was first introduced to this man of God and his teachings when I was in Burkina Faso, West Africa, in 2001. Since then I have tried to get all his books and listen to all his audio preaching, and there is a lot of it. He really opened up my eyes to the amazing depths of the Old Testament and how we need a thorough knowledge of the whole Bible. Brian Bailey is a man I consider to be a true prophet and some of his encounters with the Lord are amazing. I have seen in him a man who is truly a friend of God, and likewise, I want to be God’s friend ([www.zionfellowship.org](http://www.zionfellowship.org)).

**5) Evangelist Bill Subritzky** – Bill would be New Zealand’s most well known evangelist, due to his many years of faithfully

doing outreach meetings throughout the land. I had the privilege of working personally with Bill for almost a year and a half, organizing outreaches for him in Fiji and NZ. Bill has a tremendous anointing in the area of healing and deliverance. Many people need to be set free from the influence of demonic powers. Bill walks the talk and constantly believes for the flowing of the Holy Spirit and manifestations of God's power. He has stayed focused on his calling, which is to lead people to the Lord in true repentance. He never lets a meeting go by without calling people to turn from their sins ([www.doveministries.com](http://www.doveministries.com)).

**6) Evangelist Reinhard Bonnke** – In the early 1990's I saw a picture of this man preaching to great crowds in Africa. I said to the pastor I was staying with at that time, "In one meeting this man could accomplish more for the kingdom of God than many pastors will in a whole lifetime." More recently I've been greatly inspired by watching DVD's of his gospel crusades and conferences to empower believers. Reinhard's autobiography, "Living A Life Of Fire," is one of my favourite books. His life can inspire and challenge us to win nations for God and to fulfil the Great Commission ([www.cfan.org](http://www.cfan.org)).

These are some of the men of God who have been most influential in helping me to go deeper in the things of God. Young Christian men need spiritual fathers and young Christian women need spiritual mothers to help them grow in their walk with the Lord (Titus 2:3-5). Who are your spiritual fathers and mothers? Who are you letting influence you and help you to grow in your walk with our Lord Jesus? Having favourite sports stars and idolizing famous singers can be useless in helping you to get closer to God. What kind of role model are you following? The type of role model we need today is someone like the apostle Paul, who can say, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Learn from those in whom you can see something of Jesus. Can people see Christ in you?

## THE POTENTIAL THAT IS OFTEN MISSED

One reason why Christians don't grow as much as they could or as much as they should, is because they don't have the right kind of spiritual fathering and mothering taking place in their lives. By showing concern and giving timely encouragement, we can help one another to get closer to God. We have to discern the work of the Lord in people's lives and encourage them to never give up. A person who is going through great trials and difficulties in their faith at the moment, can still become a future evangelist, teacher or apostle who shakes the world. You never know what potential lies in a person who is about to get a breakthrough with God. The hardships a person is facing today could be the catalyst for transforming them into the nature and character of Christ.

How can you raise up more people from your congregation? Often it takes a lot of perseverance and hard work, but most importantly it takes the right kind of vision; the vision of releasing spiritual sons and daughters. We often fail because we do not understand team ministry and that Christ will use the whole body. Today's churches have hardly begun to make full use of the potential in the pews. The apostle Paul wanted to present every believer perfect in Christ and that is why he was working so hard at teaching and correcting them (Colossians 1:28-29). The nature of Christ has to be formed within believers through travailing in prayer (Galatians 4:19). Paul was praying earnestly for his people and he wanted to visit them so that he could supply what was lacking in their faith (1 Thessalonians 3:10). Imagine having someone like the apostle Paul wanting to constantly visit you to build you up in your faith.

To produce a high standard you have to be a high standard. That's why Paul could invite the believers not just to listen to his preaching, but to imitate his way of life (1 Corinthians 4:16). Paul could say that the way he lived was an example of how Christ lived (1 Corinthians 11:1). Paul had the nature and characteristics of the Lord so worked out through him that his life revealed Jesus. Yet he was not satisfied having this just for

himself; he wanted every believer to come into this level of Christianity. The true success of any ministry or church will be how much of Christ was formed within the people. Having every believer's character changed and formed to become more and more like the nature of God must be our ultimate goal. Are they becoming more like Jesus this year than last year?

Godly character is often developed by the testing of our faith (James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-9). Every person in ministry needs to keep working towards a higher level of godliness and maturity. How are the church members when they are at home, at work, when no one else sees them but God? Are they becoming more like Jesus or are they holding onto bad attitudes? (Philippians 2:4-5) Do they explode with anger, unforgiveness or bitter criticism among certain people while appearing to be saints among others? The great work of developing godliness is going on right now as Christ builds His church out of the lives of His people who commit themselves to Him. We have to be made ready before we can be presented as the most beautiful Bride before the most glorious King. Success in God's eyes is being ready to meet His Son.

## **ETERNAL FRUIT VERSUS QUICK RESULTS**

An altar call is not about how many people come forward, but how many people are transformed. Man looks at the outward appearance but God looks at the heart. It's very easy for evangelists to go for big flashy altar calls and to get almost everyone to put their hand up, but there's no transformation of life because the people's sins weren't properly addressed. I was in a certain town where I had frequently shared the gospel and witnessed to a young man, but he refused to repent of some blatant sins. I went to a big evangelism crusade and I saw him put up his hand to supposedly accept Jesus as his Saviour. I went to talk to him and found that he was not willing to repent of a single sin. See how easy it is for people to accept Jesus when they don't have to change.

To become a true disciple of Christ you need to discipline your life, what you read, what you watch, what you eat and what you do with your time. Jesus warned us of those who hear the word of God with joy and they believe the gospel, but they have no roots (Matthew 13:5-6,20-22). You can lead a person in a salvation prayer and send them on their way straight to Hell if they are embracing a shallow, compromised version of Christianity. When trouble or persecution comes they fall away. You need a constant vision to live a life with purpose, right to the end. This is why I suggest you learn from those who preach a strong message and seek to purify the church of sin. Who are you looking at to lead you deeper in the Lord? If you want lasting results, don't promote a shallow version of Christianity. Never compromise God's holiness and righteousness. Stand strong in the truth of God's word!

**WHAT KIND OF CHRISTIANITY ARE YOU FOLLOWING?**



10)

## THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

*'For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

*Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience' (2 Corinthians 5:10-11).*

### **APPEARING BEFORE THE LORD**

We as believers are all going to have to face the Lord at what is called the Judgment Seat of Christ. We need to realize what an awesome event this is going to be. It should cause us to fear God and grip us so much that we will seek to persuade others to be saved before it's too late. Most believers have virtually no vision of what it is going to be like to stand before Christ and have to look into His eyes of fire. They have virtually no understanding of what it means to fear God and to tremble before Him because of His majesty. They have little understanding of His holiness, power and glory, but God is an awesome and majestic being. He created the Universe by His Word and on the Day of Judgment earth and sky will flee from His presence.

There is a huge difference between the judgment of the believer and the unbeliever, but even the judgment of the believer is going to be horrific enough. The apostle Peter says it like this: 'For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" (1 Peter 4:17-18) Does the Bible say that it is

easy to be saved or hard to be saved? When Jesus was asked about how many people were going to be saved, He gave this answer: “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to” (Luke 13:24). There is a time when the door of salvation is closed. Those who stand outside knocking and banging on the door will be told to go away because they are evildoers.

Believers are judged before the unbelievers, both in this age and in the age to come. There is no way that I would want to be numbered among the unbelievers. They will have nothing but everlasting torment, shame and regret for their life of rebellion (Daniel 12:2; Revelation 20:10). Yet many people live a life of rebellion, confess their sins, and then expect to have a top mansion in paradise. They forget one thing and that is the Judgment Seat of Christ. There is no paradise without facing the judgment. If you are expecting a nice, easy judgment and a big reward, you might be in for a shock. On that day our works will go through the fire and if what we have done is burned up we will suffer loss, but if what we have done remains, only then we will receive a reward (1 Corinthians 3:11-15). The test is going to be the quality of our works. It seems that many will be saved only because they are escaping through the flames. They will not have much reward.

Judgment is a decision resulting from an investigation. As a result of a thorough investigation Jesus will make decisions about people’s lives. These judgments are eternal (Hebrews 6:2), which means that the decisions that are made at that Judgment Seat of Christ will never be able to be changed. They will stand forever. The way we live as believers determines how we are going to spend eternity. Unfortunately, many believers will stand before Christ and suffer terrible loss because their works are of bad quality. The range of the rewards will be anywhere between reigning beside Christ forever, and having everything that we ever did burned up.

Jesus is the Judge (Acts 10:42; Romans 2:16) and He will weigh the value of everything we have done. The motives of men’s hearts will be exposed and we will receive honour from God according to what we deserve (1 Corinthians 4:5). Paul made the

point that just as the stars of heaven differ in glory and brightness, so believers will differ in glory in the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:40-44). This should motivate you to serve the Lord wholeheartedly.

## **THE REALITY OF GOING TO HEAVEN**

The following testimony comes from Dr. Brian J. Bailey when he was still a young pastor:

‘I would like to give my own testimony concerning eternal judgment. I have experienced death. Many years ago I asked the Lord to take my life because of all the opposition I was facing. God answered my prayer and the angel of the Lord appeared to me one night while I was sleeping. When I awoke, I found him standing above my bed. I came out of my body and stood next to the angel. For a brief moment, which seemed like an eternity, I looked down at my body lying beside my wife who was sleeping peacefully. The realization that my life was over gripped me. I could do no more on this earth to serve the Lord. It was an awesome feeling that everything was over.

The angle turned and I turned in unison with him. No word was spoken between us. Then it was as though the roof of the parsonage was no longer there and we went quicker than lightning towards Heaven, which I could see in the far distance. The nearer we came to Heaven, the sadder I became. A profound sadness gripped my being and that sadness overcame my soul. Although I knew that I was saved, baptized in water and in the Holy Spirit, and living in the light that I had received, strangely, I was not looking forward to going to Heaven.

We arrived at the gates of Heaven, before a river of pure water. Standing there, I was shown my whole life from birth to that present moment in a series of cameos, one after another in a matter of seconds. The amazing thing is that some of the cameos were blank. I understood that these were times in my life when I failed God, but because I had asked for forgiveness, all memory and record of them had been washed

away by the blood of Jesus. The Lord revealed to me God's purpose for my life. I realized that I had not fulfilled it, for I was dying before my appointed time. Yes, I was a Christian, and I made it to Heaven, but I had not hit God's mark for my life!

I hope none of you ever experience the terrible agony I felt through my whole being. The anguish of not fulfilling God's call on your life is terrible. In agony of spirit, I pleaded with the Lord to send me back to earth and give me another chance to fulfil my calling. The angel must have received an order from the Lord, because at that very moment, he and I turned again without a word being spoken, and we went down towards earth at a tremendous speed. Arriving at my bedside, I saw my body lying there. The angel then touched me and I returned to my body.

After a few days I asked the Lord why He had given me that experience. The Lord replied that I was to warn His people what it would be like at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Not only will we have to give an account of the works done in the flesh, but also whether or not we have fulfilled God's calling upon our lives.'

## **HAVE YOU FULFILLED GOD'S CALLING UPON YOUR LIFE?**

When God first calls someone to the ministry that calling starts as a small seed. If you don't develop it and allow it to grow you won't make much progress. When God's power first touched me and changed my life, I thought I was going to save the world and that an incredible ministry would open up before me. Then I found out it's not that simple. I found that it's actually a lot of hard work and you've got to really press on for years to reach spiritual maturity. I look at the call of God upon a person's life as having to go through three stages. 1) A person is called; 2) They are chosen; 3) They must prove themselves to be faithful (Revelation 17:14).

The first stage is really your time of training, preparation and development. Step by step God makes it clearer to you what your calling actually is and God gives you opportunities to walk

in that gifting. Many don't know what God wants them to do because they haven't even gone through this first stage. The second stage is when you are actually flowing in the ministry God has called you to. Things are moving ahead, even though you may have to face constant obstacles, but God has established you in your ministry and given you an open door.

You only reach the third stage through many years of faithfulness to the call of God upon your life. It's easy for many ministers to think they have reached this third stage when in reality they are stuck in stage one or two. To come into the fullness of Christ for your ministry is not easy and you have got to have a very high vision of how far you need to continue pressing into God. As servants of Christ we are entrusted with the secret things of God and it is required that those who have been given this trust must prove themselves to be faithful (1 Corinthians 4:1-2). You don't discover the secret things of God unless you are intimate with Him and by spending a lot of time studying His word. I try to study the Bible day and night, yet I have stayed with a number of ministers who seem to hardly open the Bible at all. You've got to study.

The aim is to complete God's plans and purposes for your life, so like the apostle Paul you will be able to say: 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing' (2 Timothy 4:7-8). Very few have got anywhere near the apostle Paul in finishing their calling, yet we want every believer to stand before the Master and hear these words: "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" (Matthew 25:21,23) The question is this: "Are you a good and faithful servant of Christ, or have you become sidetracked and are failing to complete the work that God has for you?"

**THERE NEEDS TO BE FIRE IN THE PULPIT!**

To prepare believers to stand before Christ at the Judgment Seat there needs to be some very strong and powerful preaching. Breaking barriers in people's lives is not easy. If the church you are going to has no call to holiness, no searching of hearts to drive away sin, no message of humility and brokenness before God, no warnings of the coming judgments, no burden for those who are perishing, then you need to start praying seriously for your church and its leadership. Many churches have refused to deny themselves and take up the cross, but rather they are in the grip of materialism and many other distractions. That is why the true prophets of God are often not accepted in many modern day pulpits. There is a refusal to let Jesus correct and rebuke. What we need today is fire in the pulpit. The word of God is a sharp, double-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12-13), for the purpose of piercing the heart of man.

The preacher needs to prepare every sermon in the light of the Judgment Seat. We need prophetic preaching that searches men's hearts and scorches men's souls. We need ambassadors for Christ who are burdened and broken due to the impending doom and unending despair of the impenitent, as well as a deep concern for the believers who are not going on with the Lord. I cannot express strongly enough the reality of divine judgment. Every single one of us is now treading a path of fire: Hell-fire for the sinner and judgment-fire for the believer! It is so good if you are still on the right path because so many have given up and fallen away. In the awesome presence of Christ, we will be made aware of God's plan for our lives and whether we have fulfilled it or not. There is a special judgment for preachers. If we are not faithful we will be rewarded the least, while big rewards will go to many unknown disciples.

Fire in the pulpit comes from fire in the prayer closet. I like what Leonard Ravenhill said, because he often preached about the Judgment Seat: "I've said it many times and I'll say it again – no man is greater than his prayer life. I don't care how big his organization is. Let me live with a man awhile and share his prayer life, and I'll tell you how tall I think he is, or

how majestic I think he is in God... What's your devotional life like right now? Would you like Gabriel to hand down the book of your devotional life for the last month so it could be read out loud at church this Sunday? If you were to stand before the Lord at this very moment, would you like your life story read by all the millions in eternity?"

When Jesus puts the fire to your devotional life it will be seen how intimately you walked with God or whether you were just a Christian showman. The big showy life of a prayerless preacher will not stand the flames. The traditions of man that have been mixed with Christianity will burn away. A lot of public ministry is going to turn into ashes at the Judgment Seat because it was of no eternal value. It was man-centred rather than Christ-centred. We are warned: 'See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ' (Colossians 2:8). Mix together some philosophy, human tradition, basic principles of this world and add a touch of Christian jargon and a lot of believers will fall for it. This is because what they really want is worldly success rather than godly success, yet there is no easy road to Heaven (Acts 14:22).

A preacher's job isn't to give the people what they want to hear. The preacher's job is to hear from God and to declare His word with a holy fear. Life on this earth is not a holiday. It is our time where we work for the Lord (1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:58; 16:10). There is no crown without the cross. There is no glory with Christ without suffering for Christ (Romans 8:17-18; 1 Peter 4:12-14). We need an awareness of how short life is and how serious the judgments of God will be. We have been forewarned and should not be caught by surprise. Those who continue in Christ will have confidence and be able to stand unashamed before Him at His coming (1 John 2:28). Those who do not live wholeheartedly for the Lord will be covered in misery, shame and regret. We need to realize how accountable we are to God.

Believers need to feel their personal accountability, so that they continue to work out their own salvation with fear and

trembling (Philippians 2:12). Look at the state of the church and then look at the state of the world. The Bible says that God is not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Have you fallen for the idea that the Lord is now willing that many should perish? Or are you going to seek and to save the lost. The life of every person will end with fire; judgment-fire for some and Hell-fire for others! The preacher needs to shake and tremble so that through his ministry the laziness of the nominal believer, the compromise of the backslider and the rebellion of the unbeliever will be shaken. Imagine how terrible it would be if those condemned on the final Day turn to us and say, "Preacher, if you had more fire of the Holy Spirit, I would not be going now to Hell-fire."

**WHAT KIND OF PREACHING DO YOU NEED TO  
LISTEN TO?**



## THE MAKING OF AN APOSTLE

Paul loved the Corinthian people deeply (1 Corinthians 16:24), yet as we see in his letters to them, he then faced a major ongoing spiritual battle to pull them out of darkness and into the full light of Christ. To help them overcome, Paul had to open his heart to them like a father who loves his children. It was actually through the Corinthian church that Christ stretched Paul and shaped his character into being a true spiritual father, where he could openly share everything with his spiritual children. As Paul said, 'We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. As a fair exchange – I speak as to my children – open wide your hearts also' (2 Corinthians 6:11-12).

Paul continued to appeal to them, 'Make room for us in your hearts... I have said before that you have such a place in our hearts that we would live or die with you' (2 Corinthians 7:2-3). While the Corinthians resisted Paul in many ways, God used this to do a deeper work in Paul's life to make him into not only one of the greatest apostles, but also to make him into a spiritual father, whose letters would be used to teach and equip the church for the generations to come. This was accomplished in and through Paul's life because he opened his heart to the point where he was willing to live or die to see this church reach the incredible potential of their heavenly calling. The making of a great apostle is not about glamorous miracles, even though miracles are needed and important, but rather by a broken heart over the sin within the churches. Your heart has to be stretched and stretched and stretched so that you are united with the heart of Christ for His people.

### OVERCOMING MISUNDERSTANDINGS

It is very easy for misunderstandings and different lines of direction or emphasis to develop between those in ministry. This could have unfortunately happened when the apostle Paul was away from a church for considerable periods of time. Therefore, Paul needed to make the Corinthians understand him and what he was doing, so that they could be united in the vision and purpose of the church. 'For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand. And I hope that, as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus' (2 Corinthians 1:13-14).

As a young evangelist I found that a number of pastors could not understand the direction of my ministry, yet I felt I was heading in the direction God had called me to go in. There was some misunderstanding, but I had to persevere. One pastor emailed me saying that out of all the ministries, he finds it the hardest to incorporate the evangelist into his church. I emailed him back saying that we need to discuss ways to solve this problem because the ministry of the evangelist is desperately needed in the New Zealand church. The pastor returned my email by saying that he was too busy; really he didn't want to discuss it. He acknowledged the problem but didn't want to solve the problem. This is why so often the ministry of the evangelist has been crushed by pastors instead of released.

Different parts of the body have to work together and this kind of unity can only be developed through understanding. Paul used his letters to give the Corinthians a greater understanding of his ministry, so they could continue to work together. This understanding had previously been broken between Paul and Barnabas, as a sharp disagreement led them to split and go their separate ways. They never came back to work with each other again (Acts 15:36-41); but with the Corinthians Paul worked through the issues that confronted them and formed a deep, long-lasting bond that would carry them through to perfection. Differences of opinion among leaders need to be addressed in a godly way, so that we can

find and accomplish the very best that God has for all of our lives.

## **RELYING UPON GOD FOR EVERYTHING**

The second letter to the Corinthians was written at a time when the apostle Paul and his evangelistic team of co-workers faced many hardships. They were under enormous pressure, even despairing of their lives to the point where they felt it was beyond their ability to endure. They had gone through a lot of suffering and “deadly peril”, yet Paul said that this happened to make them unable to rely on themselves and to bring them to the place where they fully relied upon God (2 Corinthians 1:8-11). God wants to increase our faith by making us completely reliant upon Him, so that He can then work through us in a greater way. God taught Paul this lesson the hard way, which was through persecution. Without an understanding of God’s eternal perspective we will not be able to handle the situations that are necessary for us to endure.

Paul described his persecutions in this way: the ‘sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives’ (2 Corinthians 1:5-6). This distress was to also bring comfort and salvation to the Corinthians. Often, when life is easy and going well, people are inclined to get so busy with the cares of this world that they forget the Lord, but when they have a thorn in the flesh, they plead for God’s grace and become more reliant upon Him. We have to be focused upon continually looking towards the Lord, so that His work is done in our lives by His grace and not by our own strength. Examine the work that you are trying to do for God. Are you really relying upon Him or just moving ahead in your own strength? Take time to pray and wait upon the Lord for the answer.

## **THE GRACE TO WORK UNDER PRESSURE**

God has many ways in which He provokes His church into action for the sake of the gospel, and through this, the Lord raises up His true ministries to a higher level. Violent or verbal

persecution is one way and spiritual confrontations against false teachings is another. God brought the apostle Paul to this position and placed these pressures upon him, and out of this we can actually see the second letter to the Corinthians come forth. There was both a thorn in Paul's flesh and a burning within Paul's heart, which allowed the grace of God to be poured out. If you are facing incredible pressures at the moment in your ministry, you need to go before the Lord and plead for His grace.

When Paul pleaded with the Lord in intercessory prayer, the Lord responded by explaining the outworking of His purpose: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore Paul was willing to boast all the more about his weaknesses, so that Christ's power would rest upon him. That is why he delighted to be persecuted for Christ sake, for he knew that when he was weak, then he was strong (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). The power of God will rest upon those who sacrifice their lives for the cause of Christ. The thorn in the flesh was a messenger sent by Satan to torment Paul through hardships and persecution. But as well as the thorn in the flesh, which came from the outward persecution that Paul suffered, there was also an inward burning within Paul's heart.

After explaining the extent of his persecutions, Paul then says, 'Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?' (2 Corinthians 11:28-29) This inward burning was well expressed to the Corinthians because of the state of their church life. 'For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you' (2 Corinthians 2:4). It was out of love and a burning heart that Paul had rebuked the Corinthians for their sins in both of his letters. You need to have a lot of grace to be able to bring godly correction to people's lives. It is a very difficult job, but when your heart burns you have no choice but to do it.

## **A HEART THAT INWARDLY BURNS**

The message to the Corinthians came out of enormous pressure upon Paul from both outward persecution and the inward sins of the church that caused Paul to have a broken heart because of his love for these people. This pressure caused him to lay hold of Christ, to cry out with many tears and to prevail in prayer. Does sin in your church move you to weep for your congregation? Do you inwardly burn when someone falls? Do you feel any physical pain for the lost people that surround you? As a pastor, Richard Wurmbrand had that kind of heart:

‘In the first days after my conversion, I felt that I would not be able to live any longer. Walking on the street, I felt a physical pain for every man or woman who passed by. It was like a knife in the heart, so burning was the question of whether or not he or she was saved. If a member of the congregation sinned, I would weep for hours. The longing for the salvation of all souls has remained in my heart.

In my activities as a pastor I would go from one house to another to tell people about Christ. Some would not receive me. Then I would stand in front of the house for hours in the snow, in bitter winter, praying for those inside and waiting in case they might change their minds. The owners would see me through the window. They would come out from time to time and tell me, “Go away. You’ll freeze to death. I’m not interested in what you have to say.” I would answer, “But I love you, and I know that you will be lost eternally if you don’t accept my message. I will not leave.” In the end, they would pity me, call me in, and give me some hot tea. Not many pastors proceed this way.’

Why don’t many pastors proceed in this way? It’s because they are too comfortable in their offices. Some pastors seem to hold onto their church with such a tight grip that they are afraid of what might happen if they let go. They give little or no room for the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the church service is like a prearranged show. Everything has to be under their control, but in times of true revival God comes into His church and takes over. Now I know there does need to be good leadership and things do need some order, but so many churches have

left Jesus outside, knocking on the church door calling them to let Him in (Revelation 3:20). Churches need to be awakened to the challenge and intense spiritual battle of today. Every believer needs a heart that inwardly burns.

## **PRAY OR YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE WILL FADE AWAY**

Prayerless churches are spiritually dead, no matter how greatly the numbers of people are increasing. God isn't looking for numbers. He's looking for purity, integrity, honesty and intimacy with those who belong to Him. Jesus didn't die just to save us from going to Hell; He died to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people who are His very own (Titus 2:14). If you don't have a heart that burns for Christ and for the salvation of souls, your prayer life will remain weak. How much time do you spend alone with God in earnest prayer? Prayer isn't just for faithful old ladies. A minister's inward relationship with God is more important than his outward ministry. Apostles are made by God through their relationship with Him, not through their works for Him. The apostle Paul was a man who could pray.

A pastor told me that he wanted to shut down a certain prayer group that was going on in his church because he saw them as a group of rebels. Obviously the pastor had not led the way in prayer with these people and now he was unhappy with the way the prayer meeting was being run. Instead of making God's church a house of prayer for all nations, as the word of God commands (Mark 11:17), many pastors are willing to shut down the prayer meetings. I have stayed with many Christian families all over the world and what I have found is that if you don't have good prayer meetings in the church you won't find good prayer meetings in the home. If the church won't teach people to pray, pastors should never take it for granted that the believer's homes are good examples of prayer.

Whenever I heard the Lord's voice in my early days of ministry it always seemed to be a hard and challenging word. I had to accept the Lord's rebuke and it often came with a

warning to obey Him, to pray and to fast. Many believers seem to be totally unaware of the seriousness of obeying God and they don't realize that a prayerless life is a sinful life (1 Samuel 12:23). They want everything to go on as normal so that nothing rocks the boat. Why did the religious leaders get so angry with Stephen? It was because he was doing the mighty works of God and preaching against their sin (Acts 6-7). Much of the Bible, especially the writings of the prophets, is God's rebuke of His backslidden people. Do you really want God to speak to you? It's not easy when God comes into your heart to prune you and to cut you back, but that's what is needed if you are going to produce the true fruit of the kingdom (John 15:2).

There are very few people who make an all-out commitment to the call of God on their lives. They know that God has called them and they are willing to follow that call to a certain degree. But unless they have a deep commitment in their hearts to the Lord, they are not willing to endure all the difficulties and hardships that the call of God brings. Many are seeking a thornless path to Heaven, yet the apostle Paul became more and more sold out to God as he suffered for his faith. Paul never backslid because he was too busy going on with the Lord. Every thought of his mind, every step of his feet and every longing of his soul was for Christ and for the salvation of men. He had commitment, dedication and endurance. Now it is our turn to press into the high call of God. We must always challenge Christians to do great exploits for the Lord. Do you accept the challenge to have the fire of God burning within you?

**ARE YOU WILLING TO LET GOD SHAKE YOUR LIFE?**





12)

## **SATAN'S UNRELENTING ATTACK**

Satan has many ways of breathing down your neck to try and destroy your ministry. Outward persecution from unbelievers is often easier to handle than an inward attack from believers. Jesus Christ faced both the outward rejection and the inward betrayal on His way to the cross, and the apostle Paul faced a similar situation in Corinth. Looking at the situation, the second letter to the Corinthians was written from the context of Paul being forced to make a strong defence of his ministry, not because of the outward attack, but because of the inward attack. Paul is actually provoked by the Corinthians to prove that he is a true apostle.

Here was the apostle Paul, their spiritual father, the one who had founded the Corinthian church and had lived among them for one and a half years, preaching in the synagogue and from house to house with powerful messages, tremendous teaching and incredible demonstrations of the Spirit's power, yet in Second Corinthians we see him having to defend his ministry and compel the people to believe that he is a true apostle. Therefore, Paul has to expose the work of Satan among the Corinthians.

### **KICKING THE DEVIL OUT OF THE CHURCH**

'But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ,' and then in referring to those who were preaching in Corinth, Paul says, 'For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness.

Their end will be what their actions deserve' (2 Corinthians 11:3-4,13-15). The problems within the Corinthian church were caused by the masquerading of Satan as an angel of light through the false preachers.

Paul had clearly explained to the Corinthians that the work of Satan is to veil the gospel so that people will perish. For 'the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God' (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). The issue of false prophets is a major issue, but aside from these false preachers, one of the ways that the cunning serpent was able to most effectively enter the Corinthian church was through the believers who had yoked themselves with the unbelievers. Therefore, Paul had to warn them about this.

'Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols?... "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing and I will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:14-17). There needs to be a right balance between living in the world, but not being of the world. Paul addressed this issue in his first letter (1 Corinthians 5:9-10). In the second letter we see that the one who had been expelled from the church and handed over to Satan had repented. Paul was, therefore, now calling them to forgive him, so that Satan would not outwit the church. They were not unaware of Satan's schemes and they were expected to overcome the evil one in all their circumstances (2 Corinthians 2:5-11).

To overcome our enemy, we have to know what he is up to and how his schemes work. We have to know the voice of God, for what is right in one situation is not necessarily right for another. We have to follow the Lord's voice and seek His wisdom and counsel. Again this shows the importance of preaching the right message at the right time. We have to be in the world but not of the world. We have to befriend sinners

with the love of Christ to shine the light in the places of darkness, but we cannot afford to compromise or fall into their ways, otherwise our faith will become weak and ineffective. We cannot give any footholds to the devil, but rather we must submit to God, resist the devil and he will flee (James 4:7). In what way is the devil seeking to come into your church?

## **A BELIEVER MUST NOT MARRY AN UNBELIEVER**

The principle of not being yoked together with unbelievers holds a strong warning about marriage. Attaching yourself to a person who does not share your faith in Jesus can have very bad consequences. In the Old Testament God commanded the Israelites not to marry with those from the unbelieving nations that surrounded them, otherwise their hearts would turn away from the LORD (Deuteronomy 7:1-4). A major reason Israel fell into sin is because they would not heed this advice (Ezra 9:1-4; Malachi 2:11-12). They married with unbelievers and fell away from God. King Solomon fell away from the LORD due to marrying foreign women and Nehemiah used the example of Solomon's life to warn the whole nation not to continue to make this same mistake (1 Kings 11:1-10; Nehemiah 13:26-27). Samson made a similar mistake and was destroyed because of the heathen woman he married (Judges 16).

Paul taught in his first letter that 'a woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord' (1 Corinthians 7:39). Notice that a Christian widow is only free to marry someone who belongs to the Lord. Paul clearly stated the principle that 'he must belong to the Lord,' because a Christian is not to yoke him or herself to an unbeliever. This principle should be applied by Christians who are single. You will only cause yourself problems if you compromise. You should not marry an unbeliever thinking that you will be able to convert them. If you can't convert them before marriage, you will most likely find it harder after marriage.

Paul counselled the younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no

opportunity for slander, because some had already turned away to follow Satan (1 Timothy 5:14-15). We have to take this warning seriously about the women who turn away to follow Satan, for the issue specifically relates to the subject of marriage. These younger widows were in such a hurry to remarry that they were willing to turn away from the Lord. I knew a Christian woman who was like this and she married an unbeliever. They separated and he found another lady, but after some time he committed suicide in a ghastly manner. She continued to sing in the church choir and to search for a new husband. As soon as she found one, another unbeliever, she left the church.

We must teach the young people to seek God and to be determined to have a true Christian marriage partner. Those who do things in a godly way will reap many benefits. A person wanting to do their own thing in relation to marriage has not put Jesus first in their life. No Christian sets out saying, "I'm going to marry a drunkard, blaspheming unbeliever one day," but there are many Christians who unfortunately have married that kind of person. Often they find their partner while in a backslidden condition. Then they come back to the Lord and have to live with the consequences of their actions. Sometimes a couple were both unbelievers when they married and then only one of them becomes a Christian. The one who is saved then needs to learn how to live with the unbelieving partner (1 Corinthians 7:12-14). At times that's not easy.

Sometimes a person pretends to be very spiritual when they are not. There was an older man in our church who had been single for a long time. He started dating a certain lady and during that time she looked very spiritual, coming to church with her Bible and attentively looking up the Scriptures. As soon as they were married she stopped coming to church and it wasn't long before their relationship had broken up. I was surprised when a certain Christian man said to me that being unequally yoked doesn't relate to marriage. I strongly disagreed with him. Some years later he left his wife. Look at where small compromises take people and you will see that the end result is disaster.

## **FULFILLING GOD'S PURPOSE IN MARRIAGE**

The purpose of marriage is for the husband and wife to be united in flesh and spirit, because the Lord is seeking godly offspring (Malachi 2:15). An unbeliever and a believer cannot be united in spirit to fulfill God's highest purpose in raising up godly offspring who will do the great exploits of God's kingdom. Of course there is restoration for those who repent. God will shine His light out of darkness and He can lift up anyone who has fallen. Nevertheless, there is a higher level or intensity of light that can shine through our lives if we have the faith and the patience to do everything in a godly way and walk in obedience to the wisdom and counsel of God.

The strength of the church revolves around the type of marriages which are taking place and the way in which godly offspring can be brought up. The future apostles, prophets and nation shakers can be born within our families when we are fully dedicated to knowing the purposes of God and His ways. Paul taught the Corinthians that 'we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory' (2 Corinthians 3:18). This ever-increasing glory comes through an ever-increasing transformation into the likeness of Christ. The blessings of God are released through walking according to the ways of God. Obeying the principles of God in marriage reflects the great glory of Jesus. Jesus is finding His Bride, the Church, through righteousness.

The husband and the wife are called to come together so that Satan will not tempt them because of their lack of self-control (1 Corinthians 7:5). In discussing the issue of marriage, notice that Paul continually refers to the personage of Satan at work to lead people astray. We have to know that Satan is the tempter, so that we will not be deceived into following him. We cannot follow Satan into marriage; we have to follow Jesus. I presume that Paul had much wisdom on this subject because Satan would have tempted him many times to marry someone who was not suited for him. The best way that the devil could have hindered the spread of the early church would have been

to find some unsuitable person to have become yoked to the apostle Paul. A wrong relationship could cost you the call of God on your life. Paul had committed his life to the preaching of the gospel and from that he would not be moved.

Faithfulness within marriage symbolizes our faithfulness to Christ. The Bible teaches that husbands are to consider their wives to be 'heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers' (1 Peter 3:7). This is a very beautiful point that the husband is to consider his wife to be heir along with himself in the gift of salvation. The husband and wife should be helping one another in their walk with the Lord, praying with one another, so their treasures are in Heaven. When a husband and wife are journeying together towards their heavenly home, that is an ideal marriage. But if they are travelling separate paths and start pulling one another in different directions that is when they can become "unequally yoked" and the devil can gain the victory. Satan's unrelenting attack is against the covenant of marriage. We need to be aware of the devil's schemes so that we are equipped to help people to overcome.

There was a very large ministry team that was travelling throughout the whole of the country and constantly leading people to the Lord. The team was being run by a husband and wife. When the evangelistic outreach came to an end, so did the marriage of the head couple. What went wrong? How did the devil gain such a victory? Again we need to realize the seriousness of the spiritual battle and how small compromises can lead to big defeats. We need prophets like Nathan who can show the David's their sins. If you are in a front-line Christian ministry, be extra careful to make sure the well-being of your marriage stays a priority. Pray with your wife and make sure you maintain good communication. Do not let your marriage fall into the hands of the evil one.

## **IS JESUS OR THE DEVIL THE HEAD OF YOUR HOME?**

## 13)

# BUILDING THE RIGHT MINISTRY

Satan's greatest attack against the Corinthian church was in the area of sexual purity, followed up with a bombardment of false apostles to turn the church away from the apostle Paul's teaching. To combat this onslaught of spiritual attacks, Paul explains to them what a true minister of the new covenant really is and how that he and his fellow workers were faithful to this ministry (2 Corinthians 2:12-4:2). He explained to them in more detail the ministry of reconciliation and what it means to be an ambassador of Christ – which is to persuade and appeal to people to come and follow the Lord, pleading with them on Christ's behalf (2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2). God will speak through you and make His appeal to the lost, in order to bring them into salvation using the godly words of your mouth.

Again Paul explains the difficulties, hardships and incredible sufferings that he has gone through to walk in this ministry (2 Corinthians 6:3-10). He teaches them the difference between true and false repentance (2 Corinthians 7:8-11), and he reminds them of the importance of giving and the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints (2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15). Giving is necessary to enlarge our harvest. We must give to the church and to the work of missions and evangelism to save more souls. A missions focused church has a very important spiritual dimension. One of the good things about the senior minister of my home church is that he has strongly promoted missions and has allowed the church to have a spiritual inheritance around the world. I hope your church has a strong missions focus so that you can sow in many fields and reap the final reward.

## DEFENDING THE TRUE MINISTRY

Paul then makes the main defence of his ministry in chapter ten and especially chapter eleven of 2 Corinthians. He mentions that he will deal with these people boldly, both in writing and in person. He enforces and wields the weapons that God has given to the church to demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the true knowledge of God, to take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. Paul then says, 'And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete' (2 Corinthians 10:6). Before Christ will punish the sins of the world, the obedience of His church must be complete. As the people of God walk in obedience, the work of Christ is then released into the world in a stronger way. As Paul completed his work among the Corinthians and faithfully warned them, it released the Lord's mighty hand to work in and through this church with great power.

Paul's final word to the Corinthians was this: 'May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all' (2 Corinthians 13:14). To stand against false apostles and false prophets today, you need to be totally clear about the fact that the one true God is three eternal and distinct persons. Doctrinally we call this the Holy Trinity. I was involved with a prison ministry team and one of the preachers began to say that Jesus is the Father and Jesus is the Life-giving Spirit, so I asked him straight out, "Are you denying the Holy Trinity?" Earlier he had said that "Adam is the god-man," which is border line blasphemy. Only Jesus Christ is the God-man (John 1:1,14) and Jesus is a distinct person from His Father and a distinct person from the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:16-17). The Holy Trinity is one God in three persons: three persons in one God.

We are to have fellowship with the Father (1 John 1:3), fellowship with the Son (1 Corinthians 1:9), and fellowship with the Holy Spirit (Philippians 2:1). If a person denies the Holy Trinity there is something wrong with their fellowship with God. God is love and a reason that God is love is due to the fact that before all created things there was an eternal and perfect relationship between the three members of the Godhead.



Muslims and cults such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and Oneness Pentecostals claim that God is a totally singular being and therefore, for all eternity prior to creation, He was alone. The Bible concept of God is far more magnificent (Genesis 1:1-5,26-27; John 1:1-3).

Jesus has always been at the Father's side (John 1:18). The Holy Spirit is a personal being who speaks (Revelation 14:13; 22:17), has a mind (Romans 8:27), has a will (Acts 15:28), emotions and feelings (Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 10:29), and He is eternal (Hebrews 9:14). Any preacher who starts to deny the Holy Trinity is going down a totally wrong path and is on the road to destruction. Jesus came to this earth to glorify the Father and the Holy Spirit has been sent to glorify the Son. The Corinthian believers were coming into a deeper experience of the grace of Christ, the love of the Father and fellowship with the Holy Spirit. That is what you need to get closer to God. Do not be deceived by the false prophets who deny the tri-unity of the Most High God.

## **WE CAN REACH THE WHOLE WORLD**

Paul wanted to get the problems in the church sorted out so that he could save the unreached people of the world. He spoke of the 'field God has assigned to us, a field that reaches even to you... for we did get as far as you with the gospel of Christ.' Then he goes on to say, 'Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our area of activity among you will greatly expand, so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you' (2 Corinthians 10:13-16). The salvation of multitudes of souls beyond their region was in the hands of the Corinthian church. Not only was Paul's desire for the Corinthians to be a soul winning church to save sinners, it was also called to be a missionary church to help preach the gospel to the regions beyond. Now for this to happen, their faith had to grow.

To become an effective missionary church, the faith of the people has to develop correctly so that they will have the onward vision to reach out, to intercede and to support God's work. Greater spiritual growth in the Corinthian church would

grant the apostle Paul more time and opportunities to take the gospel further among those who were yet to hear the true message of salvation. The Corinthian church had enthusiasm. They were eager to help and their enthusiasm had even stirred most of the other churches into action. Yet Paul had to then call them to put action behind their words (2 Corinthians 9:2-5). The Corinthian believers knew all the right words to say, and they could sound so spiritual, but God looks for those who take action, who step out by faith and who truly obey Him. Many people talk or dream of doing great things for God to save the world, but faith without deeds is dead (James 2:26). It takes the right action to bring a godly vision into reality.

On the Day of Judgment it will be revealed how well the Corinthian church succeeded or failed to complete this work. They had the potential, but what they did with that potential is recorded in the books of Heaven. We must apply this to the greater things that God can accomplish through us, if only we will allow our faith to grow. It is good to know that Paul actually had great confidence in the Corinthian church and from the beginning he looked ahead to them being blameless on the day of the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:8; 2 Corinthians 7:4,16). Let us have faith that our churches can step up and step out to complete the Great Commission. We can win souls for the Lord and we can change the world. Let us look ahead to standing blameless before Him (Jude 24-25). We can have great faith and confidence for missions and evangelism. Billions upon billions of people will be saved (Revelation 7:9). Jesus will have His spotless Bride and we will enjoy fellowship with God forever and ever.

## **TAKE UP YOUR CROSS**

Throughout his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul was greatly concerned that the believers were being led astray from Christ, being deceived by a different gospel and following false apostles. Therefore, throughout his writing Paul sought to strongly enforce the work of his own ministry. He spoke of how he was out of his mind to boast in this kind of way, but he had

to give them this reminder for their benefit. Paul explained to them again why he is a true apostle; how he had worked much harder than others, what extreme suffering he had gone through, what burden he carried in his heart and what visions and revelations he had received from the Lord. He points to the signs and wonders which happened through his ministry, things that mark an apostle. He explains how he had spent his whole life for the sake of these people and how everything he was doing was for their strengthening (2 Corinthians 12:11-19).

The apostle Paul carried the cross of Christ for the sake of the Corinthians. His prayer was for their perfection (2 Corinthians 13:9), and his motives in lifting up his own ministry were right and to the glory of God. The work of a true ministry should be made known when God lifts them up, but so often it's those who compromise God's word who are given more publicity. Look for those who are carrying the cross, those who are laying down their lives and making sacrifices for the cause of Christ. They are the ones to support and get behind. Forget the prosperity preachers who are pleading for more money and are urging you on into mere worldly success. If Jesus had preached that kind of message He would have never been crucified. Go for those who are preaching repentance and the cross of Jesus.

As Paul said, '...we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God' (1 Corinthians 1:23-24). The cross is a stumbling block to the world and to carnal Christianity. If you can't take up your cross you're not going to get up early tomorrow morning to pray. Remember that a praying man stops sinning but a sinning man will stop praying. He can't pray. The apostle Paul said, "The world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14). Did Jesus die on the cross so you could live for your own pleasure and entertainment? How many Christians have neglected the call of God all week and then they will put on a pious face to go to church and sit through a sermon that doesn't convict them of their sins at all? We need on-fire preaching in order to set the

church on fire. The word of God is to encourage, but it is also to rebuke. Let the pastor receive the rebuke first and then the church will follow.

### **A MODERN DAY PROBLEM**

One reason I have seen the modern church fall into all kinds of problems is through being overly keen to enlarge their church building. In order to do this they often have to spend a huge amount of money. At the time of writing this chapter my home church is still going through a similar issue. The senior minister has withstood a lot of pressure and he has remained standing through a storm which could have knocked many pastors over. I suppose that is why churches need older mature men, whereas a younger leader would not have the experience to see him through. My prayer and hope is that God arises and does a miracle in answer to all the prayers of His people and this issue is solved. But no matter what happens, and even if we did lose everything, God will be with us through the financial crisis and will lead us to the other side.

I was taken to visit a certain pastor and we arrived just in time for his sermon. He got up with a set of plans and designs of the new church building he was aiming for. The rest of his sermon was a message on fundraising and giving. I looked around at the congregation and thought, "How are they going to be able to handle this burden?" Sometime after this I was invited to preach in a similar church. After the service the pastor began to ask me questions about getting a new church building. I told him my opinion honestly, which was that you've got to be so careful not to tie the financial noose around the congregation and strangle them. Those who do not properly estimate the cost bring their churches into shame (Luke 14:28-30). After that he never invited me back to speak in his church, even though we had spoken of doing some evangelistic meetings.

There certainly are times when new church buildings and extensions are necessary, but first of all church leaders need to realize that many ministries have destroyed themselves at

this point and over and over again churches keep making this same mistake. The desire to build costly, oversized buildings would have been a shock to the apostle Paul. God does not get any glory when pastors have to start pressurizing their congregations for more and more money in order to build the dream project. Solomon's temple was magnificent, but God soon rejected it and had it destroyed (2 Kings 25:8-9). Take no pride in buildings. When some of the disciples were remarking about how Herod's temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God, Jesus said, "As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down" (Luke 21:5-6).

Pastors that give themselves more to planning and scheming than to prayer and fasting can so easily pull their congregations down the wrong path. The church then becomes wrapped up in material things. The natural man wants to build something that looks great and can be seen by others. God merely tolerates these kinds of temples, which are more like towers of Babel (Genesis 11:4). Is the church prayer meeting so overflowing that you need a new building? The following saying by Leonard Ravenhill is so true: "You can tell how popular the church is by the morning service. You can tell how popular the preacher is by the evening service; and you can tell how popular God is by the prayer meeting." You've got to put up a warning sign when so often the churches with the empty prayer meetings are the ones that want to build the biggest buildings. Very few churches are willing to give prayer its proper place because they are more interested in outward success than in pleasing God.

I was taken to meet a certain pastor who constantly went on about how we should not build these little lean-on shacks, but we should go for the best. A few years later his church was in major financial trouble. Is a new building really going to bring deeper repentance to your congregation? Is it really the best method of saving more souls? It certainly wasn't the method the early church adopted. Are the pastors of today wiser than the apostles of the early church? Some churches will spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on plans and drawings. No

wonder places like India and Pakistan are not being fully evangelized! Pastors will spend more on drawings than on reaching the lost.

Now I know there is a balance and we still need buildings today, but we are warned not to fall into the grip of vain, deceitful ambitions that can cause the whole church to be sidetracked for years. You cannot let your message and ministry plateau because of your building scheme. Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ, does not have God (2 John 9). Our aim is not just to start in the ministry, but to fulfil and complete the work that God has for us (Colossians 4:17). You will miss Christ if you take the church in the wrong direction. Be very careful when taking upon yourself a building project. God will be with you when He has called you to it, but be very careful!

## **HOW POPULAR IS GOD IN YOUR CHURCH?**

## 14)

# I HAVE WORKED MUCH HARDER

*'Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again... I have been constantly on the move... I have laboured and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked' (2 Corinthians 11:23,26,27).*

The words of the apostle Paul, "I have worked much harder," have often been upon my mind and have challenged me to live wholeheartedly for God. The life of the apostle Paul was one of sacrifice for the sake of the gospel. He faced difficulties, dangers and hardships that kept him constantly on the move. Jesus said, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15). You can't take the "go" out of the gospel. The early church relaxed and stayed around Jerusalem until Saul (before he was converted and his name was changed to Paul) chased the believers out and sent them into action. It is human nature to want things to be easy, but when a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem and Saul began to destroy the church, those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went (Acts 8:1-5).

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF A POWERFUL CONVERSION**

Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples and had received letters of permission to imprison the believers, yet on his journey to Damascus everything was about to change. The Lord appeared to him, as

a brilliant light from Heaven, brighter than the sun, which blazed around him. This left Saul blind for the next three days, until he was prayed for and something like scales fell from his eyes (Acts 9:1-19). The first Christian outreach team I joined was in 1991. We shared our testimonies and did skits in old-people's homes, schools, churches and wherever we could get an invitation. The main preacher who joined our team had a Damascus road conversion and life changing encounter with Christ.

In the 1980's Arthur was a leader of a gang known as "Black Power," who were involved in crime and drugs. I often heard him share his testimony of how a young Christian guy witnessed to him on the street and this brought tears to his eyes. He was going to smash this guy over when he next saw him, but again his eyes began to well up with tears as the word of God was being shared with him. He didn't like this so he got on his Harley Davidson motorbike and took off. In a sense he was trying to run away from God. One attribute of God is that He is omnipresent. He holds the whole universe in His hands and at the same time brings together every atom. There is nowhere to run or hide from God's watchful eyes. The whole earth is full of His glory.

The mighty hand of God was upon Arthur while he was trying to flee from the Lord. After riding for some distance he saw a local pub and decided to stop for a drink. In the pub there was a drunken fool who was saying all kinds of stupid things and annoying Arthur to the point where he was ready to punch the guy out. As he was about to throw the first punch, suddenly these surprising words came out his mouth: "I love you and I love Jesus." Both of them were knocked to the ground by an unseen force and Arthur heard God's audible voice speaking to him. "Arthur, Arthur, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Arthur asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." These were the exact same words Saul heard on the Damascus road before going on to become the most radical apostle and preacher of the gospel the world had ever known (Acts 9:4-5).



You don't need to see a bright light or hear an audible voice to have a powerful conversion. Jesus said to Thomas, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29). There is a greater blessing for those who have not seen Jesus with their physical eyes but they have encountered Him by faith. They know that their hearts are full of Christ. Our spiritual eyes have to be enlightened far above anything we see with our physical eyes. All the promises of the Lord are for those who will inherit them by faith and patience (Hebrews 6:12). You don't have to be the greatest sinner to become the greatest saint, but what you do need is to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith (Hebrews 12:2).

I had a powerful and real conversion as a young child because I was deeply convicted of my sins and I knew the reality of forgiveness through the blood of Jesus. I have always known the presence of God and have never doubted His existence, yet I have needed a lot of patience and perseverance to get closer to Him. There are no shortcuts. To press on in God you need to do some hard work. Paul was a hard worker, but also a focused worker. He focused on proclaiming the gospel. Many pastors are hard workers, but much of their work is on secondary things and at times unnecessary; producing no eternal fruit.

To produce the fruit of God's kingdom there are three areas that every person called to the ministry needs to continue to work at: 1) Prayer; 2) Studying God's Word, and; 3) Preaching And Witnessing. These three areas need to stay the focus of one's ministry in order to become a more effective messenger of Christ.

### **WORK HARD IN THE FOLLOWING THREE AREAS:**

**1) Become Powerful In Prayer** – You don't become powerful in prayer unless you focus on the Lord and your relationship with Him. Without a deep hunger and thirst for God you'll settle for second best. The apostle Paul seemed to always be able to keep the spiritual fire burning. He was one of

the greatest preachers and writers of the Bible, primarily because he was one of the greatest prayer warriors of the Bible. He was earnest in prayer day and night (1 Thessalonians 3:10), constantly remembering those he had to pray for (2 Timothy 1:3). He wrote to the Corinthians saying, 'I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you' (1 Corinthians 14:18). We should be praying in tongues constantly to edify and build up our faith, just as Paul was doing. He had a great burden to pray and intercede for the salvation of his lost people (Romans 10:1). Do you have that kind of burden?

Paul constantly requested that the believers would pray for him and he sought after prayer partners (2 Corinthians 1:11; Romans 15:31; Ephesians 6:18-20). He knew the importance of being faithful in prayer (Romans 12:12). He was praying that the believers would share their faith (Philemon 6), live a life worthy of the calling (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12), partnership in the gospel (Philippians 1:4-6) and be established in love (Ephesians 3:17-19). He was praying for the Corinthians that they would come to spiritual perfection (2 Corinthians 13:9). Prayer is hard work. How you walk with God and what you accomplish in the spiritual realm is largely due to how you pray. We are called to devote ourselves to prayer (Colossians 4:2-4). If you want eternal fruit in God's kingdom then you will have to increase the level and quality of your prayers. Work hard in developing a life of earnest prayer.

## **2) Receive More Revelation As You Study God's Word –**

Before his conversion, Saul knew the Old Testament well. After his conversion, Paul had to bring this in line with the establishment of the New Covenant. Paul was able to say, "I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11-12). We don't follow the doctrines and traditions of man or of any church denomination. We follow the Lord Jesus Christ as we are led by the Holy Spirit. Jesus does have great teachers in His church, but more importantly we have to let the Holy Spirit teach us individually

through the word of God. God does speak through human vessels. I hope that God is speaking to you through this book, but our aim must always be to hear the voice of Christ and to learn from Him.

Those who preach must be able to correctly handle the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). That means they must be able to correctly discern and interpret the word of God. The apostle Peter spoke of how the apostle Paul wrote with the wisdom that God gave him and his letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:15-16). They destroy themselves by distorting the Scriptures because they are ignorant and unstable. Ignorance is due to a lack of proper training and study. Those who are unstable have not built their lives on the firm foundation of Christ. It is so important that believers study the word of God and develop a true relationship with the Lord by looking to Jesus to receive revelation from Him.

Why it is that Paul has more books in the Bible than all of the other apostles put together? It's because he worked much harder. Hard work for Christ does pay off in the end. At the time it might not look as if much is happening and your work may go unnoticed, but what is done for Christ is kept safe in the hands of God. What is done for the Lord does last for eternity. Paul was able to write that which was of eternal value because he had received so much revelation. Those who are strong in prayer and in the study of God's holy word are then in a position to be God's true messengers.

**3) Receive More Anointing For Preaching And Witnessing** – It seems that everything that happened in Paul's life was for the advancement of the gospel. He wrote to the Philippians from his prison cell, saying, 'Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word

of God more courageously and fearlessly' (Philippians 1:12-14). What we need are people who will go out and share the gospel with unbelievers courageously and fearlessly. If the believers are timid and bound up so they can't share with anyone, then the devil will keep many souls. But if the believers overcome all fear and are courageous in doing great exploits for Christ, then the forces of darkness will be pushed back and the light of God will shine.

God has chosen to save people through the preaching of the gospel. Once the apostle Paul received this revelation he had a burning heart engraved with these words, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16) Once his heart was filled with the love of Christ he could not hold back from sharing the word of God. From the early days of my ministry the words, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" were engraved upon my heart. This really helped me to stay focused on the call of God to preach. Everything of this world is designed to stop or to hinder us from preaching. Many who go to the mission field end up being so busy with all kinds of jobs that they hardly do any preaching to the unbelievers. Unless they get their priorities right they will stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ and they will feel the "woe" that Paul spoke about. It's a very serious business to be called by God to the mission field. It's a battle for lost souls.

The apostle Paul had two factors compelling him to preach the gospel: 1) The fear of the Lord, because we must face His judgments (2 Corinthians 5:10-11), and; 2) The love of Christ, having been demonstrated by His death upon the cross for our sins (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). To be strong in evangelism the church needs the right balance between a fear of God and a perfect love for God. True conversions should produce both of these attributes. Yet often a person comes to the Lord through majoring on just one of these factors and they are in need of being disciplined well to get the proper balance. You need to love God with all your heart and you need to fear and tremble at His awesome judgments and His absolute holiness. Evangelism is hard work and that is why many give up doing it, but when you see both Heaven and Hell in the light of eternity

then you will have a fire in your heart for the salvation of lost souls.

## **LET THE GRACE OF GOD OVERFLOW YOUR LIFE**

Paul acknowledged that he was the least of the apostles and did not even deserve to be called an apostle because he persecuted the church of God. He went on to say, 'But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me' (1 Corinthians 15:9-10). Paul was able to say that he worked harder than all of the apostles, yet he acknowledged that this was only because of God's abundant grace towards him. This type of grace is what many ministers of the gospel need. Some preachers seem to get instant success, but for the majority it is a long, hard, continuous, step by step pressing on, and to overcome they need to work harder than others.

This is what I decided early on in my ministry: I would work harder in prayer, harder in studying God's word and harder in preaching and witnessing for Christ. After almost twenty years of ministry I haven't had anywhere near the kind of breakthrough I was hoping for. Instead I've had more difficulties and sufferings, yet I believe and trust God that lives have been saved for eternity and even now some of them are already in Heaven. I still believe the best is yet to come, but that is going to take another twenty years of hard work. The great thing about this work is that it is not for any man; it is for the Lord. I hope this message has encouraged you to continue working for the Lord, even though at times it can seem that we are making slow progress. The grace of God is with us.

If you have had great success in ministry, don't take it for granted. If you have received a reputation as being a great preacher, don't take it for granted. If you are financially secure and God seems to be overflowing the resources of your ministry, don't take it for granted. If you are leading multitudes to the Lord and seem to be increasing on every side, don't take it for granted. Make sure you continue to work hard and

don't neglect the fundamentals of your own quality prayer times with the Lord, seeking Him for more revelation from His word. You might be preaching to the multitudes, but don't neglect witnessing to the ones and twos. Continue to be faithful to Christ and continue to press on like the apostle Paul. Make sure you are never distracted from prayer or from preaching the word (Acts 6:2-4).

## **ARE YOU DOING THE RIGHT WORK FOR THE LORD?**

## 15)

# EXAMINE YOURSELF

*‘Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you – unless, of course, you fail the test?’ (2 Corinthians 13:5)*

What really disturbs me about this Scripture is that the apostle Paul is saying these words to a group of people who should have been solid believers. Not only were they to examine themselves, but they were to examine themselves in light of the fact that they could fail the test and not even be saved. If you don't have Christ dwelling in your heart by faith, you are not a part of His kingdom (Ephesians 3:17). It is Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). Jesus Christ can dwell within us because He is divine; He is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity (Matthew 28:19). Jesus is our Lord and Saviour, and the only name by which we must be saved (John 20:31; Acts 4:12). You are in the faith only as long as Christ is in you and you are in Christ.

There are many people who start to follow Jesus but then through their own pride they think they can find a better way. We are warned: ‘Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son’ (2 John 9). To walk with God you have to remain and continue in the teachings of the Lord. Those who fall away and deny Jesus will die in their sins (John 8:24). The teachings of Christ and of the prophets clearly reveal that the one true God is a Trinity of three divine, distinct and eternal persons (2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2). Those who deny the Tri-unity of God have abandoned the teachings of Christ and are falling from grace. You are not in the true Christian faith if you deny the Holy Trinity.

## **FOLLOWING JESUS TO VICTORY!**

A major problem today is that we have a lot of shallow conversions instead of deep, heartbroken, life-changing encounters with the Lord. Sin is like a disease and we have all been infected by it. The cure is simple, yet most people do not apply it sufficiently. The antidote for sin is the holy, righteous blood of Jesus that our Lord willingly shed for us upon the cross. An unbeliever's mind is at enmity towards God and is hostile towards Him (Romans 8:7). Those who go against God's will are in reality God's enemies. They refuse to submit to God and His path of salvation. Many people seek to come to God on their own terms and not on His terms. They can appear to be very religious but they are unsaved and still lost in the ways of the world. To follow Jesus we have to learn to be sensitive to the leading of God's Spirit and really seek to walk with the Lord day by day.

The word of God is of such a high standard that only Jesus Christ could fulfil it, yet we must press on in our walk with the Lord. To do that people need to examine themselves. They need to examine their own hearts before the holiness of God. For spiritual progress this examination must continue, but not in the sense of getting bogged down in one's own failings. We are changed into the image of Christ by beholding His glory. When a person is mining for gold he will dig up a lot of dirt, but ultimately his goal is to find the gold. There may have been a lot of dirt or sin in a person's life, but what they need to find is the faith which has been purified like gold. To purify us God allows us to go through trials of faith, to make sure that our lives are solidly founded in our Lord and Saviour.

Will your faith stand the test of time? Will you maintain your ministry and that which God has purposed for your life? Your faith will be tested by many trials and temptations. Trials come in many variations throughout life because we have to be completely tested. Life is a test, but God intends us to be more than conquerors (Romans 8:37) and we have to look to God to make us triumphant through every difficulty that comes our way. We must stand upon the fact that God has promised that



He will not permit any trial or temptation that is too hard for us to bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). Therefore, we can always find the way of victory. The church is not called to defeat but is called to be victorious through faith in Jesus. We must walk in the victory of Christ!

Victorious Christians begin this path by having victorious conversions. We cannot expect people to come to the altar and in two minutes they are forgiven, granted a mansion on the main street of Heaven, given a free ticket to the marriage supper of the Lamb, permitted to rule over five cities and wear a glorious crown. There is a sense in which we can receive instant forgiveness, but a person can't commit sin for fifteen years and forget it in fifteen seconds. God reveals to us that there are things we had better straighten out. We should examine our ways and test them (Lamentations 3:40). To advance in education one has to pass tests. As it is in the natural so it is in the spiritual. To go to a higher level in God you have to pass the testing of your faith (Galatians 6:4). If you don't pass the test you will go around and around in circles like the Israelites in the wilderness for forty years. That generation died before reaching the Promised Land. You could die spiritually unless you press on to maturity.

*'A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world' (1 Corinthians 11:28-32).*

## **SEEK GOD FOR POWERFUL CONVERSIONS**

One thing that I am concerned about as an evangelist is securing powerful conversions. Our longing in the church must be for real genuine conversions. If a lost soul on their way to eternal damnation is on the verge of dying in their sins, yet by

the grace of God the Lord reaches down to them, touches their heart and they respond, isn't that going to be a life-changing encounter? If a person has truly been "born again" and has passed from death to life, aren't they going to know the joy of salvation? Every sinner who comes to Christ in the right way should have a powerful testimony as to their conversion. This conversion experience may have happened quickly or over time, but it has brought the person to the place of intimacy with God.

A powerful testimony has nothing to do with how bad they used to be, but rather how well they know the Lord. The problem today is that people are not coming to Christ in the right way. The rocky, stony ground of their hearts hasn't been sufficiently broken up. Therefore they don't receive a deep peace with God and they fail to come into the fullness of His love. We are in such a rush that we don't give people enough time at the altar. People cannot do eternal business in a couple of minutes. They need to really open their hearts to God and spend time in His presence. They need to come into a full assurance of life changing salvation and intimacy with God. The modern church is often too busy to give time for this to happen.

Can you say that Christ lives in you? Have you really got rid of bitterness, anger and jealousy? Is your heart purged from sin or is it still polluted by sin? Do you really live and move and have your being in God? You may have never been a drunkard or a habitual thief, but Adam didn't get kicked out of Heaven for those kinds of sins; neither did the devil. People fail for the simple reason that they choose to run their own lives and not allow God to be in control. This can be a greater sin than even committing adultery or murder; that a person can decide that they can do a better job of running their own life without God's guidance and love. Therefore, they have no saving faith. You can consider yourself to be a nice person, but there is a spot inside your heart that is still a graveyard of spiritual death unless Christ lives there.

The pure in heart see God and that is why revival doesn't come until hardened hearts are broken before the majesty of

the Lord. One time I clearly heard God speak to me from the book of Philippians chapter two and verse twenty-one, which says, 'For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.' I literally felt the presence of the Lord enter my room and God told me the reason why the gospel has not been preached to all creation: people are looking out for their own interests and not those of Jesus Christ. This is a warning that I have to declare to believers and to churches. Many Christians consider themselves to be faithful to the Lord, while in fact they are not pursuing the interests of Christ. They are completely tied up in looking out for their own advantage and worldly benefits. If this word is for you, will you open your heart to meet with the Lord and have a fresh encounter with Him?

### **TRUE BELIEVERS PRAY**

Revivals don't come without at least a small group of people who are desperate for God. By our attitude to prayer we show our devotion to God. There used to be a misguided saying going around about those who were so heavenly minded that they were no earthly use. Rather, the reality is that those who are prayerless are often so earthly minded they are of no heavenly use. God has to bypass men because they are too self-sufficient. God often asks us not to do what we can, but what we can't. This is why we have to meet with God in order to do the impossible. If the church doesn't pray, what has begun in the Spirit will end in the flesh. Revivals cease because of self-sufficiency. A dying or dead prayer meeting reveals a dying or dead church.

When believers stop praying they start straying. The prayer meetings are some of the most important meetings to attend, yet those who are spiritually naive will say, "I won't go tonight. It's only a prayer meeting." Have you ever spent a whole night of prayer, waiting upon God? Those who prevail in the agony of intercession and Jacob-like wrestling prepare the way for powerful preaching. The word of God must be aflame in order to cut to the heart. Victories in the pulpit can be won in the prayer closet before the preacher even steps foot into the

church. What church that is looking for a new pastor asks its proposed ministers how much time they spend in prayer? Can a church settle for a fine speaker even though he is a prayerless pastor? Preaching affects men, but prayer affects God.

“He who kneels before the Lord will stand in any situation,” again I’m quoting Leonard Ravenhill. We need Spirit-inspired, Hell-shaking, world-breaking prayer. What use is greater standing with men if we have less standing with God? What use is physical strength if we have spiritual weakness? What use is worldly wealth if we have spiritual poverty? It is in the place of prayer that we are linked with Christ. Today there are more churches air-conditioned than prayer-conditioned. Prayerless leaders cannot produce prayer warriors. We need knights of prayer to lead nights of prayer. To save a sin-hungry generation we need a prayer-hungry Church. Those who have no appetite for prayer have missed the heart of God.

Only God knows what is deep within a person’s heart and what He requires of them, but this warning is for every believer to truly examine themselves in the light of Christ’s perfect faithfulness and not be deceived. Examine yourself. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you – unless, of course, you fail the test? Have you been crucified with Christ? Is the Lord Jesus, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, dwelling within you? Look at those who have kept the faith and do not let any offence cause you to turn aside. The call of God has to be treasured, pursued, and by the grace of God fulfilled. One reason why we are not raising up enough powerful men and women of God is because we have shallow conversions. Are you truly converted? Are you a new creation? Have you been born again?

## **WHERE DO YOU STAND?**

## 16)

# THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BEING A CHURCH LEADER

Even though they have progressed and come so far, Paul has to again rebuke the Corinthians over their sin. He laments, 'I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged' (2 Corinthians 12:20-21). Even after Paul had written them the great letter of first Corinthians, there were still people in the church who continued in their old sinful ways. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians had caused them great sorrow and at first it appears as if there was true repentance on the part of many. But at the same time there was such a mixture of light and darkness within this church because of those who were ignorant of the spiritual truths that Paul was trying to teach them (2 Corinthians 7:8-11). Sin always endangers the well-being of the church.

In the last chapter of his second letter, we have already looked at how Paul had to warn them to examine themselves to see whether they were really in the faith, otherwise they would find that they had failed the test (2 Corinthians 13:5). What a church! So much potential, yet at the same time they were hardly even saved. They were still in need of examining themselves to see whether they were even in the faith. A whole church can lose its ministry if it is not faithful. Jesus had to warn the Ephesian church, "If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place" (Revelation 2:5). You would think that Jesus should have given this warning to the Corinthian church, yet that tough rebuke was given to the wonderful Ephesian church. God certainly looks at churches differently than we do.

## HEARING THE VOICE OF THE LORD

Members of the Corinthian church were still demanding proof that Christ was speaking through Paul, so Paul had to again repeat his warnings and speak of Christ's power among them and through him (2 Corinthians 13:2-3). Today we acknowledge Paul for the great work that he did and it is obvious to us that Christ was speaking through him. But how many times have we ignored the Lord because we did not accept the ones He sent to speak to us? It's astonishing that many believers did not accept Paul as being a true apostle (1 Corinthians 9:2). But the state of the Corinthian church is actually the state of many churches around the world today. The only way to overcome is to hear the voice of Christ through the true messengers that He sends to us.

The spiritual battle over the Corinthian church can be applied to the spiritual battle over our generation. The test will be whether or not the church of today will truly obey the voice of the Lord. Paul had to continually repeat elementary truths of the gospel among his converts, and while much of Paul's teaching seems advanced, Christ actually wanted to take them a lot further. This again compels those who are called to preach to really seek after the Lord, to hear His voice and proclaim the fullness of His word, preaching to the level of the people but at the same time having an onward vision of advancing towards the fullness of Christ. We cannot sit still, content with where we are at. We have to advance and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour (Philippians 3:10-14; 2 Peter 3:18).

In the Corinthian church I see a church that had the potential to reach the world, but on the other hand, it was also in danger of being cast away, cursed and spat out of the Lord's mouth. In relation to the apostle Paul, I see that this church actually compelled him to become a greater apostle and teacher of the church. He had to lift up the standard of his ministry to a higher level to expose the false apostles. He had to set out the works that he had done and he had to convince them of his love towards them as their true spiritual father. Of all the churches, it was the Corinthian church that compelled the apostle Paul the most in his writing and in his ministry.

Even though the apostle Paul had done so much great work in evangelism, missions and church planting, God wanted to take him on further to become a spiritual father, to overcome the false apostles, and to take these believers who were living in sin and make them into the most significant, evangelistic, missionary church on the face of the earth. It was the Corinthian church that God used to mould Paul and help him to become a better servant of the Lord. Maybe you wouldn't want to be the pastor of the Corinthian church or to be sent to Corinth as an evangelist, but maybe that is exactly what you need.

### **THE SERIOUSNESS OF BEING A LEADER**

In the dream I talked about earlier I saw a Bible College that had clumps of dirt swept up into piles that had to be removed. It was laid upon my heart not to underestimate the significance of those who call us to clean up the mess and when I came to the prayer room I received in my spirit this message about the incredible church in Corinth. It seemed as if sin was corrupting the believers who were being trained for ministry because their prayer lives were in tatters. This dream was a call for me to study and examine the Corinthian believers and the way in which God has a message through them for us today. The Corinthian church speaks of the battle for the salvation of our generation. The church of today needs to overcome in many of the same areas where the believers in Corinth were still failing.

The church that saves the world will be made up of those who listen and obey the Lord's voice and of those who press ahead into the deeper revelations of Christ. Judgment begins in the house of God. There are going to be incredible judgments from the Lord to purify His people, so that He can come for a Bride that is ready and spotless. God has to provoke His leaders, His apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. They themselves are called to reach the fullness of Christ's ministry in their particular field so they can then lead others. The message of the Corinthian church is not just about cleaning up the church; it is also a call and a

challenge for those in ministry to reach the fullness of what Christ has called them to walk in.

Sad to say, I have heard of church leaders who have openly admitted that they are not where they should be in their walk with the Lord and months later, or even years later, they make the same confession. Deep in their hearts they know that things are not right, but they are unwilling to make the necessary sacrifices to change. How can the church save the world when this is permitted to go on? The cry of the Lord is to “repent!” If you don’t repent, don’t try and be a church leader. If you know you’re not walking with God as you should be, get on your knees in the place of prayer and don’t get up until you get a breakthrough. The salvation of many may depend upon you getting your life sorted out. You can’t fool around and be in church leadership.

Bible teachers are warned that they will be judged more strictly (James 3:1). Pastors are warned that they have to give an account for the members of their congregations (Hebrews 13:17). Evangelists will have the blood of lost souls upon their hands if they fail to preach the gospel (Acts 20:26-27). Prophets are warned that they will be destroyed if they speak words or visions that do not come from the Lord (Jeremiah 14:14-15). False apostles have to be immediately thrown out of the church (Revelation 2:2). Paul lays down a very high standard of moral conduct for those who seek to be in leadership (1 Timothy 3:1-13). To serve the Living God you have to make sure your life is right. A true vision of God will always cause us to tremble at His holiness and to keep our lives on course with Him.

## **EMPTY PRAYER MEETINGS AND A LACK OF OUTREACH**

One of the greatest things in this world is to be a preacher of the gospel, but that will backfire if you don’t practice what you preach. Remember that your inward walk with Christ is more important than your outward ministry. Your times alone with God in prayer are more important than your times before the public or at the pulpit. If your relationship with Christ is not your prime concern, your ministry will never reach its full



potential. It doesn't matter how big or famous you might become, you'll still be a mere infant in the eyes of God if you can't pray. It doesn't matter how eloquent your words are and how impressive you are to people, you won't impress God unless you walk intimately with Him.

Most pastors are not bothered at all that their church prayer meetings are empty. If Christians can't meet together to pray, they are distracted by the world and they lack true hunger for God and for revival. Most pastors won't like to hear this, but, "The biggest tragedy is a sick church in a dying world." They were again the words of Leonard Ravenhill and I agree with him. "The only reason we don't have revival is because we (the church) are content to live without it!" Many Christians have no time to pray, but they have time to watch hours of television. You don't fool God. None of us do. Revival won't come unless believers confess their bankruptcy and plead with all their hearts to be really cleansed. The elders and the pastors are to weep before the Lord and call the church to fast (Joel 2:15-17).

I shared some stories about Leonard Ravenhill's ministry at a small pastor's conference of about 30-40 pastors. I spoke of how God had raised him up to rebuke pastors for their lack of prayer. At the end of my message a pastor came up to me and he was furious. He told me, "Never come here and preach a message like that to pastors." It wasn't his position to tell me that because I had been invited to speak. I went straight to the pastor who had invited me and told him the situation. He agreed with my message. Anyway, a short time later I returned to another country for missions work and out of the blue I was invited to be the main speaker at a pastor's conference of 200 pastors. I felt that God was confirming my earlier message, but it seems that some pastors don't want to be told they need to do more prayer and if they have empty prayer meetings their church is backslidden.

One time Ravenhill heard God speak to him about the "prodigal." He preached about the two prodigals: the one who went to a far country and wasted everything he had and the one who stayed home and wasted everything he had. Our

danger is not always what we are doing wrong but rather what we are not doing at all. The judgment is going to be terrible for not what I did but for why I did it. Then Ravenhill addressed the men of that church by saying, "There are a lot of prodigal father's here. How many of you men are priests in the home? You open the Bible every day and counsel your children. Every one of you prodigal father's that do not read the word of God to your children and do not pray with them, you are running a communist home."

"You've got an expensive, showy, beautiful church here, but when did you last go out to the immoral lepers, the prostitutes and homosexuals, to extend compassion? Everyone who acknowledges their failure come up right now." The altar was packed and full almost to the doors. Ravenhill then called the pastor of that church to come up and pray for these people. The pastor said, "I can't pray. The reason you don't love the lost around here, the reason you haven't visited them and haven't extended a hand, the reason you would rather stay at home than get in the back alleys and rescue the perishing is because I haven't." Once the pastor was broken then revival was able to come to that church and that community. Today we have a church that is so busy with its own schedule that it has no time to preach the gospel to unbelievers. Outreaches to the lost are hardly considered.

## **PROVOKING THE CHURCH TO ACTION**

Jesus has many ways to provoke us into action for the sake of the gospel. One of those ways is revealed through the message of the Corinthian church and this should produce a deeper hunger for God in our lives. Paul said, 'Listen to my appeal' (2 Corinthians 13:11). If you listen and take the letters to the Corinthians to heart, you will receive the spiritual strength that is needed to help you press forward and overcome. Your vision of what God is doing in and through the local church will increase and you will be encouraged and even enthused to take a greater part in building, strengthening and enlarging the church that will reach the multitudes who are lost.

We have seen through these letters the areas of significance that really make the Corinthian church stand out and we have seen how the Lord was able to raise up His ministry among them. In examining the state of the believers in Corinth, I see God's incredible love and compassion to save sinners and His patience to deal with the deep rooted wickedness of His own people. The worst sinners can accept Christ and be saved, but unless they go on in obedience to the Lord they will either fall away or they will remain spiritually shallow. Out of darkness came forth the light of God. Those who are forgiven much are in a good position to pour out love and devotion back to the Lord for His kindness and mercy. But Jesus still says, "Go now and leave your life of sin" (John 8:11).

### **WHAT IS THE FINAL OUTCOME?**

When God first spoke to me through this dream, saying that the Corinthian church was the most significant church of the New Testament, I questioned whether that could be true. Yet in studying the word of God, it opens up the amazing work that God wanted to do in and through this church to reach and impact the entire world. Jesus revealed Himself to the Corinthian believers powerfully through the life and the message of the apostle Paul. Those who obeyed this word would then become the vessels through whom Jesus could reveal Himself to the regions beyond. In many ways the church at Corinth was more significant than the Antioch church, the Jerusalem church and all the churches of the New Testament.

Only the books of Heaven will have recorded what happened in the following decades after Paul had gone, but won't it be interesting to view the rest of the story in regard to the Corinthians? How did the church respond to Paul's second letter and did they repent so they could fulfil God's plans and purposes? Now what about your church? Will you go deeper in God than the Corinthians or will they put us to shame on the Day of Judgment? Maybe you consider your church to be far more holy and pure than the sin-stained believers of Corinth.

Yet remember that your great holiness is all a pretense if you have virtually no witness in saving your community and the regions beyond.

Are you going to let God lay hold of your life so that He can really use you to extend His kingdom? What kind of prayer times do you have and do you enjoy searching the word of God? Is there an eagerness within you to testify for Christ? Do you have purity or are you a Christian who is defeated and in bondage? Are you a powerless, prayerless, loveless, up and down, sometimes on fire for God and sometimes cold unbelieving believer? Are your hands clean and is your heart pure? Or have you tucked away selfishness, anger, pride, jealousy, secret lusts, grudges and an unforgiving spirit? Are you an overcomer or have you been overcome?

How will it be for your church if you have to stand right beside the Corinthians at the Judgment Seat of Christ? Surely your church members can't be as bad as them, but remember that Adam never committed any of the grotesque sins that the Corinthians did and he is the one who got the whole world in this mess. There are times when God looks at sin differently than we do. There are times when a church that has fallen is given many opportunities to repent, yet a self-righteous church is only given one warning that they are about to be spat out of the Lord's mouth (Revelation 3:14-22). We don't know how much longer the materialistic Laodicean church was given to repent, but it seems to me that their time was short. The church of today doesn't have long to repent either.

## **HOW WILL YOUR CHURCH STAND COMPARED TO THE CORINTHIANS?**

17)

## HOW SHOULD MY CHURCH APPLY THIS MESSAGE?

Jesus Christ is using His church to save the lost people of the world. We've studied what was going on among the Corinthians and how this affected the ministry of the apostle Paul, but how do we apply it to our churches and to our own lives? I want to emphasize ten points that can help you and your church to fulfil the plans and purposes of God. Jesus is truly at work in and through your local group of believers, so be encouraged and get involved in assisting the onward progress of this work. Take action by putting into practice the following simple, yet effective, recommendations:

**1) Make Sure Your Church Is A House Of Prayer** – Jesus drove out all who were buying and selling in the temple. Then He said, “‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it a ‘den of robbers’” (Matthew 21:12-13). As a Christian your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. If you let the things of the world hinder you from praying, you need Jesus to come and drive out all the sins from your heart. The Christian who doesn't pray falls away.

The spiritual strength of the church is determined by and large by its prayer meetings. Church leaders need to repent if they have taken these meetings too causally. If you're not willing to be awakened to a deeper level of personal prayer and are not willing to awaken the church, you may gain a reputation of being spiritually alive but you will always be spiritually dead (Revelation 3:1). You will be like the fig tree that had lots of leaves but no fruit (Matthew 21:19). The whole church needs to call upon the power of God to come and shake our towns and cities. Can you wrestle in prayer until you get the assurance of the answer?

**2) Preach The Message Of Repentance** – Often there are walls or stumbling blocks that people put up between themselves and God, which allows the devil to have a foothold. These things need to be broken down and removed before there can be any revival. We need to expose the sins of the believers who will otherwise sit comfortably in church week after week without making any spiritual progress. We have to let God cut away the things that are not of Him. We should never underestimate the terrible effects or hindrances due to sin in the church. A preacher won't get far unless he has a burden for saving people from their sins. He might entertain and appease his congregation, but he won't train them to seek and to save the lost.

It can be shocking to find out how many in ministry, in the worship team, etc, have been committing fornication or adultery while at the same time standing at the front of the church. The preaching will not have sufficient impact to bring about lasting change if this kind of behavior is going on. Many pastors are going to have to stand on the Day of Judgment and watch some of their church members being thrown into the lake of fire (Hebrews 13:17). Jesus will be standing there weeping and then He will show the pastor how he is responsible for the damnation of that lost soul because he compromised the word of God. It is therefore better for us to repent now so that doesn't happen. There is no revival without prayer and repentance.

**3) Be Concerned About The Spiritual Growth Of Every Believer** – Every Christian must press on to reach spiritual maturity. Your own personal spiritual growth and that of every believer is very important in releasing God's greater purposes. Paul would inwardly burn for the weak believers who fell into sin (2 Corinthians 11:29). How much concern do you have to help your brothers and sisters overcome their problems and make progress in their walk with the Lord? The call of Corinthians is really a call for spiritual growth in the church. Sad to say, many believers give up along the way because situations get the better of them.

We have to work together for the mutual benefit and building up of the body of Christ. We need the deep wisdom of God's word so that we can help people to enlarge their vision of what God wants to do in their lives. This is where the house fellowships and weekly Bible study groups need to be so strong and well equipped to train and disciple the church. I hope that you have received a greater vision of what the Lord can do in your own life and in the life of any group of believers. We should be concerned if the church is not progressing.

**4) Realize There Is An Answer To Every Church Problem** – We need to see our victory in Christ and His available power which enables the entire church to overcome sin. Many Christians are bound up with different issues, but as we see the bigger picture of what Christ is doing in their lives, we can be encouraged to press forward and to never give up. Again we have to look at how we are discipling and training the people. Are you preparing them to do great exploits for God's kingdom or are they just warming the seats and getting frustrated?

We should never automatically disregard believers who have some obvious faults, but rather see what God can do in their lives through discipleship and encouragement. See the incredible potential within your congregation and give them the opportunity to be trained for greater service. No matter what problems you are facing in the church, go back to the place of prayer and get the wisdom of God for your situation. Jesus is with us so that we overcome.

**5) Encourage Faithfulness In Marriage** – We need to apply the word of God in the area of sexual purity, marriage and the family. God calls us to honour the marriage covenant, to bring children up in the ways of the Lord and for children to honour and respect their parents (Ephesians 6:1-4). We need to teach the importance of faithfulness, commitment and of working issues through, so that relationships can overcome the test of time. Are these important truths and godly virtues being taught and developed in each of our lives?

Young adults, especially, need an awareness of the consequences of choosing the right person to marry. They need to be taught to pray for the hand of God to lead and guide them for the right marriage partner in God's timing and not to rush into a premature relationship. Sexual purity and marriage is a very important part of the message the church has to save the world. Marriages have to be constantly strengthened by good communication, humility and by following the example of Christ's love (Ephesians 5:22-33).

**6) Train And Develop Future Leaders** – We need spiritual fathers and mother who can really nurture believers, not just as new believers but right up to the point of taking over the ministry once you are gone. This is what Jesus and the apostle Paul did. Jesus trained His apostles so that when He returned to Heaven they would carry the gospel throughout the world. The apostle Paul trained younger men like Timothy and Titus. He gave this advice: 'You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others' (2 Timothy 2:1-2). This is how the work of God is really passed on. We have to train reliable men who in turn can teach others.

**7) Focus On Saving Sinners** – When the church focuses on having effective outreaches to unbelievers, this is where it can be most challenging but also where you will see God at work. In some parts of the world evangelism is really tough and it will drive you deeper into God to lay hold of Him through prayer. As I was doing weekly evangelism in my home country, I had to pray for open doors. I knew I couldn't do it in my own strength. Churches that don't do evangelism are often weak in prayer because they are not putting themselves into a position where they need more of God. Our mission is to save more people and to allow the work of God to increase through us.

Something is wrong if a church is not strong in evangelism. Believers are spiritually blind and deceived if they think they



can't do it. We have so much modern technology today and this should be used to more effectively awaken people to the reality of God's word. Pray about what you can do and God will show you something. To begin with it might be to share a word of encouragement with just one person that God lays on your heart. Evangelism is simple and often starts small, but if you are faithful in the small things then God will give the increase. He will lead you into what to do next.

**8) Aim For A Higher Standard Of Ministry** – Jesus has a high standard for those who are called to the ministry. We need to aim for the fullness of Christ, to do the works that Jesus did and even greater works (John 14:12). We have to face head on the challenges and the obstacles that come our way and use them as stepping stones to get closer to God. Think of how many more souls could be saved if we were really walking in the fullness of Christ's power. The church must come into the fullness of the spiritual gifts and the ministry gifts.

We need the onward vision of pressing ahead like the apostle Paul (Philippians 3:13-14). A vision for our own deeper spiritual growth will help us to go far in producing fruit that will last. Those who have been called by God to the five-fold ministry have an enormous task. We have the responsibility of preparing God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ will be built up and reach maturity, and attain to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13). We can only lead others as far as we have gone and that is why we ourselves need to constantly press ahead to lay hold of Christ.

**9) Promote Missions** – Every church should be doing their utmost to support the work of God in the area of missions. That includes the nurturing of the missionary call in young couples and new believers, as well as challenging the older members to consider why they haven't already gone. Maybe the whole area of training people in evangelism needs to be seriously addressed within your church. If people don't know how to witness in their homeland, how are they going to have

much effect overseas? Missions should always embolden local evangelism and local evangelism should always inspire missions.

I have greatly benefited from being involved with churches that have had a strong missions thrust. This has helped me to take the gospel to the regions beyond. I have received prayer and financial support from churches that have enabled me to preach the gospel to multitudes of Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists. On the Day of Judgment they will share in the fruit of my ministry. Those who are involved in this work will have a great inheritance and eternal reward.

**10) Prepare Your Church To Appear Before The Judgment Seat Of Christ** – All paths lead to the Judgment Seat. Everything we do will be judged and we need to keep focused on this fact. Some Christians are somehow deluded into thinking that when they go to Heaven they won't have to give an account for anything. All their sins are forgiven and they'll enjoy the free ride. Yes, salvation is free but rewards are not. Jesus is not going to hand out the treasures of Heaven haphazardly. Our life's work goes through the fire and if everything is burned up we are going to feel ashamed. Many Christians will feel a deep shame for what they have or haven't done; I'm not talking about how they lived before they were saved, but after they got saved. We have to live for God while we have the chance. What is your church plan and strategy for this year?

**WILL YOU HELP INCREASE THE SPIRITUAL GROWTH OF YOUR LOCAL CHURCH?**

# CONCLUSION

I was preaching at a certain Christian meeting and two-thirds of the way through my sermon a person came up to me and my translator, saying, "Can you please preach a different message? Your message is too hard. Can you preach a softer message?" I immediately stopped preaching, left the place and shook the dust off my feet. It was a bizarre situation. Yet something even more bizarre happened to the Lord Jesus Christ while He was preaching to His own followers. As He was explaining to them the true way of salvation they began to grumble among themselves. It came to the point where many of His disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" (John 6:60) Those who are backslidden often say that it's too hard to be a Christian. No, it's not too hard. It's just that the person doesn't want to deal with their sin and actually become a true servant of the Living God.

You might think I have been overly critical at times in what I have said in this book, but on the Day of Judgment I will not have to answer to the deacons, but to the one who will cast a large portion of humanity into the fiery lake of burning sulphur. The situation in this world and in the church is extremely urgent. I could not bear to be in Hell for five minutes, let alone being separated from God's love for eternity. Soft, tickling the ears and patting the back type of messages are not going to cleanse the church of all its iniquities. A lot of preaching is nice and entertaining, but it doesn't challenge the people to change or to do anything. It's time to listen to those whose preaching will convict you and cause you to take action. You should at least start immediately becoming more serious in prayer and seriously ask yourself this question: "Am I a true servant of the Lord?"

Jesus calls His people to come out of Babylon (Revelation 18:4). Come out of prosperity-minded, lust for money, mansion building cult-like gatherings following a man. Come out of the sin-ridden, compromising, liberal, socializing synagogues of Satan. Come out of the sleeping, dead churches that have lots

of singing but no praying. Virtually every church in the world can sing, but if they can't pray they are spiritually dead. Come out of any church where there is no presence of God, no hunger for holiness and no conviction of sin. Come out of any church immediately if it denies the Holy Trinity and beware of any preacher who denies the warnings of Hell-fire. If you underestimate God's wrath it is because you have ignored half the Bible. Don't do it! Believe in God's love and believe in God's wrath!

### **PRAY AND GO!**

Throughout this message we have examined how God dealt with the Corinthian church, so that we can get a better understanding of how God wants to outwork His incredible purposes among every group of believers. We have attempted to apply this to our own lives and churches. God is continuing the same work today and will do so until He has a pure and holy Bride for His Son. If you are a pastor, teacher or evangelist, I know some things in this book are tough, but I hope that you are still encouraged to persevere in building upon the right foundation and developing a work that will remain. I hope that your personal prayer life will increase in quality, as well as your vision for the prayer life of the church. I hope that the anointing of the Holy Spirit will empower you for greater works in missions and evangelism, and that through the spiritual gifts God will confirm the preaching of His word.

There is a great difference between the church that might save the world and the church that does save the world. Are you willing to make greater sacrifices for the cause of Christ? Once again Jesus is calling His church to go into all the world and preach the true message of salvation to every living person (Mark 16:15). The nations must be taught to obey everything that our Lord Jesus has commanded (Matthew 28:19-20). The hand of God is truly upon us to complete our task in God's overall plan. My aim is to see strong, prayerful churches that are evangelistic and on the forefront of spreading the gospel. This has to be built and developed within a church by

allowing the King of Heaven to teach us and train us to be fishers of men. It doesn't happen without the hard work, perseverance and faithfulness of God's ministers. God bless you in your service for the Lord. Go with the Holy Spirit fire!

**The apostle Paul moved far with the early church, but in Christ we have an opportunity to go even further. Please remember that Jesus is always working in and through our lives to build the church that will win the world.**

**ARE YOU WHOLEHEARTEDLY COMMITTED TO  
THE LORD YOUR GOD?**



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matthew Needham is an international evangelist called by God at the age of 16 to begin an evangelistic ministry. He stepped out by faith in 1991 to travel through his home country of New Zealand, witnessing on the streets and working through whichever churches gave him opportunity.

After six years of doing street evangelism he went on his first overseas missions trip to Fiji in 1997, but returned home feeling unprepared. A call to the mission field came a second time in 1999, which led him into evangelism among Muslims in Africa. The third time the Lord called him to leave everything and go at once was in 2003 to preach the gospel to the Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists of India and Nepal. In 2009 Matthew went on his first and second mission to Pakistan.

His testimony booklets have been translated into many languages and over 220,000 copies were given out in street witnessing to share the gospel with those who have never heard the good news of salvation. Thousands of copies of his books have also been distributed to reach unbelievers and to strengthen the church in the work that Christ has given us to do.

Matthew's passion is to reveal the glory of the Lord Jesus to those who are living in spiritual darkness and to press ahead to reach the fullness of Christ for the ministry of the evangelist. This is an evangelistic, literature, crusade ministry, doing large and small outreach meetings, leader's seminars, Bible college teaching and constant street evangelism and witnessing. His love for the Lord and for the salvation of lost souls is bringing many into the kingdom of God.

## **BOOKS BY MATTHEW G. NEEDHAM**

Make Sure Of Your Salvation (2007)

The Awesome Magnificence Of Jesus Christ (2009)

Walking In God's Power (2010)

The Church That Might Save The World (2010)

How The Devil Destroyed The Youth Group (2010)

Muslims Touched By The Love Of Jesus (2010)