

The Culture of Glory

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With many thanks to Jeannie, my wife, who has typed, proofread and made suggestions to make it more readable.

Also many thanks to Pat Holloway for typing the daily readings.

THE GLORY OF THE NEW CREATION

God shares His blessings and character with fallen man, once we repent and receive the new creation. The Christian life is discovering the scope of the new creation. The Lord Jesus has placed everything we need to live the life in our spirits. We are called by the gospel to obtain glory, says 2 Thessalonians 2: 14. All that God HAS and all that God IS are communicated to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit, God's great "how He does a thing" alone knows the Son perfectly and lead's us into ALL truth. In the light of astonishing new creation realities, how is it that the church of the living God is impotent and immobile?

Ignorance ranks high, and God's people are destroyed by it. There was a man who paid for a transatlantic ship journey and stashed plenty of biscuits and cheese for the journey. His ticket actually included the fabulous meals on board, but he only realised his ignorance when the statue of liberty was in sight! On our heavenly path, many of us make the same mistake. We don't receive all that redemption has purchased for us – perhaps only 1 or 2 per cent? This could be the believer's greatest sin – living at such a low level of faith we are hardly distinguishable from those next door pagans who left God sometime in childhood.

Let me list an A – Z of who we are in Christ.

A	Accepted Adopted Anointed	Ephesians 1: 6 Galatians 4: 1 – 6 1 John 2: 20, 27
B	Blessed Beautified Beholding	Ephesians 1: 3 Psalm 149: 4 John 1: 14, 6: 2
C	Called Chosen Confident	2 Timothy 1: 9 Ephesians 1: 4 Hebrews 10: 35
D	Delivered Dead (to the world) Dead (to sin) Dead (to the law)	2 Corinthians 1: 8 – 10 Galatians 6: 14 Romans 6: 6 Romans 7: 4

E	Elect	1 Peter 1: 2 Romans 8: 33
	Edified	1 Corinthians 14: 3
	Encouraged	Romans 15: 4 1 Samuel 30: 6
F	Forgiven	Ephesians 1: 7
	Free	John 8: 32, 36
G	Glorious	Hebrews 2: 10 2 Thessalonians 2: 14
	Good	Galatians 5: 22
	Gentle	Galatians 5: 23 Psalm 18: 35
H	Healed	Isaiah 53: 4 – 6 1 Peter 2: 24
	Holy	Colossians 1: 22
	Heirs	Titus 3: 7
	Harmonized	Acts 4: 32 1 Corinthians 1: 10
I	Irreproachable in His sight	Colossians 1:22
	Invincible	Ephesians 6: 10 – 18
	Involved	1 Corinthians 6: 17
J	Jewel in the crown	Malachi 3: 17
	Joyful	Nehemiah 8: 10 John 15: 11
K	Known (by Father)	Psalm 139
L	Loved	John 3: 16 John 17: 23 1 John 3: 1, 2 Jeremiah 31: 3
M	More than a conqueror	Romans 8: 37
	Meditate	Philippians 4: 8, 9
	Mind of Christ	1 Corinthians 2: 16
N	New Creation	2 Corinthians 5: 17

		Galatians 6: 15
O	Overcomers	1 John 4: 4
P	Predestined Precious Priests	Ephesians 1: 5 1 Peter 3: 4 1 Peter 2: 5
R	Redeemed Restored Reconciled	Ephesians 1: 7 Joel 2: 25 Colossians 1: 21
S	Sealed Strong Sent ones	Ephesians 1: 14 2 Timothy 2: 19 2 Timothy 2: 1 John 20: 21
T	Thankful Tested Triumphant	Ephesians 5: 20 1 Peter 1: 7 2 Corinthians 2: 14
V	Valued	Isaiah 43: 4
W	Workmanship	Ephesians 2: 10
X	Example	John 13: 17
Y	Yoked	Matthew 11: 28 – 30
Z	Zealous	Titus 2: 14

Get to know the divine optimism of who you are in Christ Jesus. Speak the Scriptures aloud, because when you do three things happen:

- a) God hears your confession
- b) it creates faith in your spirit, which
- c) ensures protection against the enemy.

God hears. Your spirit hears. The evil spirits hear the good confession, which fights the fight of faith. Light comes in your house by positive and negative wires. The positives of daily confession must be balanced by resisting and renouncing the enemy (the negative). Positive and negative words will produce the glory of the new creation coming through you!

Some believers rely on faith, others on spiritual warfare. Both are vital in balance for the manifestation of the atmosphere of heaven. Let us hold fast the CONFESSIOIN of our hope, without wavering, for HE who promised is faithful. Confession means saying the same thing as God says, feeling and thinking the same as God feels and thinks. We need to read, speak out and meditate on these verses that give us:

A DESTINY
AN IDENTITY AND
SECURITY

Psychological good health basks in these three vital issues. Positive faith confessions are a help along the road provided we also possess self-discernment and see where we need healing and deliverance ministry. A simple sum helps young believers.

FAITH MESSAGE + HEALING AND DELIVERANCE
+ OBEDIENCE = WHOLENESS

The faith message alone will graft new creation realities onto the old man in many instances. Deliverance alone will lead to co-dependence and self introspection. Without obedience we are likely to be, as a friend put it, "fruit cake Christians", more associated with unreality than truths coming through the lifestyle. There are 101 hindrances to the glory of the new creation shining through. All kinds of clamps can stop our spirit (where the Holy Spirit dwells) from functioning.

WE FUNCTION UNDER THE UNCTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We know there is a fierce battle, for Satan hates the manifestation and demonstration of the new creation realities. We can make a claim on the precious blood for our sins to be cleansed. We can reckon ourselves dead to sin. But what about the sinister aspects of spiritual warfare, when you feel you've been targeted by invisible demonic forces? These forces hate the manifestation of the new creation.

THE SPIRIT OF JEZEBEL

This religious, pervasive spirit seduces, flatters, divides leadership to the point leaders cannot function; their identity becomes blurred, their security unhinged and their destiny fails in terms of God's

purpose. Jezebel launches a massive attack on our spiritual well-being. She began the attack

- in our hereditary line
- in our relationship with mother as a baby and a child

She completes her attack

- through the wrong girlfriend
- through false charisma in the church (particularly personal prophecies)
- through defiled leaders who have never confronted her cleverly controlled kingdom, and who debunk deliverance ministry
- through wrong affiliations in church groups and denominations
- through culture and T.V.
- Are you getting the picture? It is a pervasive spirit – the very fact it is universal is part of her deadly camouflage. The enemy wants to devour glory and Jezebel, in particular, will abort a “God idea”, supplanting it with a good idea. A checklist for discernment purposes will help, see table.

HOLY SPIRIT	JEZEBEL
1. God initiatives with the glory of God.	1. Man initiates a good work for man's esteem.
2. Leads to a balanced view of the Word of God.	2. Pushes toward extra-biblical revelation... so person becomes deceived.
3. Sanity and sanctity in a renewed mind. Calm considerations.	3. Fascination toward strange doctrines, and weird ideas. Emotions lead.
4. Abiding in the word: 2 Timothy 3: 10 – 17.	4. Divination: Acts 16: 16 – 18.
5. Meekness of wisdom: James 3: 13 – 18.	5. Confusion is the end product, mixed with fear.
6. Glorifies Christ alone: John 16: 14.	6. Glorifies the person ministering.
7. Low visibility like Jesus.	7. High profile or lusting after people.
8. Confronts sin, laziness, carnality with the authority of Elijah.	8. Keeps men weak, vacillating; knowing what is right but unable to do it (Ahab).
9. A self examined life with repentance.	9. Flatters to seduce, crossless messages.
10. Exposes sin and Satanic workings.	10. Tolerates sin, accuses the spiritual ones.

Remember, essentially Jezebel is a religious counterfeiter. We must deal with Jezebel for the new creation to shine through. This religious counterfeiter of the true Holy Spirit working:

- produces shame through the spirit of harlotry, making the victims humiliated.
- ruins businesses and jobs by speaking against God's anointed ones in the marketplace.
- twists words in misrepresentation and misinformation and projects a camouflage of self-righteousness.
- breaks male identity in God and brings fatherlessness so men seek sodomy or incest.
- projects false logos morality – pretending to be a virgin, she is really mystery Babylon.
- self absorbed (Isaiah 47: 8) but believes by sorcery can keep her 'spiritual' children co-dependent.
- loves counselling to gain a following, which she gradually poisons and seduces away from legitimate authority.
- brings false guilt and condemnation to those who question her 'discernment'. This produces a maternal control that leads to depression and limitations.

Now you can see why we must renounce and repent of all Jezebelic involvement in our lives, and why we must also build ourselves up in the glorious realities of the new creation. The Jezebelic spirit hates the release of the new creation in worship. True worship must be from our spirits, how rarely we arrive there! Where Jezebelic wives are broken, we as the body of Christ can begin to worship in spirit and in truth.

The following Scriptures warn of Jezebel:

- Genesis 39: 12, Potiphar's wife.
- 1 Kings 19, Jezebel and Elijah.
- 1 Kings 21, Jezebel and Naboth.
- 2 Kings 9: 30f, Jezebel and Jehu.
- 2 Kings 11, Athaliah (Jezebel's daughter).
- Isaiah 47, the Lady of the kingdoms.
- Nahum 3: 4, the scope of Jezebel's influence.
- Isaiah 3: 16 – 26, God's judgement.
- Jeremiah 3: 1 – 5, Israel as jezebel.
- Proverbs 6: 20 – 35, the peril of adultery.
- Proverbs 7: 6 – 27, the harlot.

- Judges 16, Samson and Delilah.
- Mark 6: 21 – 29, Salome.
- Revelation 2: 20 – 22, church at Thyatira.
- Revelation 18, the fall of Babylon.

As we read these passages, meditate and inquire of the Lord, we will “wise up” and be prepared. Through renunciation, repentance and deliverance ministry the glory of the new creation will shine through. Hallelujah!

We will also be in the secret place of His presence to receive a greater infilling of the Holy Spirit. He, the Spirit of truth, always wants to make real to us what our triumphant Redeemer HAS purchased for us.

IDENTIFICATIONS

The glory of the new creation is our identification with Christ. Just as He is one with the Father, so are we one with Him. In the New Testament, Samuel Chadwick points out seven identifications. We are ONE SPIRIT with the risen Lord and that means exactly the same as. What a privilege and responsibility!

1. Relationship

Through the new birth and baptism in the Holy Spirit we possess a relationship of sonship with our Lord Jesus. We have the legal right and borrowed power to become sons of God, says John 1: 12. Our sonship is authenticated by the leading of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8: 14). There are two sides to redemption: legal standing in Him and vital state of our hearts. For example, we are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. It can never be altered or damaged. However, we work out His righteousness by our righteous motives, righteous thoughts and deeds. Only His righteousness worked out in our lifestyle causes us to function as believers. Righteousness gives to us the relationship and adoption of sons. Galatians 4: 5 – 7 is a picture Paul borrowed from the heathen world. When a son was 16 he had a coming of age ceremony – only then could he receive the inheritance. The inheritance was his legally at birth, but vitally only after an apprenticeship when he learned from the head slave, the spirit, values and attitudes of the family he had been born into. Therefore, you are no longer a slave, but a son. A vast family

awaits the believer who is rightly related to the Lord Jesus.

2. Nature

Jesus partook of flesh and blood that we may become partakers of the divine nature... see Hebrews 2: 14 and 2 Peter 1: 4. Nature is stronger than the conditions of our environment. I once befriended some Easterhouse teenagers who had adoptive parents on the remote but beautiful Harris. The locals soon realised they were and still were tearaways from Glasgow!

Adoption must be linked to regeneration. The glory source of the new creation is His divine life. We are not born again by human persuasion, but by divine reckless love intervening in our sorry state. The Lord's image defaced in Adam is renewed in Christ (Colossians 3: 10, 11 and 2 Corinthians 3: 18).

We are conformed to His image (Romans 8: 29) which means we activate our wills to put off and to put on! (Ephesians 4: 22 – 24). We identify daily with that daily procedure, of putting off the works of the flesh and the works of darkness, and putting on the virtues of Jesus. The activation of the will is essential in our path toward maturity. We must co-operate with His initiative in regeneration. It is not a new coat for the man but a brand new man underneath the coat.

3. Possessions

We are heirs of God who share His possessions. Imagine a rich aristocrat marrying a poor girl. She enjoys his rank, status, home and wealth – it is freely shared with her, because he invests her with all he has. See 2

Corinthians 8: 9; and 9: 8, the resources of heaven are for us. He took our poverty that we could RECEIVE HIS WEALTH. We can have ALL sufficiency in ALL things that we may have an abundance for EVERY good work. How? By ALL GRACE!

Hallelujah, if we are WILLING and OBEDIENT we shall eat the good of the land (Isaiah 1: 18). Some are willing for a prosperous life but not obedient and other sons and daughters obey, but are not willing to grasp the provisions and possessions. The double premise of willingness and obedience ushers in the delight of the promise. Inheritance begins in the here and now (this life), and continues in the hereafter (eternity). The milk and honey of the promised land begins with looking after bees and cattle, in the actualities of this life. Faith must have corresponding actions so that we can enjoy our inheritance.

4. Character

If we are one with Him we must be like Him. Christ-likeness is the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8: 9). Christ gave His life FOR US in order for the Holy Spirit to impart TO US His sinless life... overcoming life... demon-defeating life... death-defying life... submissive, sacrificial, separated life... of love, joy, peace. As HE IS so ARE WE... in this world: righteous, pure and in the light. The holy hereditary is the mark of the new creation. There is an atmosphere of heavenly glory about the faces of certain saints. I knew several such men at the Bible College of Wales – they carried the atmosphere of a celestial realm with them, because of godly character.

5. Experience

The dealings of Christ with His disciples are the same process for us today. Experience of Jesus Christ has not been watered down by the Father – even though many modern movements have tampered with terminology, and the modern saint is a pale reflection of what he could be. The great need today is to identify with the genuine manifestations of the Holy Spirit as in John 20 and Acts 2. The glory of the new creation depends also on “go on being filled with the Holy Spirit”. We will also share the experience of persecution (especially if we know His power). John 15: 18 says,

“...if the world hates you, know that it hated Me before it hated you.”

Matthew 10: 40 is the encouragement,

“He who receives you, receives Me, and he who receives Me, receives Him who sent Me.”

It is enough that the servant be as His Lord in times of opposition, and in blessing. In whatever situation, His peace is our peace (John 14: 27).

6. Mission

We identify with the Great Commission of Matthew 28: 18 – 20. As co-labourers with Him we are called into fellowship with the Son of God. As the Father sent Jesus so our Lord sends us today. It was my joy in the late 1980's to work with a young missionary society. Young men and women were receiving the seed that is successful against any satanic situation, in order to go into all the world. The incorruptible seed of scripture cannot be destroyed. There is an intensification of teaching the word, the taking up of a daily cross and the power of the Spirit in missionary preparations. Many

students had to bridge the gap between casual church experience and the GO of a missionary heart. Here is an acrostic you will do well to study and develop for yourself.

Making new solutions – Acts 13: 1 – 3

Inspiring new prayers – Acts 4: 24f

Sowing new seeds – Acts 19: 1 - 8

Serving new peoples – Acts 16, 17

Inventing new ideas – Acts 10

Opening new highways – Acts 27

Nourishing new souls – Acts 8

May God's M.I.S.S.I.O.N. be emblazoned on our hearts with holy fire,

branding us with vision and passion. The heartbeat of Father should be the heart throb of the church. When it fails to be, we slowly imperceptibly, perish for lack of purpose.

7. Reward

We are one with Him in reward. Revelation 3: 21 is the great goal of all Christian living,

“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I ALSO overcame and sat down...”

We enter heaven for free!

We enjoy heaven with our rewards!

There in heaven the glory of the new creation will be everywhere for the sons and daughters who overcome. The rewards for the overcomer are in short: the throne life. Here is where man stands higher than the angels! To quote Samuel Chadwick, the great Methodist pioneer:

“The Son of God in all things the Son of Man, that the sons of men may be as the Son of God.”

What an amazing identification! What a glory of the new creation!

THE GLORY IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Suddenly when the Holy Spirit came;
when heaven went on a holiday;
when the fall of God rectified the fall of man;
when the effusion from God enabled:

120 in the upper room were totally immersed into the glory of God. Saturated saints swam into a spiritual summer! They took heaven's treasure in bodies, which Paul likened to jars of clay, into the world – by God's method of evangelism.

The three co-ordinates were involved in the process of the progress of the early church. Acts 2 was much more than speaking in tongues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The deeper purpose of Pentecost was to write the word of God on the softest thing: the regenerate human heart. How is this true? We have to go back to Jewish history and Mount Sinai, when God wrote commandments on hard stone. The significance was that this awesome time of fire, glory, and lightning was 50 days after the lamb was slain and eaten. Pentecost is 50 days after Golgotha. The new covenant in 2 Corinthians 3 implies the parallel and Paul asks in verse 8, "... how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?"

The ministry of the Spirit gives divine life to the word of God - by quickening and implanting the sacred seed to the souls of men. Have you noticed how extensive the preaching and teaching of God's word was in Acts? Not an intellectual head knowledge, but the using of the Word as a SPIRITUAL SWORD:

- that severs the soul from spirit,
- that encourages death to sin,
- that separates us from the world,
- that proclaims victory over Satan.

Glory in the church rests on these four foundations. The Spirit and the Word in faithful balance will lead us to the Cross. The Acts 2 baptism of the Holy Spirit experience, whether to Jew or Gentile, "purified their hearts by faith". The pure heart of Acts 15: 9 was only possible as the deeper work of the Cross was unveiled. They sank down into His death and made it their own. Check 2 Corinthians 4: 10 – 12.

THE FOUR PHASES OF THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (in Acts).

Acts, chapters 1 to 28, span 35 years: the early church generation. They ate, drank and swam in the glory of God. They dreamed the visions and acted on them, all for His name's sake. Have we seen the four phases of the work of the Holy Spirit? How the Spirit of God highlighted certain ways God was working in a distinct emphasis.

In Chapter one the disciples are bound spiritually, but geographically free. In Acts 1: 6 they ask a natural question, forgetting the urgent reality at hand: the mighty baptism in the Holy Spirit in fire. Natural thinking easily diverts us away from the vital essential. Thomas in John 11: 15, 16 and Peter in Matthew 16: 21 – 23, are good examples of carnal thinking cancelling out the spiritual realities of the resurrection and the cross. In chapter 28, Paul is spiritually free but under house arrest. The phases of the Holy Spirit link the beginning and end of this early church history. A table will help us:

	Phase	Chapters	Keys
Phase 1	COMMUNITY	1 – 5	UNITY, POWER
Phase 2	INDIVIDUAL	6 – 12	GIFT, GUIDANCE
Phase 3	TEAMWORK	13 – 20	CHURCH- PLANTING
Phase 4	ALONE	21 – 28	FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE GOSPEL

PHASE 1: COMMUNITY

After the 10 day prayer meeting (Acts 1: 14) the power of the Holy Spirit descended, clothing 120 in the upper room. On resurrection day Jesus HAD breathed into them... a breath. Now a mighty rushing wind flowed UPON them with a tongue of fire upon each head. Ten thousand breaths came suddenly, and accomplished the baptism of fire Jesus predicted in Luke 12: 49 and 50,

“I came to send FIRE on the earth and how I wish it were already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed (or hindered) I am, till it is accomplished.”

True revival is a wind and a fire – not merely a little blow breath and goose-bumps! Three things had to happen to make the 120 a community of radical believers.

(a) Initiation into the power of God. Dynamite power for blowing up the works of the devil, as one evangelist puts it! Power to get through your 40's, 50's, 60's, and 70's -

without doubts and worry,

without bitterness,

without fears and regrets!

Power to feel at home in His presence, and linger there without tormenting accusations.

Power to know the Father and the Son better than your own family.

Power to wait and listen to His instructions, so you are not driven mad by trying this and that in the ministry.

Power to know His voice, without a trace of doubt or hesitation in responding to His call.

Power to live as He is in the world; as He is pure and as He is righteous.

(b) Impregnation of divine life within your spirit so CHRIST IS IN YOU, the hope of glory. This happens in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The early church lived in a culture of strange baptisms and initiation ceremonies. In ancient rituals, people lay under a cow which was disembowelled and the entrails covered them!

Christians know an inward operation of faith, where Christ comes to indwell and rule as Lord. As we receive with meekness the implanted word (or seed), Christ is increasing in us spiritually, as Jesus grew in Mary's womb physically. The indweller Christ has become a forgotten reality. Read Nee, Guyon, Chambers, Norman Grubb, A. W. Tozer, and a host of missionaries who lived from the blessed reality.

(c) Inauguration of church life by a public setting forth of a separated people through Pentecost, the birthday of the true church. The called-out ones would turn the world upside down. The promise of the Father alone accomplishes and births true church life. So many denominations were born minus this unique characteristic, and so become dry and eventually a playground for the demonic. The demons seek dry places. Many charismatic house fellowships by replacing the Acts 2 baptism with the John 20 experience, have a little life, but do not see the supernatural

realities of normal church life, in terms of the Acts. One reason is that men still love to dominate over the flock. Sadly many, who think they are free from manipulation, are still holding to the doctrine of the Nicolaitians, who loved to rule over the laity.

Four Essentials

A community caught up in revival has the STAYING POWER of Acts 2: 42. Four ingredients:

1. APOSTOLIC DOCTRINE
2. FELLOWSHIP
3. BREAKING OF BREAD
4. PRAYERS

1. Apostolic doctrine begins with God as Creator. In Africa you don't have to start here – they all know it. In Western Europe it's a different story, due to evolutionism and Darwin. Romans 1: 20 is the foundational twin truth: His eternal power and Godhead. The universe is the product of Word spoken and glory sealed, as the angels rejoiced at the shock and awe of creation (see Job 38: 6). In Genesis 3 we read the second great truth of the fall of man. Total depravity means that Adam, federal head of the human race, took the entire species with him, into the disposition of sin. Every department of our being has been contaminated, there is no divine spark, the image has been eradicated. Adam fathered his own children into sin, "... in his own likeness, in his own image." (Genesis 5: 3). The glory had departed, and can only return in our spirits, when we repent and receive eternal life, and are in-filled with the Holy Spirit. The third doctrine is Jesus as redeemer. Then follows the necessity of repentance, the work of the Holy Spirit, and Church life.

A good thing to do: look at the apostolic sermons in Acts and categorize the main features. Apostolic doctrine will become clear to you. Is preaching today truly apostolic?

2. Fellowship is a vastly undervalued word. The early church because of their amazing experience of the Holy Spirit, were enabled to share His crucified, risen, and ascended life with one another. Fellowship with God being translated to fellowship with one another; which is the heartbeat of church life. Without it, we follow religion, dead tradition and humanism. Fellowship is out-worked by Acts 9: 31, "... walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the

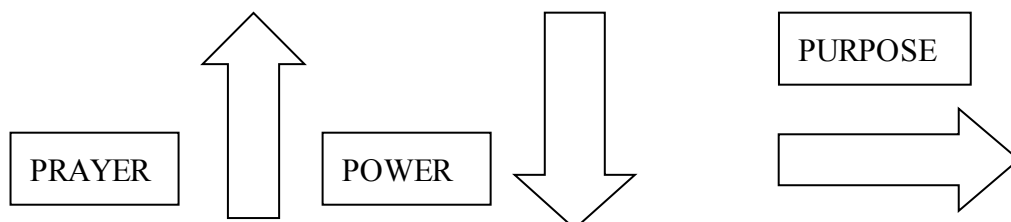
comfort of the Holy Spirit.” The apostle of love who placed his head on the breast of Jesus in the context of the exposure of betrayal, knew that fellowship with the Father and the Son was the only source of our fellowship as believers, see 1 John 1: 3. Oh for a small group of believers to know what God is doing and saying and to walk in that!

The text of a deeply fellowshiping church comes in 1 Corinthians 14: 26 – 30. Note the last verse – someone who is sharing must shut up if another has a revelation! Our meetings usually don’t get there because they are usually controlled by a leader. Conversely, body ministry can often be ruined by an over-functioning brother or sister. Sadly, many meetings inhibit a strong flow of revelation from the body of Christ, where keen believers share fresh oil, latest testimony, and new adventures. We cannot turn on this reality like the flick of a switch. We need prayerful preparation, a spirit of gentleness and submission to one another, and a listening ear. I remember how Rowland Evans, of Horizons, would listen for hours to fellow and younger workers, before he would venture his God-guided opinion. A leader who truly listens is a rarity today.

3. Breaking of bread: community maintains its unity through the Holy Communion. Our remembrance of His passion becomes anointed and richly meaningful as we lay down our lives for one another. The broken body of Jesus and His poured out blood becomes the focus of worship, the heart of righteousness, and the center of wisdom, as we love the brethren. Too often breaking of bread is tacked onto our services, and rushed, without reverence. We are judged in taking communion unworthily: some die prematurely and are sick because sin in the life of a believer, or between brothers and sisters has not been dealt with. Sin is either judged by us: by coming to the Cross in repentance; or by the Lord when we stand before Him. The two major reasons why believers backslide is unresolved sin and unresolved relationships. The breaking of bread is the place of restoration of unity, so vital in Church life.

4. Prayers: in Acts 4: 24f we can get a snapshot of the power of collectively pouring words out of a burdened heart. They proclaimed who God was and knew the protocol of approaching the Holy One of Israel. They used O. T. scripture in a biblical argument in order to receive new boldness (verses 25 – 29). Prayers came to a crescendo and then the Holy Spirit fell in power,

shaking the room. From verses 31 – 33 they went forth in power. Three actions occur: prayer of the saints, power of the Spirit, purpose of the Son of God continuing.



PHASE 2: INDIVIDUAL

In chapter six the Holy Spirit changes His emphasis from community to an individual spotlight. We see cameos of Stephen, Peter, Philip, Ananias, Cornelius, Dorcas, Rhoda, and the conversion of Saul, and Barnabas eventually bringing him to the church at Antioch. The massive persecution of the church at Jerusalem in AD 37 brought about a lay-led movement of men and women going out from the city they cherished. From Jew to Gentile, from Jerusalem to Antioch, we see the gospel beginning to go to the uttermost parts of the earth.

In Acts 6 we glimpse church government and see how individuals can find their place in the body of Christ.

(a) The secret of efficiency is diversity (Acts 6: 3, 4).

Some are deacons. Some are apostles and prophets, who must not be entangled with tasks that others can do. Every part doing their share, "... causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." (Ephesians 4: 16). We need to know if we are hand or foot, an ear or eye, see 1 Corinthians 12: 14 – 20. The ear of the teacher, the eye of the prophet, the hand of the pastor, and the foot of the evangelist are four precious brethren. Rejoice in the gifting God has placed in you. Too many try to do too much! Too many don't really know what to do! Glory comes to the church when we all know our calling and anointing. The prophetic eye may need the artistic hand. The head of good theology needs the feet of action: ideas need legs (see 1 Corinthians 12: 21).

(b) The secret of spirituality is priority (Acts 6: 4)

Not everyone is an Ephesians 4 five fold ministry. We may teach or

evangelize on one level, but not in the apostolic team, constantly travelling, birthing churches. We need to rejoice in mega-ministries without envy or covetousness. We all run in a race designed by Father, each on his or her own track. We are not running against each other, but seizing aggressively the prize of an imperishable crown. We are, whatever our calling, like professional athletes striving for the mastery, refusing aimless drifting, and disciplining our body. We are not shadow boxers but hitting the target, whether administrator, healer, helps, deacon or apostle, showing mercy or one used in discernment. Glory comes to the church when there is a respect for priority in ministry. The trouble has been we are slow to recognize what has been given to each other. Also, we need to learn how to respect those above us, who operate in the intensification of the apostolic team.

(c) The secret of equality is the Holy Spirit (Acts 6: 6 – 8)

Peter won 3000 souls. Stephen received 3000 stones! Both men had yielded unreservedly to the Holy Spirit. Whether you have a ministry of helps or an apostle, the essential is the indwelling Spirit. Whatever our function in the body of Christ, do we exhibit the disposition of Jesus Christ? In terms of kingdom realities there is little distinction between Dorcas and Cornelius, or Philip and Rhoda, or Ananias and Saul. They all obeyed God and lived out of their regenerate spirits.

In this section we see Stephen going through three stages of the Cross as Devern Fromke reveals in “Ultimate Intention”.

- a) The Principle of the Cross. Stephen knew the price of power and faith when he preached in Acts 7. He knew the consequences! (6: 8)
- b) The Place of the Cross. Stephen had to face the council (6: 12 – 15). The elevation of the Holy Spirit through his spirit caused his face to shine as an angel. Glory!
- c) The Power of the Cross. The power of the martyrdom was the great sequel causing Paul to find it hard to kick against the pricks of conscience.

1 Corinthians 1: 18 says in expansion:

“This divine cross – principle, when expressed in mere words, is utter foolishness to the man of this world who embraces a selfish way of life; but where these two ways of living come into conflict, an exposure is produced.

This is the place where God released His divine energy in explosive power to utterly rectify man.”

Devern Fromke: free translation.

That’s what happened between Stephen and Paul – that is the missing ingredient in today’s church.

Also in this section we see Philip, God’s paratrooper entering Samaria with the supernatural gospel that is both seen and heard. Casting out demons produced the joy of the Lord, as Philip preached Christ, revival came. Then God asked him a difficult command: to go into the desert, leaving the popularity, and speak to ONE MAN! Philip obeyed and reaped a remarkable blessing – many revivals till he came to Caesarea (see Acts 8: 40).

A good thing to do: trace all the verses which apply to gift and to guidance in Acts 6 – 12. The overwhelming evidence of this section is that the empowered individual must GO into all the world. Easy armchair Christianity must be spurned, especially when we are young. God comes in the glory of revival power to the young at heart. The greatest pivotal guidance is probably Acts 10: 9 when Peter went to pray on the housetop, falling bodily into a trance. His time with Cornelius changed the church forever. Let’s pray:

“O heavenly Father who authors our contacts and connections, lead me by the Holy Spirit to find deep heart fellowship with those key people you permit me to meet. For the sake of Jesus name and Your kingdom. Amen.”

PHASE 3: TEAMWORK

Acts 13 is a great turning point where the glory of missions begins, birthed by the Holy Spirit. Here we find the itinerant church planter or apostle, the wide-eyed zealous anointed one, fully focussed on his Lord Jesus! There are 28 in the New Testament according to Derek Prince, but alas they are rare in the UK in the 21st century. 2 Corinthians 12: 12 speak of their main characteristics: “... with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds...”. The deeds primarily were church planting and church building.

The disciples had been designated apostles after they had been sent out in Matthew 10 - they preached and demonstrated the

kingdom by healing and deliverance. They were part of a team, with Jesus as first and head Apostle. The General will speak with the officers and a chain of command will be established. It is like this in the body of Christ, there is a hierarchy in the kingdom and the Holy Spirit established it in Acts 13: 2, “Now separate to ME, Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I called them.” (Emphasis mine).

Fasting and prayer by prophets and teachers sealed the commission. The key concept was “GO” and “BIRTH” church life in regions beyond.

However, the two apostles separated by the Holy Spirit, were separated by strong differences over John Mark (Acts 15: 36 – 41). Contention became sharp as Paul remained the disciplinarian, and Barnabas exhibited a forgiving attitude – but it was Paul who was commended by the brethren, taking another prophet, Silas, to Syria. Teams can change; it may be hurtful but often necessary. Paul became the master-builder of the church because he could see the Lord’s purpose with greatest clarity of mind and purity of heart. He did not count his life dear to himself (Acts 20: 24), counting the losses of his old life as excrement (Philippians 3: 8)! The diaries written by Gene Edwards are helpful to see this phase of teamwork. His book “Revolution” is an excellent overview on Acts.

A good thing to do: will we venture into mission? Will we take the time to pursue God in another culture? This education remains priceless to the submitted, obedient heart. World is a New Testament word. “God so loved the world He gave...”. “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature... making disciples of all the nations....” Missions abound today. Honour God in agreeing with His heartbeat. The commission of the church is mission. Experiencing this is more important than finding your life partner.

PHASE 4: ALONE

After unveiling mysteries to young believers in the adventure of God’s itinerary, the apostle Paul now has to stand for the defence and purity of the gospel of God at Rome. The Holy Spirit is not mentioned hardly in this last section (the exception being Agabus), but HE is still SOVEREIGNLY at work. Paul gives four testimonies:

before the Jerusalem mob,
before the council and,
before Felix,
before Agrippa.

This is the grip of God's grace in these dangerous situations. Acts 22: 3 states:

"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our father's law, and I was zealous towards God as you all are today."

The uproar in Acts 22: 22 was related to the word that commanded him to go to the Gentiles. We need to be supernaturally strengthened by the Spirit to preach boldly the truth and to give testimony (see Luke 21: 12 – 19). Also Luke 12: 12 brings the dimension of the Holy Spirit who will teach in that very hour what you ought to say. At the apostle Paul's conversion we see the truths of suffering, and the priority of going to the Gentiles. The Lord spoke to Ananias in Acts 9: 15 and 16,

"Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My Name's sake."

Note: Gentiles first. It took some years before Paul did it! The glory of God is upon us when we act on God's orders. Unusual miracles accompanied Paul when he preached to the heathen. But now he was alone, and Acts 26: 22 sums up this section: "Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day, I STAND...". In the hour of trial he stood, by the Holy Spirit strengthening. In Acts 23: 6 he was given a mouth of wisdom in detecting the differences in his audience and exploiting them! The supernatural help came because of his holy character. In Acts 23: 1 he opens his defence by declaring, "... he lived in all good conscience before God until this day."

A good thing to do: Check out Acts 27, the shipwreck in the winter season. Winter is a time when no one will listen to you (27: 10, 11), when deceitfulness happens (27: 13), when all hope is gone (27: 20), when confusion reigns (27: 41, "where two seas met"), and when you jettison things (27: 32, 38). Has there been a winter in your experience? Describe your time of difficulty and loss and the sense of being alone. How did God deliver you?

Many today have to withstand persecution unto death, but there is comfort in this phase. All of us will experience being alone. God called Abraham alone. This is not loneliness that breeds isolation and demonic oppression, but such a focusing on God that people are of secondary concern. Elijah had Cherith, Moses had Midian, Paul his Arabia, and David knew the wilderness for 8 years, being hunted by Saul. God wants us to go to Him alone, abandoned, surrendered, to the place where we are yielded to Him. He uses persecution to take away human co-dependency.

What has this to do with glory? We only know God by intensifying our desires to be with Him. Out of that being in His presence, comes the harvest glory that gives God glory. True “doing” issues out of deep “being”. The works that give God glory come out of worship in the sanctuary. Paul had two “alone” periods: the Arabian years of preparation, and the Roman years of proclamation under house arrest. During the latter phase he preached the kingdom of God, and taught the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. When people forsake us, remember there is a place in Heaven – our home of glory we can experience NOW IN JESUS NAME.

The Four Phases.

Which ones have we known to some degree? Can we come before God and ask Him to deepen our lives: in community relationships, in seeking God for individual giftings and guidance, in joining teamwork in mission, and knowing God even in the seasons of being alone?

There has been a huge desire to see revival glory in the United Kingdom. Prophecies of imminent blessing have eventually disappointed and confused the Church. Is it because we have not had the same mighty baptism of Acts 2 as the early Church? Is it because we have not understood these four essential phases that comprise glory in the Church? Or is it that we have not fully met the conditions of the cross in our lives?

GLORY THROUGH THE CROSS

Glory begins in the excellent glory but comes to us through the Cross. That glory or metaphysical ooze of the risen presence of Jesus Christ began between Father and Son in past eternity. In John 17: 24 Jesus says,

“Father I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me WHERE I AM, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

(Emphasis mine)

In the High Priestly prayer Jesus desires to share His glory. Only our spirits can take it! We know Peter, James and John were overcome by it! We know the priests dedicating Solomon's temple fell down before it! Nevertheless God wants to communicate glory to those who fear His name and live in obedience.

In days of revival, when heaven seeps into earth's atmosphere, the manifestation of glory is common. In the day of personal revival the glory of God can be our rear-guard. One day as a young repentant believer I walked down the road and the rear-guard glory manifested behind me. There is no more secure feeling in all the world. You are held by the everlasting arms of God, with no trace of fear, with a boldness and strength. How we need the glory. Once in the same town I walked a mile or so with a close friend, David Cheetham, and we became aware of the presence of glory as we discussed the Lord's return. Again, the manifestation was behind us, and emanated complete security and freedom of expression, in an atmosphere of holy awe.

This lovely phrase “WHERE I AM” needs an explanation. Yes, it is Jesus in heaven when He is still on earth (John 3: 13). Jesus lives in two worlds: in heaven, and on earth. His discussion with Nicodemus was on earth, but He was also communicating with the Father in heaven. We have our feet on earth but our spirits are communicating with our Lord in heaven. Paul was a prisoner (Ephesians 3: 1) but communicated with God in the heavenlies (Ephesians 3: 10). Yes, it is also our position of privilege in heavenly places (Ephesians 2: 6), in the glory of our ascended Christ. Elsewhere in John's gospel we can build up the picture.

John 14: 3 famously says,

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that WHERE I AM there you may be also.”

(Emphasis mine)

We interpret this as a place in heaven, and the second coming of Christ. In the previous verse there is a strong clue this is not the full picture. “In my Father's house” must mean the synagogue then (compare John 2: 16), and church now (Ephesians 2: 19 – 22)! There are many dwelling places for God's glory in the members of the church, in Father's house. Christ dwells in us by His Spirit (1Corinthians 3:16). The preparation of the place where He dwells i.e. our lives, is through a real consecration, a Gethsemane where our will bows to the divine will. A real place in us on earth now. Through this consecration we join ourselves to the Lord becoming one spirit with Him (1Corinthians 6: 17). Jesus will come again replacing our sacrifice with unsearchable riches.

Jesus dwells in us by His Spirit, but also WHERE HE IS, there WE ARE, mystically seated in Christ in the heavenly places NOW. When we are born again we are placed into Christ WHERE HE IS in heavenly places. That is our position of privilege supernaturally. Check out 1 Corinthians 6: 17 where our spirit is joined to the risen Lord. To experience this blessedness the believer has to live as a living sacrifice, dead to sin (Romans 6: 6). Evan Roberts was taken up into heavenly places for hours every day in the Welsh revival. He made his position a real performance of knowing the Lord Jesus. The result was heaven came to earth in power and in glory.

Our service comes out of being a living sacrifice (Romans 12: 1), and being where God is at work for His glory, “... and WHERE I AM, there My servant will be also” says John 12: 26, Jesus commands us to follow Him if we are to serve Him. Our ability to follow Him is dependent upon us first denying ourselves and taking up our cross daily (Luke 9: 23). The key to fruitfulness in service is to remain in Him (John 15: 4). In Him is our legal standing, our position that cannot be altered. However, there is also the vital side to our redemption: the state of our hearts, and how we now live and move and have our being in Him.

True servants work together with Him: where He is, i.e. from

heaven's viewpoint; and on earth where His presence is manifest. To the religious bound Pharisees He said in John 7: 34,

“You will seek Me and not find Me, and WHERE I AM you cannot come.”

(Emphasis mine)

You have to be born again, and baptized into the Holy Spirit to experience glory.

Glory is manifestation of the divine nature, the revealing of His true character. When Moses asked God to show His glory, the goodness of God, the grace and compassion of God passed before him (Exodus 33: 19). The glory of God is released only where we allow the Cross to powerfully do it's work in our lives. This is illustrated by the transfiguration of Jesus (Luke 9: 27-36). As He prayed on the mountain with Peter, James and John His appearance was changed as the glory of God came, as the atmosphere of heaven came down to earth, two members of the cloud of witness's were seen talking with Jesus: Moses and Elijah. The topic: the Cross that was looming up ahead for Jesus. The disciples are overwhelmed by the glory of God, their focus is to want to pitch their tents and stay there! Perhaps we can identify with them, the Cross is not a pleasing prospect to our flesh but by His grace we are enabled! God adjusts their focus by telling them this is His beloved Son, and gives a command to “...Hear Him” (Luke 9: 35). We need to concentrate on the revelation word when we are in His glorious presence. Our natural thinking is useless when we have a realization of the enthroned life with Christ in heavenly places.

GLORY AND SACRIFICE

In 2 Chronicles 7: 1-3 we see the relationship between our sacrifice as a burnt offering and the glory of God. There in three verses we see a divine sequence for us to follow:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|--------|-----|
| 1) PRAYING | v 1 | |
| 2) OFFERING AND SACRIFICES | v 1 | v 1 |
| 3) FIRE | v 1 | |
| 4) GLORY | v 1, 2 | |
| 5) HUMILITY | v 3 | |
| 6) WORSHIP | v 3 | |

One problem today is we want to do 6 and 7 before 1 and 2, and become confused as a result of neglecting the divine order. The steps to the glory of the Lord are clearly PRAYING, the LIVING SACRIFICE and FIRE. Prayers from the heart come to an end so we enter the sanctuary stillness (see Psalm 72: 20). Solomon also had finished ... praying. Any prayers from the old man cannot even be heard from heaven. Fervent prayers, inwrought by the Holy Spirit, upon the mouths of righteous men will bring the quietude from eternity. From here the fire of the Spirit will consume the sacrifice.

Has there been consecration in His presence in your life?
Have you laid your entire life as a burnt offering on the altar of God?

Contemporary preaching fails to bring this essential message that leads to His glorious presence. Moses knew God as a consuming fire at the burning bush. Will we hand over the useless bush of our lives? We must come empty handed. For the temple of our bodies to be filled with His glory we have to GO OUT. We have no right to our lives. We must surrender. The priests could not enter the temple because the glory of the Lord fully inhabited the place reserved for God. When our flesh enters our lives by various forms of selfishness we prohibit the glory of God. We cease to demonstrate His disposition.

Romans 6 is essential for maintaining ourselves as a living sacrifice. The old man is dead, gone and finished at the Cross, verse 6 is past tense. However, when an old man dies in his house, his belongings are still there in the property! According to Romans 6: 13 the Spirit must put to death these belongings of the old man. Habits die hard. So the progress of the process of eliminating flesh works from our lives is found in Romans 8, the chapter we all want to experience! There is a reckoning on what Jesus HAS already done, and a dealing with deeds of the body through the Holy Spirit. The verbal confession of being dead to sin helps to release the power of our co-crucifixion with Him. Declare:

“Worry and fear I have died to you in Jesus' name. Jesus never owned you and now I refuse you because I am

dead in Christ Jesus to you. Abiding in His love and faith I live and move and have my new creation being in Him. Amen.”

Upon the foundation of Romans 6: 6 – 11 the Holy Spirit can now be more specific and deal with the belongings of the dead man, for example: gossip, selfish ambition, or pride in one's ministry or appearance. The Lord, if we allow Him, will lead us to sacrifice and consecration, and separation.

Once a man in New York did up his home to sell it to a property developer. The purchaser laughed and said, “you've wasted your time, for I only want to knock it down!” When we seek to improve our lives we hinder God's property developer: the Holy Spirit. He wants to knock down the Adam life in us, that unit of evil based on our human birth. The Spirit of truth will build beauty that gives God glory, from the ashes and futility of our self life!

WISDOM AND GLORY

In 1 Corinthians 2: 6 -16 we have a fundamental passage showing the priority of revelation over reason. Politicians and philosophers are coming to nothing because a new age of revelation opens up before the believer. The hidden wisdom is FOR OUR GLORY (2: 7). As we obey the revelation word from God, the glory of God will appear to us. In Leviticus 9: 6 this link between our obedience and the glory of God is to do with the specific thing God commands of us. An exciting story from the Argentinian revival confirms this.

Edward Miller had worked hard as a missionary for many years and seen nothing. After months of personal prayer for a breakthrough the Holy Spirit led him to call for a prayer meeting. Four attended with the command from the Lord that they must stay from 8pm till midnight. They continued for a few nights mostly in silence. No one heard God except the wife of a backslider who had an impression she should bang the table. However, she didn't do it maybe thinking it was too obscure to have been the Lord! After much frustration at the silence, the missionary led the others in a chorus as they walked round the table. They all banged the table except the woman. Nothing happened! But as soon as the woman who had the special revelation obeyed, the wind of the Spirit entered the room and the glory came! The hidden wisdom is what God is saying to you personally – a given strategy to know what to

do with what we know.

Once in Tema, Ghana, at a pastor's house, six of us prayed in tongues and the glory of God flowed through the ceiling so that you could not see the ceiling anymore. Then a skinny African sister of 19 sang a chorus on her knees and God was everywhere – you could not move. The river of tongues had gone on for two hours, some warfare, some singing in the Spirit, some mysteries in the Spirit. The Spirit of wisdom of revelation tears away the blindness from our eyes, so the eyes of our heart can be flooded with light. Only filled with the Spirit can we have the mind of Christ, and judge (or discern) the source of all things. We may not be wise according to the flesh but God calls the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.

- How foolish to bang a table!
- How foolish to pray in unknown tongues for two hours!
- How foolish for Hosea to marry a prostitute!

God looks for obedience from the heart. Only obedience to a specific command brings God on the scene where His glory is manifest.

Reason crucified the Lord of glory.
Revelation went to the Cross as a fulfillment of Father's love plan.

Reason is always stabbing revelation in the back. Cain killed Abel. The Jews delivered Jesus up, out of envy. Saul hunted David with murderous intent. The harlot bride hates the true church that is cleansed by His precious blood, and is sustained by the washing of the water of the Word. The wisdom of God is found in the word of the Cross.... the daily cross where our will and God's will cross. These things of God's interest only the Holy Spirit knows and He must let us into His secrets.

The Spirit of wisdom and revelation leads us to discover the hidden wisdom of God in the power of the Cross.

What does this practically mean?

The revelation is imbued with glory, the presence of Jesus, as the Cross in its power is proclaimed. Relief from mental torment once

came to me as a song was played on a grand piano: I felt the blood of Jesus do a work in my brain. The word of the Cross was present in the lyric and playing of the instrument. Glory always follows the power of the blood of Jesus Christ. Sermons minus the redemptive power of the Cross cannot bring the glory of God. An act of service done from the basis of "I die daily" will contain glory. When we act in the name of Jesus we will have denied an area of flesh (or self) life. Our secret weapon over the

- tyranny of self
- triviality of the world
- temptations of Satan

is the personal cross. Glory comes in lives yielded to death throughout our days on earth.

"We overcome him (the enemy) by the blood of the lamb by the word of our testimony and they DID NOT LOVE THEIR LIVES to the death (until our dying day)."

Revelation 12: 11

(Emphasis mine)

We do not have to overcome sin. We reckon ourselves dead to sin on the basis of Romans 6: 6. Sin will never be dead to us, but we can be dead to sin by sinking down into the death of Christ and finding His death is our own!

We must overcome, however, the world (1 John 5: 4) and the enemy. These battles continue throughout our lives, there is no let up. Faith in the word of the Cross, and faith testifying to what the word says that the blood does, will bring victory. The redeemed of the Lord should say SO! Proclaim His victory with me:

"Lord Jesus I am redeemed from the grip of the terrible. I am redeemed from the curse of the law, of poverty and sickness. I am brought and bought out of the market place of sin by Your precious blood. The life of God in Your blood, Lord Jesus, cries out to the Father on my behalf. I'm forgiven by the blood of Jesus from all sins. (Wait on the Holy Spirit and name the specific sins that are unconfessed.) The blood stands against every assignment of the enemy, every control and manipulation. The Lion of the tribe of Judah smashes all principality and powers that harass and torment and deceive me. (Now wait again on the Holy Spirit for light to see the wiles of

the devil.) Amen Lord.”

Why is this declaration important?

Faith forms a bridge of Spirit-filled words that take us from our circumstances to the Living Christ. Our confession gradually becomes our possession of the inheritance. Hallelujah!

JOB'S PATH TO GLORY

The glory came eventually.

For months Job had to endure a perplexing spiritual spin of circumstances. The unique nature of this book is in the context of Satan saying, "this perfect, wealthy individual leads a charmed existence". Or, "take away the blessings and he'll curse you to Your face!" The war of wicked works descended quickly, authored by the devil, yet allowed by God. A second war, of words, remorselessly continues inspired by evil spirits (read chapter 4: 12 – 21 and chapter 32: 18, 19). However, the smitten man held on to his integrity and persevered, discovering future happiness and the awesome glory of God.

We all move forward in a path to glory through various counsellors who fail to see the whole picture, propose false gospels, and think themselves more spiritual. To read the book as a dialogue between Job and "the worthless physicians" will cause us to fight better in the future. Of course, we must forgive and pray for any wrong counsel we have received. Another profound aspect is the weight of suffering endured by those who lead an interior life in the gospel: hidden ones who before the Lord, know the intimacies and infinite dimensions of the gospel.

FALSE COUNSELLING

Much of what Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and Elihu say is true but utterly out of context to Job's despairing situation. For example, the prophecy of Eliphaz (22: 21 – 30) has "Word of Faith" clarity and charismatic eloquence, but is unsuitable for the person it has been directed to. This becomes clear in Job 23: 10:

"But He knows the way that I take; when He
has tested me I shall come forth as gold."

We are on an individual path to glory that contains many crosses of perplexity, disappointments, vilifications and the destruction of all carnal ambition, with abandonments and God's special chauffeur: the journeying companion of sorrow. Why does God allow the negative side? Why does He permit counsel into our life that cannot bring the balm of Gilead? Let us look at the four counsellors who think they can probe Job's condition.

1. Eliphaz

When someone is in dire straits with an inexplicable mystery of suffering hanging over them, only the Word from the mouth of the Lord (the rhema) will work. When that works no man or no demon can reverse it. Eliphaz thinks he is a prophetic counsellor (Job 4: 12 – 21), but the evidence is that he has heard a religious demon (Job 4: 14, 15, 16). The voice was not from God because the experience is clearly from the demonic, and the theology fails to fit Job's dilemma. Job was being accused of being more righteous than God, which was certainly not his heart (4:17). Theology, even when it is in line with scripture, cannot relieve a sufferer unless the Holy Spirit elevates the truth to be a prophetic, living rhema of God. Job's reply in 5: 17 – 27 is nearer the context of the first two chapters. How important it becomes for a counsellor to be led of the Spirit and to know an accurate history of the sufferer; including knowledge of the hereditary past. When Job complains, "Oh, that my grief were fully weighed, and my calamity laid with it on the scales!" in Job 6: 2, he is saying the weight of this oppression is very unusual, and Eliphaz, "you've not touched it!"

Eliphaz has charged Job with hypocrisy (4: 5) and accused him of being in his awful state as a result of error and deception (4: 7 – 11). We can sympathize with Eliphaz at this point.

Punishments and trials can look identical to concerned outsiders.

Upright people who shun evil can be annihilated by the breath of pure love says Madame Guyon. Their reputation for holiness has to be destroyed, and this is happening to Job, unknown by Eliphaz!

2. Bildad

The extraordinary "war of words" continues to torment hapless Job through Bildad (19: 1, 2). Job has already asked, "Have I sinned?" (7: 20). Examining our own heart is always a first step, but sometimes a step that will not bring desired peace. Our problems can be further back than personal sin. Always remember who introduced sin to the human race! Bildad's onslaught begins with crudeness (8: 2) – always beware a counsellor whose words are loquacious or lewd and loose. Every counsellor must know the guard of the Holy Spirit over their tongue. Their qualification to counsel is surely Psalm 17: 3:

"You have tested my heart,

You have visited me in the night,
You have examined me and found nothing evil:
I have purposed my mouth shall not transgress.”

Bildad has already missed it by accusing Job and his sons of sin (8: 3 – 7). Our days on earth are a shadow when seen from the substance of heaven’s viewpoint (8: 9), but we can rise above ignorance. The woman of Samaria knew not the gift of God, but later received. Bildad pursues pessimism, thinking joy only belongs to God viewing the procession of our descendants (8: 19). Was envy allowing Bildad to give a skewed, judgemental approach? In chapter 18: 5 – 21 Bildad compares Job with the wicked. He feels that Job is treating him as utterly carnal (18: 3) and therefore goes on the offensive. Job’s reply in chapter 19 moves us deeply; especially the acknowledgement of spiritual imprisonment in verses 8 – 12. It seems as though God looks on us as an enemy, we are road-blocked, utterly curtailed; and in this state we should wait, be patient and refuse to make a path of escape. We are sometimes forsaken by spiritual friends, family and children (19: 13 – 20), but out of utter abandonment to the Lord comes a glimpse of resurrection glory! See Job 19: 25 – 27. True counsel will focus on these four aspects:

- (a) **Vindication**: (19: 23, 24) a **service to new generations**... permanent blood-bought, blood-taught counsel.
- (b) **Victory**: (19: 25, 26) the **success of resurrection** awaiting us after ceasing correspondence to this form of life.
- (c) **Vision**: (19: 27) the **seeing of hope**, as we have the confident expectation of beholding Jesus we will purify ourselves in this life (see 1 John 3: 1 – 3).
- (d) **Vengeance**: (19: 28, 29) the **sword of judgement** comes to us all and will divide soul and spirit, revealing our true selves.

Resurrection realities answer all pessimism!

3. Zophar

Zophar quotes back to Job, “my doctrine is pure” in chapter 11: 4. It can be to the point of received light, but it is still not sufficient for Job’s present distress. Our problem at certain critical moments in our experience is that the gospel we know up to the present experience is not big enough to take us on to greater usefulness. Zophar fails to grasp this and quickly jumps to a conclusion of judgementalism (11: 5; 11:13 - 20). His argument is a choice of repentance, or loss of life. When we jump to conclusions there will be inconsistencies. Zophar talks about double prudence – a

prophetic hint on Job 42: 10 in 11: 6, and then curses mankind as empty-headed with no prospect of wisdom in 11: 12. In today's world much counsel when dissected has wrong conclusions and inconsistencies, because of a lack of a holy logic from a Spirit-renewed mind. The length, breadth, height and width of the dimensions of the gospel are not found in one ministry. There are often serious gaps of bible knowledge today in many popular preachers and teachers. This is why we need to be open to different kinds of ministry. The Lord help us not to jump to conclusions as many do, when they fail to grasp the fullness of the gospel and the demonic dimension.

Zophar gives the game away in 20: 3 "...my understanding" and 20: 2 is surely a bad start! We never minister out of anxiety, but out of peace and rest. The authority of the name of Jesus works when fears and anxieties are gone (John 14: 27). Zophar's attack includes Job being enriched with the spoils of another (20: 19). So often people attack in others what they are guilty of themselves.

4. Elihu

He is not restored as the other counsellors through the prayers of Job (42: 7 – 10). Why?

He was the young man who dared not declare his opinion in the presence of the other much older counsellors. However, this was not humility, when we discover the number of "I's" from verse 10 – 22 in chapter 32. This proud and envious young man had an appalling secret: evil spirits locked up in his belly were driving, enticing and compelling him to speak (verses 18 – 20, particularly brought out in study of the original Hebrew).

In chapter 33: 2 Elihu says, "...my tongue speaks in my mouth", his argument seems to be that we are to listen to him because his words come from an upright heart (33: 3). However, his logic is that they are so because, "The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life." (33: 4). Our words don't link heart and mouth with pure knowledge on the basis of creation by God – but only on the realities of the new creation: redemption and sanctification and consecration in a person's life. This error of believing that what we say is always from God is prevalent today.

Some charismatics believe every prophecy they utter must be

pure, because the Holy Spirit indwells them. This mistake has brought confusion and destruction to many lives. Job 33: 6 speaks of priest-craft pride, "I am as your spokesman before God." We are individually accountable to God for our lives and no ministry can come between our life and God. The pride of youth contradicts this truth and we have seen the shepherding error of the 1980's that sought to dominate another's faith. We also see the busybody spirit of 1 Peter 4: 15 which seeks to manage that for which they are not responsible for. Paul places this "allotrio – episkopsis" word next to murder and thief. Absalomism still waits in the wings to take over many churches and para-church organizations. The outright condemnation of Job by Elihu (34: 8, 9, 36, 37; and 36: 17) is a thinly veiled attempt to become the new wise man of the east. The Leviathan spirit is associated with him: see Job 38: 2, it was Elihu who had been speaking. After the Leviathan chapter 41, we find 42: 3, a description of the misrepresentations of the enemy. Therefore, we can assume Elihu cannot be restored as the other three counsellors.

THE END INTENDED BY THE LORD

The perseverance of Job brought a wonderful reward: God's outstanding mercy and grace in giving double. His humility is seen by taking the rebuke of, "Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?" to his own heart. The path to glory was through repentance and patience – an endurance that carried on under a terrible weight of terrible words. Many in pursuing God have had the same perplexing path to paradise, as pure priests, who are misunderstood and abused by carnal believers or those who purport to know God.

Will we pray for those who spitefully abuse us?

Will we bless those who curse us with lies?

Will we be of a heavenly disposition and love our enemies?

It is those who do these things who truly ascend the hill of the Lord and behold His glory.

The great mark of spiritual strength is to help the weak. Romans 15: 1 goes on to tell us not to please ourselves. Love is sacrificing self for the benefit of others. Job had to pray for his comforters who had given him 9 months of false counsel. If we please ourselves we shift our power source...

FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT TO THE FALLEN LIFE OF OUR SOUL POWER.

False counsel contains false logos from our soul power. When Job forgave them, only then did he truly prosper.

One last word – check out James 1: 5 and 6. We desperately need wisdom when we are in a spiritual spin of circumstances like Job. Consider the two references to “ask” in James 1. To ask of God is to cuddle up into the warm embrace of Father God. To ask in faith is to make a demand on the basis of our new creation rights. “Without reproach” means that God will not withhold any information, insight, or explanation. He gives liberally with an open hand. The explanations came enveloped in the atmosphere of glory. God works for those who wait for Him. The glory came eventually! The key to a Job experience is not to doubt the sovereign love of a loving Father. The winds of adversity want us to see the circumstances as an impossible Goliath. The enemy always desires to gnaw away our trust, as David well knew. Job had five smooth stones of his own. The largest being his integrity. Another would be his perseverance, another humility. Another is the prayer from the heart, even if it is silent. Job was baffled by his experience but, in the words of Oswald Chambers, was baffled to fight the battles of life better.

WHAT TO DO WHEN THERE IS NO GLORY

We must face reality with honest hearts. There are days, even years, when the glory of God has departed, and Paul's definition of sin in Romans 3: 23 underlines our state, "...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

We've missed the beauty of God's plan for our lives by disease, disaster or disobedience. Decades of sin have brought an unconscious decadence to our hearts. The word of Hosea 7: 9 resonates:

"...aliens have devoured his strength, but he does not know it. Yes, grey hairs are here and there on him, yet he does not know it."

Imperceptibly, the UK has drifted into spiritual bankruptcy throughout the twentieth century. In 2007 many believers ask, "Where is the God of Elijah?" and "We've heard about a revival coming to Britain for 30 years, but where is it?" Grey hairs are all over England – that's not wrong in itself, but we are not aware of it. Grey hairs single out a lack of former powers. You never find the words "glory of God" in Hosea, because it has departed. Glory of the occult is mentioned in 10: 5. In 4: 7 God promises to change THEIR glory into shame. And in 9: 11 Ephraim's glory shall fly away like a bird. The glory of God is absent.

THE PROBLEM

Hosea paints a dark picture from 740 – 680 BC and it's the same today. We also have forgotten God and God has departed. Look at Hosea 5: 15 and 8: 14 carefully. God in 5: 15 has departed to His place, the highest heaven. When God departs, holiness, agape love and wisdom disappear and cease among the sons of men. There comes atrophy of the faculties, strength begins to wane. Know the truth that God NEVER leaves man, until man has left God. In chapter 5: 12 God's judgement is like a moth – subtle, slow eating away of man's clothing as it were. In 5: 14 God is like a savage lion devastating its prey. The judgement over Europe was two world wars – savagery and unmitigated bloodshed. In the 1960's we had "the death of God" theology. God has left His earth and become an absentee Father leaving man to his own devices. The only exception is a diminishing remnant of true believers.

In chapter 8 after a record of five specific sins, the last verse speaks loud and clear,

“For Israel HAS FORGOTTEN his Maker and made temples (or spacious buildings), and Judah has multiplied fortified cities...”
(Emphasis mine)

The word “forgotten” according to Campbell Morgan means mislaid. You can mislay your keys without forgetting them. How do we today mislay God?

- a) No relationship to the word of God. A lack of the love of the truth.
- b) No response to the Holy Spirit – losing vision and power to live for Christ. Let’s be frank. Do we have the power to live through our 40’s, 50’s, 60’s, 70’s, and 80’s without:
 - bitterness or disease?
 - regret and disappointment?
 - unforgiveness and hatred?
 - jealousy or sorrow?
 - pride?
- c) We love spacious buildings and fail to find room for Jesus in our hearts. Too many leaders empire build with huge church buildings and make merchandize out of the flock to do so. So often they become “pink elephants” and God is mislaid.
- d) The pursuit of security in our society comes with CCTV cameras, massive shopping malls and identity cards, not to mention burglar alarms and Alsatians! 9/11 should be an icon to us – nothing in this world is safe. Our only security is listening to Jesus (Proverbs 1: 33).

THE SOLUTION

Even God is having a problem devising a plan to get Israel back to Himself. His difficulty is expressed in 6: 4,

“O Ephraim, what shall I do to you? ...For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud and like the early dew it goes away.”

The word “faithfulness” is in the original language closer to

submission, graciousness, or bending the neck. In other words, nothing is carried through. Your admiration for the ideal is wonderful, but you never work it out in practical righteousness. The admonition of Hosea 10: 12 is the first step to the presence and compassions of God that fail not,

“Sow for yourselves righteousness,
Reap in mercy –
Break up your fallow ground,
For it is time to seek the Lord till He comes and rains
righteousness on you.”

Fallow ground is not empty but has no useful crop. Are we productive for the kingdom or are we so self-absorbed, we end up like the wicked lazy servant, who hides his talent?

Repentance

Self-examination can take the form of going through the sin list of Hosea 8, and seeing where we today fall short. Have we robbed God of glory in these five areas?

1. Transgression of the covenant (v1)

Disobedience to the new covenant can include a multitude of sins. One massive area is the sin of Ephraim, who were willingly walking by human reason and not by faith (5: 11). Reason alone kills faith dead but there is a rationality of faith. There has to be hope before faith, the word of promise before hope, and prevailing prayer before promise. Trace the battle in the Bible between reason and revelation: from Cain killing Abel, to the Jews delivering Jesus up out of envy.

2. False kings and rulers (v 4)

Leaders whom God doesn't set up do damage, in the church and in the world.

King Saul is a classic example. It always leads to some form of spiritual harlotry, so the people stumble in iniquity.

3. Idolatry (v 6)

Anything in our lives challenging the Lordship of Jesus is idolatry. Jesus will slay His enemies (Luke 19:27), which includes political institutions, the EU, and law-makers who do not consider His precepts.

4. Folly of seeking godless alliances (v 9)

Jehoshaphat made an alliance with Ahab and it was nearly his undoing. The true church should not join C.T.E. (Churches Together in England) because of its inter-faith and ecumenical links which includes spiritism, unitarianism, and other religious lies.

5. False altars produce sin (v 11, 12)

Car boot sales on Sundays, Hollywood, pub-life, soccer stadiums and many other modern amusements BLUNT our cutting edge, and gradually make the word of God a STRANGE thing. Being led of the Spirit to enter a pub or club is one thing, but being in them as a regular haunt will surely do harm. We need to be careful that our commitment to Jesus comes first in our lives.

Faith for the future

After self-examination and repentance for sins the second step is faith for the future. The lovely phrase “the valley of Achor AS A DOOR OF HOPE” (2: 14) describes the restoration of the purposes and glory of God.

The valley of Achor is the valley of troubling both for Hosea personally, and for Israel and Judah. It is one of those verses that enshrine a great redemptive principle. Out of the very nature of the trouble (whether that trouble comes from personal sin or Satan) God will use that problem to produce an open door of opportunity for His glory.

Gomer got burned by prostitution. Her immoral valley produced a door of hope, “I will go back to my husband.” (2:7). The prodigal son made the similar declaration in Luke 15: 18 and 19, “I will go back to my father.” Our folly and emptiness of personality is seen by our loving Father, who provides a door of hope... but we must by faith enter it. Then the promise of 2: 19, “I will betroth you forever unto Me” which can be etched on the soft and yielding heart. Our marriage to Jesus is “in righteousness and justice, in loving-kindness and mercy, in faithfulness.” (2: 19, 20) That is glorious! Our spirit is joined to the risen Lord where we are of “one spirit” with Him.

TO CONCLUDE

Do we examine our lives and repent?

Do we meditate on the promises of God and believe?

Hosea 6: 1 – 3 is a wonderful door of hope for you who have been in a valley of Achor. The troubling valley in Hosea is the accumulation of sin. The valley of Achor in Joshua was the work of the enemy, through a believer, bringing an unclean thing into the house of God. Whichever of these valleys you have experienced:

- He will heal us
- He will bandage us up
- He will revive us
- He will raise us up so we may live in His sight.

Therefore let us return to the Lord... let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord.

Let us. HE WILL! He will come to us like the rain, the latter and the former rain on the earth. The Spirit gives us faith TO ASK THE LORD for rain in the time of the latter rain, when seven times the volume and velocity of the Holy Spirit will deluge His remnant people!

So we see Hosea as a tract for these times, where trouble is at every hand. The alternating themes of the sin of idolatry and the loving-kindness of Father are particularly seen in the last four chapters. Jehovah and the prophet who has so closely identified with the churning of His heart have a dialogue. Jehovah speaks, Hosea commentates –

Chapter 11: 1 – 12: 1 – Jehovah speaks

Chapter 12: 2 – 12: 6 – Hosea commentates

Chapter 12: 7 – 11 – Jehovah speaks

Chapter 12: 12 – 13: 1 – Hosea commentates

Chapter 13: 2 – 14 Jehovah speaks

Chapter 13: 15 – 14: 3 – Hosea commentates

Chapter 14: 4 – 9 – Jehovah speaks

Throughout this sevenfold dialogue, notice how our text, "...the valley of Achor AS A DOOR OF HOPE" undergirds it. Trouble can turn to hope.

One day I was praying for a lady with a long-term problem. God gave a simple vision of a colander with many holes. She had been a very sensitive girl upon whom domestic responsibility lay. Some of the holes wore fear, some rejection, panic and worry. She had developed diseases, wrecking her adult life, because the spiritual

and physical immune systems had largely broken down. But God had a door of hope. She would still be like a colander – but now the holes would be openings in the heart and mind so the RIVERS OF LIVING WATER could flow out unimpeded by self.

Remember Joseph on seeing his brothers who so mistreated him. God sent Joseph before them to preserve life. He had been separated by the cruelty of his brothers. They meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. The sovereignty of God is in our verse – the very trouble of a heavy pressure situation has a door of hope hinged to it. Eyes of our spirit-man be flooded with light! May we see that we enter the kingdom of God through many tribulations. And the actual trouble has a door leading to:

REVELATION (Revelation 4: 1)

WARFARE (Psalm 24: 8)

EVANGELISM (Colossians 4: 3).

Let us pray:

“Father in heaven, grant heavenly eyes for me to see the very valley I’ve been in has a door of hope, a door of opportunity and ministry for the sake of the name of Jesus, my Lord. Doors of revelation, warfare and doors of evangelism be OPENED in 2007. Amen.”

THE GLORY CONCEALS AND REVEALS

“It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.”

Proverbs 25: 2

This verse knows no greater example than the book of Esther. The name “Esther” has two meanings:

“I will be hidden” – the glory conceals.

“A star” – the glory reveals.

Mordecai, her loving uncle, questioned her purpose as the new and Jewish queen of the most powerful monarch in the world, “Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” If she remained hidden, national genocide of the Jews would have begun a process to eradicate the scriptures. All God’s promises to Israel would have been seen to have failed. God’s reputation was at stake.

Esther was hidden in terms of her race. Also she knew the power of discretion in exposing the wicked Haman at the right time. The tables were turned completely on the arch enemy of the Jews.

Mordecai, then Esther, then the king searched out the matter for the glory of God. Mordecai’s refusal to bow down to the false number two, Haman, began a time of desperate importance throughout the Persian empire. The society we live in today is similar with righteousness crumbling around God’s people and evil being enshrined in our laws. Will we be defiant and protest with the courage of Mordecai? Or will we bow down silently to the occult forces arrayed against the Lord Jesus and His church?

Esther became a star who now shines like the stars forever and forever. Will we be stars, who press home the Lord’s victory over evil agencies on the earth today? The victory in the HEAVENLIES is manifest HERE through the church. There is no mention of God or Satan in this, the last history book of the Old Testament. Behind the scenes, however, God and Satan are very much at work.

God is looking for discerning disciples who will wage the warfare of Ephesians 3: 10,

“... To the intent NOW the manifold wisdom of God

THROUGH the church BE MADE KNOWN to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.”
(Emphasis mine)

We have two lives and live them simultaneously: a life here on earth, and a life in the heavenlies. We are hidden with Christ in God, and we receive a spirit of wisdom and revelation. Spiritual warfare depends upon a consciousness of the two realms. The importance of Esther is that by hearing God she made known God’s wisdom in perilous times. The concealing and revealing aspect of God’s glory is found in Esther. Let’s see the book in eight simple divisions.

1. VASHTI PRECLUDED (ESTHER 1: 19)

Her flat refusal to obey her husband caused an outrage. Ahasueras summoned the wise men and Memucan hit the nail on the head. Her defiant rebellion would become known throughout the empire and usurp man’s position in the family as the head of the home. Divine order is established when Jezebel is removed (Jezebel being a spirit of control, likes to humiliate and undermine). Memucan means “their poverty” and if Vashti had her way marriages would be wrecked. 1 Corinthians 11: 3 stands as eternal truth, now and then. The aspect of heaven coming to earth in family life for glory to be revealed is when the wife is neither above nor below her husband, but ALONGSIDE.

Women look for sensitivity in a man and men look for significance from their wife. Without respect the woman cannot give significance to the man. What Vashti had initiated was so dangerous to the fabric of society, she had to be excluded. The difficulty of Christian wives living with non-Christian husbands is well documented; but they must be won, without a word, and with chaste behaviour. Women try to change their men, but only God can! Christ is the head of man and man the head of woman. Let us respect divine order for the healing of families.

2. VITAL PRECURSOR (ESTHER 2: 22; 6: 2)

Mordecai discovered a plot against the king and as a faithful subject informed Esther, the new queen. Discerning righteousness was remarkably rewarded (see chapter 6: 1 – 11) at the very time when gross evil was about to be inflicted on the Jews, and upon Mordecai himself. If we exercise a ministry of warning and discernment we will be wonderfully protected in the last days. If we

handle our responsibility down here (of discernment) we will judge angels, who have the ability to obey or disobey God's decrees. Esther informed the king of her older relative's concern, and carried on the obedience she had walked in (see 2: 10; 2: 15; 2: 20).

3. VILE PLAN (ESTHER 3: 8, 9)

Extermination. Genocide. Ethnic cleansing. The vile plan of Haman has a modern ring to it as governments become more totalitarian. Hitler and Hamas are modern equivalents, whose hatred of the Jew demands their liquidation. Today the same vile plan of destruction obsesses the fundamentalist Islamic mind. The nations of the world will, through their fears, ultimately encourage it, not knowing they prepare themselves for Armageddon's judgement. Demons incite world leaders; they are a special target of unseen agencies in the heavenly places (see Isaiah 24: 21). Haman's strategy is a warning for such a time as these end-time days. We must not over-estimate diabolical intrigues, but the body of Christ basking in a false triumphalism tends to under-estimate them. The charge of 'navel gazing' or 'seeing demons under the bed' exhibits a spiritual blindness that is itself demonic! The knowledge of demonic activity comes to us as a gentle illumination of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes discernment comes as a sudden surprise. Our initial response is usually correct.

4. VALIDITY OF PURPOSE (ESTHER 4: 14)

A relationship without godly purpose always deteriorates... i.e. Saul hunting David, Delilah pursuing Samson. This key verse in Esther underlines the purpose of the Mordecai – Esther relationship. Our relationship with the Father and the Son only grows if we know and obey what the Holy Spirit is saying. He alone knows the future purpose of God. Are you walking down a blind alley, a comfort zone avenue, or the King's highway? Nobodies become somebodies by the power of obedience to God's purpose. Who gets into God's holy purpose? Is it the most loving, the most holy, or the most gifted? Like Esther, it is the obedient. Obey God's command and the glory of God shall be revealed to you. She agreed with her older relative with a hunger to do God's will. The most proactive thing in the world is to embrace God's agenda and Esther did it with astute wisdom.

5. THE VALIANT PROPOSAL (ESTHER 4: 16)

“And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!”

The most spiritual and the ugliest thing in the world was Calvary. The purpose of God took Jesus there (see John 12: 27, 28a). Only a proactive Church who determines to do the will of God, and chooses the Lordship of Christ will succeed in vision. Religion is reactive and submits to circumstances; it is led by the flesh and consequently will flounder, trapped by enemy suggestions. Esther broke through limitations of fear and natural thinking. Counting her life as nothing, she hazarded her privileged position for the sake of her people. The three day fast brought her to the beautiful moment of being seen by the king in all her beauty. This moment, engineered by God, brought her the necessary favour. She was dressed to kill! She didn't have to say a word!

6. VIOLENT PREDICAMENT (ESTHER 5: 14)

The gallows were made for Mordecai, and Haman goes to the private feast with joy. Everything seems to be going his way. The sovereign God is still working behind the scenes and stops the king from slumber. No dignity had been forthcoming for Mordecai's intervention in helping to keep the king safe, so we have...

7. THE VIRTUOUS PARADE (ESTHER 6: 11)

Can you imagine the clenched teeth of Haman as he proclaims before Mordecai, “Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honour.” How do we receive honour? Is it with a humble heart like Mordecai, who went back to the king's gate to pray? Or do we allow exaltation and reward to puff up our ego, and so we forfeit the glory of God? How do we react when others are honoured? Do we rejoice with them? Criticism and jealousy in the body of Christ short circuits the glory and purpose of God, allowing the enemy to sow his mischief. A sharp thought or accusing words, mixed with the venom of jealousy, bring a take-over spirit, cutting the victim away from blessing.

8. VITAL PETITIONS (ESTHER 7: 2f; 8: 5)

“What is your petition, Queen Esther?” asked the king. Spiritual timing crucially produces the victory. Our requests to a mighty King in heaven need to come at the right time. Too many prayers begin with petitions. We should spend time tuning in our spirits to the

Holy Spirit by praising God, singing in the Spirit, praying in tongues; fasting and meditation on the Word will also help, producing a watchfulness. C. G. Bevington would get himself quiet for days before he petitioned God. The Spirit of God must be allowed to brood over the waters of the dark and deep. Our hearts need to be attuned to the nature of God and see the sinful, dark human heart and be pained at the huge gap that can only be bridged by Calvary. The Cross is more than a moral lavatory but is the door that opens to eternal life. Prayers of petition are answered by the price of redemption. The daring initiative of Esther in days of diabolical intrigue brought divine intervention.

TO CONCLUDE

God looks for the faith and receptivity of Esthers today who will shine as lights on the hill, lamps to the path, and be trailblazers of glory! You were born again for such a time as this! If we are dressed in the armour of God, we will overcome even in days of demonic strategy and deep confusion. We need Father's wisdom as well as the Spirit's power to ask in Jesus name. Esther could say her times were in God's hands even in the midst of utmost, severe trials. Like her very name, the real stars in God's kingdom are the hidden intercessors, who sacrifice their lifestyles to pray on behalf of God's people, for God's glory alone. Although Jesus spoke to large crowds, most of His earth walk was hidden in obscurity. The entire gospels only cover about 28 days out of 33 years. Today's emphasis on the lime light can become a contrary spirit to the Holy Spirit, whose very name indicates difference from the spirit of the world. Modern Esther's work behind the scenes, in close communication with the Lord. People who are up-front in the ministry need the hidden times with God. Those who are behind the scenes need those moments of glory (not personal), which are revealed to the church or the world.

Let's pray:

"Sovereign Father God,
I refuse to be unconcerned with what is happening politically and morally. Grant your holy discretion that I may be used in Your purposes and providence. Strengthen trust and faith that I may know the Mordecai spirit, knowing Lord Jesus that You will prevail over man. I come to die out to self, to abandon myself entirely to You, loving Lord. Give me the heart obedience and submission of Esther. Help me to see Your wisdom and Your glory in the master

key of Calvary's Cross. Prepare my heart in fasting, and help me to hear the still small voice of victory. In Jesus name. Amen."

THE GLORY OF THE KINGDOM

“They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom and talk of Your power.”

Psalm 145: 11

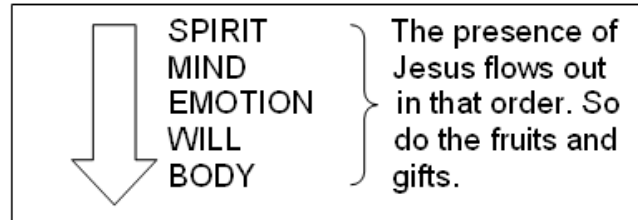
The kingdom is the habitat where Jesus lives and moves and has His sovereign authority and rulership. Entrance into the kingdom of God is always by being born from above – being born again (John 3: 3 – 17). We have to be born by the Spirit of God in order to be part of the kingdom of God. When this happens the kingdom of God is within us. Then the divine flow from your spirit can be released from within you. Those who have been truly immersed in the Holy Spirit are conscious of His authority within, there is Someone else living His life through them. When you experience a miracle, healing, or a demon is cast out, the kingdom comes upon you.

Glory means all that God is and all that God has. To be conscious of God residing inside us is glorious... His indwelling makes Jesus our inside adviser giving us inside information. It may be discerning of spirits, the word of knowledge or gifts of healings. It may be the power to go through middle and old age without bitterness or disappointment or jealousy. For some the inner knowing comes with tongues or prophecy. We speak spiritual things that natural men may scoff at or misunderstand. We compare spiritual things with spiritual – interpreting and adapting them in the light of anointed Scriptures (1 Corinthians 2: 13). Spiritual ones discern the root source of all things because God has trained their minds in the word of God.

We obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, “... through sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth.” (2 Thessalonians 2: 13, 14). We obtain glory in our spirits – in the sphere where Christ dwells in our hearts, in the kingdom within. We are really talking about the interaction of the Holy Spirit and our spirits which produces the glory of God.

**OUR HUMAN SPIRIT + THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE TRUE HOME
OF
THE GLORY OF GOD.**

Our spirits are the faculty where the King bids us to rise above natural and carnal men. Any understanding of the kingdom within must embrace the tri-partite being of man. The kingdom within is located in that place of safe retreat: our human spirit. It is here where the Holy Spirit will reveal truth and interpret it to us through a renewed mind. The divine order for Christian action is:

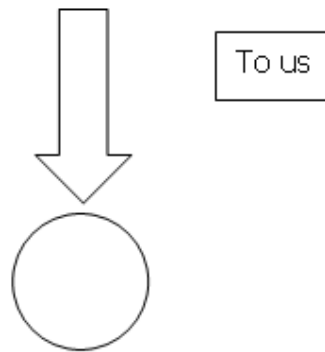


Our mind must co-work with our spirits, and bring reason to work out the revelation. As soon as the **mental picture** is formed, an emotion links the thought to the will. We act on the revelation fact and the faith carries through to the appropriate action of our bodies. This kingdom within our spirits is then demonstrated to the church and the world.

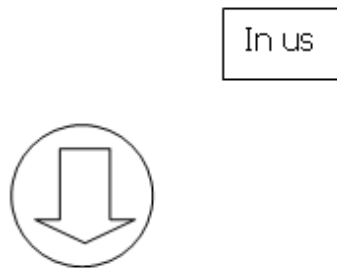
Emotions we experience can be influenced by past experience and circumstances; therefore, they alone should never determine whether or not we carry out the revelation. Once we have the picture in our minds, we need to process the thought: does it line up with scripture, with the character and nature of God, revealed in Jesus Christ; do we have the sentinel of peace. We may feel emotionally good about an idea which actually hasn't come from our spirits, discernment is essential. Emotions need to come under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

A good example of the outworking of this glory is seen in the gifts of the Holy Spirit: how they are received and given.

(a) Revelation from God: 1 Corinthians 2: 10

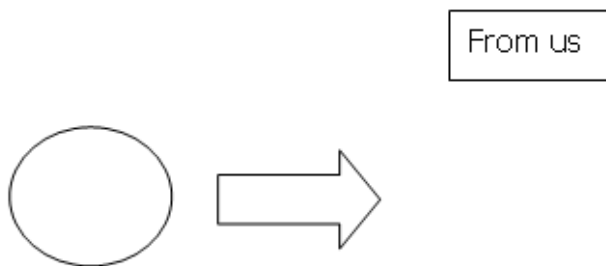


(b) Manifestation in our spirit: 1 Corinthians 12: 7



If a manifestation by-passes our spirit we have to examine the source. It is interesting to note the discernment of spirits in 1 Corinthians 12: 10 are divinely arranged between prophecy and tongues.

(c) Demonstration to church and to the world: 1 Corinthians 2: 4
“... Demonstration of the Spirit and power.”



The gifts or manifestations of the Spirit need prayerful preparation. In other words: FRAGILE: HANDLE WITH PRAYER! The list in 1 Corinthians 12 is strategically placed between the Lord's Table (chapter 11) and Love (chapter 13). The right use, misuse and downright abuse of the gifts continue to confuse adherents of charismata and their opponents. Let's now look at some of the manifestations with this in mind.

THE DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS

The greatest need in a church world is this precious and misunderstood gift, in a climate of increasing deception. There are three spheres of operation:

(a) The Human

Jesus discerned the motives of the Jews (Mark 2: 8) and the character of Nathaniel (John 1: 47, 48).

(b) Evil Agencies

Daniel saw Gabriel (Daniel 9: 21). Paul sensed an evil spirit in the girl (Acts 16: 16 – 18). Micaiah in 1 Kings 22: 21, 22.

(c) The Divine

Elisha in 2 Kings 6: 17. John on Patmos in Revelation 1: 9 – 12. Moses in Numbers 12: 8. Isaiah 6: 1 – 8, where Isaiah sees the Lord.

How I Came Into Discerning Of Spirits

At the Bible College in the library, my inner eyes were opened to see two evil spirits under a table. That sounds a bit like cluedo, the popular game! It was sudden, unexpected, but at the leading of the Lord Jesus. Who better to target than those who are keen for God! The enemy wants to bring division, contention, strife, confusion, poor concentration when saints gather, especially when it's to study the Word! It was confirmed by a tutor a week or so later. Demons like dry places, dry churches, dry preachers, and dry apathetic congregations. They bring a satanic peace that says "do not disturb". They target and assail the true church from the heavenlies, from the ground, through carnal believers, from the world-spirit that refuses to recognize Jesus as Lord. The gift of discernment is given to those who love the truth passionately and display a renewed mind. God doesn't give grace gifts on a plate. The two-fold preparation of prayer and scripture undergird the true manifestation.

The mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2: 16) is related to Philippians 2: 5 – 8, the person with the mind of Christ will exhibit:

- SERVANTHOOD
- DEATH TO SELF
- HUMBLING OF OURSELVES

The DOVE comes upon the LAMB!

God has to be sure the impartation will not puff us up or freak us out! The seeing of demon powers, whether cancer demons, occult demons, spirits of divination, tree spirits, UFO's (rare), etc. should humble us and keep us at His feet and under His headship. The demons are UNDER HIS FEET and therefore are UNDER OURS as we live in constant communion with the ascended and glorified Lord.

Within a few months God showed me many demons, especially in Christian homes! The shock made me realise many believers do not know how to apply the blood of Jesus Christ, our worthy Lamb.

Glory only comes on the ground of the blood of Jesus, and the fire of the Holy Spirit. If you desire to be great in the kingdom of God, the three co-ordinates must be at work in your life (I deal with this aspect in the chapter "The Three Co-ordinates"), and you must be willing to die out to self, to serve others. The blood of Christ, the word of God and the Spirit produce the GLORY OF GOD. In deliverance ministry, that has permanent results, the sword of the Spirit (a rhema word); the anointing of the Spirit and the sealing of the blood of Jesus can bring a manifestation of glory. How wonderful when the sufferer is prepared and the ministers truly discerning! How wonderful to see a suffering soul set free – to the glory of God! The KINGDOM OF GOD comes upon... (Luke 11: 20).

One learns quickly in deliverance ministry:

- discretion must accompany discernment.
- believers will attack your stand.
- doors of opportunity will close.
- the anointing of exposure will make some fearful of you.
- men in the ministry will seek to isolate and reject you.

So the price tag becomes very real. On the plus side, you are loved by Father for taking up your daily cross. That alone is worth

far more than money can buy. Discernment will increase with maturity, making you a better counsellor. Spiritual warfare becomes more than a topic but a reality, giving a depth to your teaching ministry. Your prayer life becomes more pertinent – there have been many casualties because of a lack of preparation and holiness of life. A soldier in the army only goes to the frontline after extensive training. A powerful kingdom lifestyle births a warrior spirit in you.

Discernment in Three Spheres

(1) Sees the value of a human soul

Jesus knew Nathaniel had no sham, no hypocrisy. He “saw” him in the spirit under the fig tree puzzling out who Jesus was. The fig tree is a symbol of national Israel. We know Jesus cursed the fig tree because figs should have been in evidence (it was not the time for ripe figs but some signs of fruit growing should have been there). Leaves only and no fruit are symbolic of religious tradition. Religion must be cursed from the roots up! (Mark 11: 20).

To distinguish here: religion is man trying to get to God in his own strength; it is opposite to the life in the Spirit which comes from God to man via the Cross. Our roots are not in Catholicism or Orthodox, but in the unlimited streams that flow from Calvary and Pentecost spiritually, the relationship between Father and Son eternally, and Abraham humanly.

Nathaniel came out of religion! We infer this from his presence among the disciples on resurrection morning (John 21: 2). He was schooled in the law but followed Jesus, anchoring his faith in the resurrection.

Do we discern the potential of a human soul? Do we sense what issue they are grappling with? Do we see why millions are still slaves of religion? Are we anointed to set them free from the hypnotic drug of religion so they can serve Jesus?

(2) Sees the victory of God’s salvation

The Syrian army came looking for Elisha to kidnap him or much worse. His servant was stunned to see the immediate peril. But the prophet prayed and the servant’s eyes saw the chariots of fire (the angelic hosts). 2 Kings 6: 8 – 23 is a wonderful story with great humour. The rescue of God’s prophet began with discernment of

spirits... and led to the humiliation of the Syrians. Angels are seen when victory is on the way. At Eckington in 1991 angels were seen in the grounds of a manor house as a church was being birthed.

Matthew 11: 12 tells us, "... the kingdom of heaven is taken by storm, and the strong and forceful ones claim it for themselves eagerly!" (Wuest translation). Discernment sees the victory before we claim it and live in its rewards.

What victory do you need in your personal life? Do you go the round of counsellors or have you revelation of victory?

(3) Sees the vice of the enemy's seduction

Peter saw the wrong intent of Ananias and Sapphira who desired a leadership position and thought they could follow Barnabas's example Acts 4: 36, 37). So, in Acts 5: 3 we see a remarkable supernatural discernment – a lie toward God. Many aspire to be leaders but have hearts toward their own gain. Ananias and Sapphira were caught red-handed in defrauding God. Today that attitude is commonplace, but the judgement of God waits.

In 1 Kings 22: 17 – 28 we see several instances of discernment in a remarkable context. Evil spirits in conversation with the Lord of glory! The veil over the unseen realm is held back. The king's life is on the line! We see the sovereignty of the Lord over the hierarchy of evil. We can confidently declare that although the enemy may assail the church, he will NEVER prevail over the church that God builds.

What is the enemy tactic in destroying the individual, the church and the nation?

CRY OUT FOR GOD'S
DISCERNMENT!

THE GIFT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES

Great glory was realized in Acts 2 as tongues of fire sat on the heads of the 120 in the upper room. The inauguration of the kingdom, the impregnation of the CHRIST WITHIN, and the initiation of church life all happened simultaneously.

Why does God continue to give the gift of tongues? Can it set on fire, in our hearts, the teaching of Jesus Christ? How does it stimulate my witness or is it mere baby language? More controversy over this inspirational gift has upset the body of Christ than any other subject.

A few reasons why God uses tongues through His sons and daughters may help us seek, covet and earnestly desire them.

(1) Experience of rest: Isaiah 28: 11 – 13

In verse 11 there is an indication of the gift of tongues that would come. Peace comes to those who stay their mind on the Lord. Unless our mind takes its education from the Spirit we fail to live in harmony and rest. The prophet of transcendence tells us “This is the rest with which You may cause the weary to rest,” and, “This is the refreshing” (verse 12). A clinical psychologist was undergoing tests for brain waves and upper torso tension. He had one test done and when the technician went from the room, decided to pray in tongues. After only ten minutes of speaking in tongues and then another test, the brain waves were dramatically reduced from beta to theta waves and from 120 to 5 micro volts. When you need peace, take a tongues break alone in a park or on a beach or sanctify a toilet! Supernatural rest and poise will evidence as you draw from the wells of salvation.

(2) Exaltation of worshipping Jesus

Singing in the Spirit has other-worldly cadences that rise and fall from a purer region of existence. At times I’m sure angelic beings in festal array join in! My wife went to a church on Mount Zion in Jerusalem with some friends. They walked into the meeting where everyone was singing in tongues, worshipping the Lord; she said it was like a taste of heaven – there was such purity present and it was absolutely beautiful. 1 Corinthians 14: 14 and 15 reveal the blessing of mingled voices in adoration. Our work begins in the sanctuary. Worship in spirit and truth comes more easily to those who practise ministering unto the Lord Jesus in tongues. It is the prelude to the glory of God and the atmosphere of heaven, which makes everything live in the Spirit!

(3) Edification: 1 Corinthians 14: 5, 6

The gift of tongues edifies or builds the house which is the human spirit, the home of the Holy Spirit. It sensitizes our spirit to what is going on around us. When we pray in tongues with another person

we quickly assess if there is agreement. Where two or three are agreed they can walk together in fruitfulness.

In the assembly edification is of paramount importance. The priority is that the gift must be followed by either INTERPRETATION, REVELATION, KNOWLEDGE, PROPHECY OR BY TEACHING. Tongues can be a rudder to steer the meeting to bring the content God desires to share – creating an atmosphere of sensitivity to the Holy Spirit in people. Too often the preacher will share what is currently occupying his mind – useful maybe, but not a fresh, relevant word from God. The edifying tongue alerts us to the NOW GOD who is eternal and wants meetings to be for His glory alone. May we be charged up to identify with His purposes and pursuits.

(4) Enemy conflict: Ephesians 6: 18

There are different kinds of tongues including rebuke against an unseen enemy. We engage the enemy by a Spirit-led rebuke that exposes the working of an evil spirit. Discernment has a priority at this point. Rebuke tongues may lead to an intercessory groaning in the Spirit, a divine protest ministry against the existing order of sin, self and evil spirit working. Once confronting a spirit of necromancy in a witch, who had recently been converted to Christ, I found a word of knowledge giving an occult name was the key to release. She writhed around the floor with a terrible extended unnatural face, but the 'occult name' was the defining moment in deliverance. Praying in tongues with fasting sharpens us to receive the inside information we need when dealing with the enemy.

(5) Encouraging faith: Jude 20

One way to raise your level of faith is by speaking out the word of God. We shall have what we say. Words are spiritual entities, with a death cycle of negative confession or the flow of divine optimism issuing from us. Faith lives in our hearts and in our mouths (see Romans 10: 9, 10). Speaking in tongues in the power of the Holy Spirit will release faith in the supernatural workings of God, keep us in the love of God, and cause us to look for the mercy of His second coming.

Confession means to say the same thing as, to think and feel the same way as God thinks and feels. Positive confession encourages faith when we acknowledge every good thing in Christ Jesus (see Philemon verse 6). Praying in the Spirit can include the

gift of tongues and as we persist the breakthrough will come and we sense a growing level of faith. We are activating the new creation by praying in tongues. It's like turning the ignition key in your car to start the engine.

THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

Prophecy as a demonstration of the Spirit and power is getting a bad name. We need to discern what are the indicators of the true gift by testing the spirits. Here is a guideline of seven indicators.

(a) Intuitive delivery.

When previous heart preparation by prayer occurs, the prophecy should bubble up from your spirit. The gift of exhortation in Romans 12 may be largely mental. Prophecy comes from your spirit, and will release the glory of God.

(b) Inner witness.

Romans 8: 16, Luke 1: 39 – 45. The babe leaped in Elizabeth's womb at Mary's greeting and Elizabeth was stirred by the inner witness of the child she was carrying, and brought a prophecy with a loud voice. When receiving a prophecy there should be an inner witness, verifying its authenticity. If there is not disregard it. Many prophecies today puff up our thoughts and emotions and are therefore soulish in source, never having good fruit. If torment is the result of a prophecy it is clearly not from God, because there has been no inner registration in your spirit man.

(c) Interaction of condition.

There is a price-tag to the glory. Check Mark 11: 37, 38 – a cup and a baptism (the Cross and the Spirit). Conditions abound in scripture. A premise for the promise to become REAL. Philippians 4: 19 is a well known verse, but do we obey 4: 15? Prophecies without condition have ruined many lives with unreality. Dreams come through hard work says Solomon, who oversaw the growth of the kingdom.

(d) Implicit obedience.

Are we hearers only or hearers and doers? Building on the sand (hearing only) will bring disaster. The disciples in following Jesus were building on the sand mostly because they all fled Jesus when the Cross was imminent. They built on the rock after Pentecost. Remember the young prophet in 1 Kings 13. He built on rock in verses 1 – 10, and then built on sand in verses 11 – 24. Disobedience to the rhema of God cost him his life. Watch a prophet's lifestyle: are they obeying the Lord or is self the motivation?

(e) Impetus of love.

See the mercy of true love in 1 Kings 13: 6. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. After Pentecost Peter flowed in agape love, but before the resurrection it was Peter himself in support of the Lord. True prophecy has a dimension of agape – benefiting others at the expense of self.

(f) Implication of faith.

We must prophecy according to our faith (Romans 12: 6). Hope belongs to our mind but faith dwells in the heart and mouth. Faith is the substance of things hoped for. Substance literally means to stand under. Our head is above our heart. Faith stands under hope. Prophecies that merely get us excited and make us dream merely disappoint in the long-term. We prophecy and receive prophecy in proportion to our faith.

(g) Idiom of character.

The testimony of Jesus is the spirit behind the prophecy. He is the lamb of comfort and the lion of challenge. The supernatural alone is never the mark of the divine. What is the spirit behind the prophecy? Can you detect the virtues of Jesus: the fruit of the Spirit? Check 1 Kings 13 verses 18 and 21 and see the essential difference of “thus saith the Lord”. The mixture in the old prophet is because he compromised with calf worship at Bethel.

These seven indicators are tests for prophecy and also for the glory of the kingdom. How we need the freshness of Ephesians 1: 17 – 20, praying that glory may come again to the church. We need:

- new insight into our spirits
- new outlook to the world
- new uplook for the return of the Lord Jesus

Scales of tradition, apathy, religion OFF our eyes! May the glory that seared into the eyes of Saul on the Damascus road, making him blind to all the world had to offer, GIVE US VISION of the LORD JESUS. May His eyes of FIRE BURN INTO US the SEVEN SPIRITS of ISAIAH 11: 2, 3 (compare Revelation 5: 6). Laser eye surgery and 20/20 vision comes from Jesus to make us see something. If we seek Him, one of the seven spirits will rest upon our life. It may be a spirit of counsel for pastoring, it may be the Spirit of the Lord for evangelism, it may be the fear of the Lord causing the desire for holiness.

We need fresh sight every year. Some years before I knew the Lord, a prostitute in Soho suddenly turned around and said to me, “... you shouldn’t be here; you should be in the ministry.” What an

insight! At the time I was an art student, thinking that culture was an escalator to a brighter future. This friend of a friend prophetically hit the nail on the head. May the Lord give us as believers a knowledge of His inheritance that He has in the Saints. Let us see how He wants to build His kingdom, encouraging others to go for gold. In the glory we see things that are pertinent, positive and powerful. Seek earnestly the gifts of the Holy Spirit to build God's kingdom for His glory.

THE THREE CO-ORDINATES

Glory is in short supply in the UK in the 21st century. Why?

The standard of preaching has fallen alarmingly over the last 100 years because the three co-ordinates are not adhered to, not mentioned and not understood. Reformed believers adhere to the primacy of the word of God in most of its length and breadth, but spawn an intellectual orthodoxy. Charismatics and Pentecostals love to balance the word of God with the Holy Spirit. The best of missionaries cleave to the deeper truths of the Cross. If we are earnest about the glory of God in the Church we must embrace and see the relationship between the three co-ordinates: the WORD OF GOD, the HOLY SPIRIT and the CROSS.

Check the landmarks in the life of Jesus and we will see the working together of these divine agents that the apostle John declares agree as one:

“And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water (the Word) and the blood (the Cross); and these three AGREE AS ONE.”

1 John 5: 8.

(Emphasis mine)

The balance of truth is much needed today because heresy, a skillful intermingling of truth with error, haunts and confuses our generation.

Lets look at the big events in the earth walk of Jesus our Lord.

1. Incarnation

The glory came over the hills of Bethlehem as angels appeared suddenly. Have you heard angels sing? When I was born again God graciously opened my ears to hear them rejoice over a sinner who had repented. When God births His new thing He launches it in the glory. He did so at:

- a) creation (Job 38: 7)
- b) Jesus' birth (Luke 2: 9 - 14)
- c) the birth of the Church (Acts 2).

In the gospel account we see the personal inner cross in the life of Mary in

Luke 1: 38 (submission to the commanded Word) and in Luke 1: 56 (the public appearance of Mary when it was becoming obvious she was pregnant). She would have to know the possession of the Holy Spirit, strengthening her, to carry such a cross in those days of severe legalism! Jesus was to be accused 30 years later by the Pharisees of being demonized and born of fornication. Mary heard it and had to carry it! Simeon did prophesy to her of a sword that shall pierce through her own soul. The Cross was involved in the incarnation. The word of God came through Gabriel. The Holy Spirit surrounded the birth of Jesus.

The relationships of Word, Cross and Spirit are most interesting. Mary received the word from heaven. The Holy Spirit would facilitate and accomplish the unique birth. Mary's obedience to the word would lead her to a personal crucifixion of the sword entering her own soul.

We see the vital importance of God INITIATING as He breaks into her private world. As we abide and pray, the Master's touch will come to our spirit inwardly. If the old man (Romans 6) is praying we will get confused. The Holy Spirit helps us in our inability to get a God result. The living Word will come with something of glory, this essence of divinity, in the presence of Jesus.

Obedience to revelation (that Elizabeth too was pregnant) may have taken Mary to the hill country to be hidden with Elizabeth. However, there came a day, a day of the cross in returning: to her house when her pregnancy was beginning to be obvious, and to the probable uproar.

2. Boyhood

Luke 2: 41 – 52: the word of God poured out of Jesus as the religious leaders questioned, discussed and became astonished. The Word should seize us with astonishment when it freshly comes as revelation in the Holy Spirit. Jesus submitted to the Cross by being “subject to them”, that is to His parents, although they failed to understand. Verse 52 which says,

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in

favour with God and men.”

points to the work of the Holy Spirit, because He had to live as a man, under God, developing the spiritual life through obediences that included surrender and anointings. He received divine wisdom through the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.

3. Baptism

In Matthew 3: 15 – 17 we see the Trinity together at work. Here we have clearly three stages:

(a) Acceptance by the Son (v15).

He accepted the way of the Cross, and in allowing John to baptize Him was taking prophetically the place of sin-bearer, identifying with human sin. Will we identify with the poor?

(b) Anointing of the Spirit (v16). The heavens were literally rent asunder as the Holy Spirit came upon the Son because He identified with our condition by baptism. The executor of the Trinity remained on Him because no sin was found in Him. We tend to be leaky vessels and need new anointings.

(c) Approval of the Father (v17). The word spoken from heaven attested to our Lord's obedience. Faith outworked in obedience, and being in the Spirit always please the Father (Romans 8: 9 and Hebrews 11: 6).

The three co-ordinates of Cross, Word and Spirit need to be taught today to bring much needed balance and true grace. Much has been said of Word and Spirit, but if we miss out the Cross we lose freshness, vitality and a real discipleship. The great need in churches today is our relationship to the Holy Spirit that includes the Cross. Note the five expressions of the Cross in Galatians, what they are and what they achieve for us. We need to be baptized into Galatians 5: 24 and 6: 14, and be open to the Spirit's challenge to come to God's altar empty handed, giving up our rights to “the many loved objects that secretly harm your soul”, as Tozer pleads. The other three verses that express the Cross in Galatians are 1: 4, 2: 20, 3: 13.

4. Temptations

He was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, and came back victorious in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4: 1, 14). Power is fullness tested. The word of God quoted in the Spirit by Jesus,

became a creative sword to defeat the devil's designs. The Cross was evident in every decision our Saviour made by the refusal to take short-cuts.

5. The Transfiguration

In Luke 9: 27 – 36 the glimpse of eternal glory was clearly a dramatic unveiling by the Spirit. The Word came from the bright cloud. The Cross was mentioned by Moses and Elijah as the “exodus”, or “His decease” depending on which translation you have. Jesus discussed His departure in a big three summit conference. The Spirit put the three disciples on the ground “asleep yet remaining awake” v 32 (RV).

6. The Great Confession

Matthew 16: 13 – 23 clearly contains the Cross (v 21 – 25) in a double sense. The place of Golgotha where Jesus suffered (v 21) and the cross we have to bear (v 24) in our daily lives. We also see the principle of the Cross (v 25), but more of that in the next chapter. The keys of the kingdom of heaven in verse 19 are so evidenced after Pentecost and are the specific things of the Spirit like:

- spirit of wisdom and revelation
- praise
- revelation gifts of the Holy Spirit
- fasting and command prayers
- deliverance and miracles.

Peter's great confession in verse 16 was the word of God from heaven, the rock of revelation upon which Jesus builds the church. The gates of hades, or councils of demons, cannot prevail against obedience to the living Word from heaven. When we appropriate the Cross and take up our daily cross in obeying the Word, the keys are effective in our hands. Without the Cross in our lives, we fall into deception and the hands of the enemy, building only the kingdom of man (v 23). There are no short-cuts! The Holy Spirit will always lead us to the Cross and the blood of Jesus, and He will teach us how to use the keys of the kingdom (John 14: 15 – 18; 16: 7 – 15).

7. Gethsemane

In Luke 22: 40 we are given the word of God, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” In verse 41 and 42 we see Jesus Himself praying as He grappled with the immensity of His own personal Cross,

“Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.” v 42

Jesus had to pray through to a place of victory, where He had to resist the enemy’s temptations. The personal cross is a refusing of our own will and a choosing of His will. In verse 43 we see the ministry of the Holy Spirit using an angel to strengthen Him. He was saved from death in the garden in order to die on the Cross. As we set our will to obey the Lord, He will strengthen us by the Holy Spirit in order that we complete the given task. The wrestling occurs in prayer first to bring our will into subjection to His, then grace is given.

8. The Cross Of Calvary

In Luke 23 we find three words from the Cross and the gifts of the Holy Spirit in verses 28 – 31. Leading up to these events we read of healing (22: 51) and the word of wisdom (22: 61). When Jesus was under the most pressure, He still ministered eternal life through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. When we know heavy pressure situations, in the Spirit we can still bring relief to others as we look exclusively to the Lord. He brought forth a prophetic word in verses 28 – 31, a prayer of forgiveness in verse 34, and an assurance of salvation in verse 43 to the thief dying beside Him.

9. The Resurrection

Not only do we find the Trinity at work in the resurrection:

- God the Father (Romans 4: 24, 25)
- God the Son (John 10: 15 – 18)
- the Holy Spirit (Romans 1: 4, 8: 11)

but also the three co-ordinates. When Jesus drew near to the two saddened disciples walking to Emmaus, He:

- expounded the Scriptures concerning Himself (Luke 24: 27)
- referred to the Cross with humour! (Luke 24: 19,

“What things?” has an air of dismissal.)

- opened their eyes by a ministry of the Spirit (Luke 24: 31) during the breaking of bread, which referred to the Cross.

We could go on and add other examples in John 20 and Mark 16.

10. The Ascension

Luke 24: 50 tells us of imparted blessing that produced real worship in Spirit and truth. Acts 1: 11 proclaims the prophetic word that He will return in the same manner. We glimpse the Cross in His present day ministry in heaven where, as High Priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses, he intercedes for us (Hebrews 4: 15 and 7: 25). His heavenly ministry is a result of “...for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.” (Hebrews 7:27). He passed through the heavens in an earthly body that had received the scars of the Cross.

Application In The Lives Of The Disciples

Can we see the three co-ordinates working in the lives of the disciples? Remember the last illustration Jesus gave in the sermon on the mount. He is speaking of two identical houses to look at, but very different foundations. The house built on sand succumbed to the storm. They were the hearers only, who failed to do the Word.

At the Cross all the disciples fled in fear. In the crisis, their houses came tumbling down! Why?

They had been hearing the Word, but largely were unable to put it into practice. Pentecost changed that. The Holy Spirit had to immerse them into the life of God. The disciples

- slept at Gethsemane
- ran from the Cross
- were slow to believe the resurrection.

Why?

The three co-ordinates were not working together in their lives. It is the same for us. Christians who read the Word diligently but fail to receive the Holy Spirit on a regular basis become dry and frustrated.

Believers who love truth and are Spirit-filled often become self

satisfied if there is no daily cross. They fail to work out their salvation with fear and trembling.

Missionaries who devour the Word and have their lives laid down for the Master's use, but have no present experience of the Spirit, can begin to move in legalism, control or tradition.

We need the BALANCE of the three co-ordinates. The interaction of Word, Cross, and Holy Spirit produces a kingdom lifestyle.

Kingdom is where Jesus lives, moves and has His authority, overruling and ruling over all. The word of the kingdom (parables) is balanced by the kingdom coming upon you (power). See Matthew 13 and Luke 11: 20 – 22. The kingdom within is released by the death-friendly working of the daily cross in our lives. (Compare Luke 17: 20, 21 with 2 Corinthians 4: 7 – 18). This will be developed in a later chapter.

In Matters Of Guidance

Why should we be looking for the three co-ordinates in the Scripture, and in our own experience of Christian life? The word God gave to John in 1 John 5: 8 clearly confirms the rightness of our search,

“And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three agree as one.”

Agreement of the three co-ordinates vitally maintains our security in dangerous end-time days, when deception stalks. This acid test of discerning whether something is of God or not, should be our plumb-line. The will of God is supernaturally revealed by the Holy Spirit, is always in line with the word of God, and will contain a personal cross. The often heard “the Lord told me” must have the Spirit and the Cross to check and balance. We live in a charismatic quagmire today, where many sincere believers having been cautious of excess, have returned to denominational churches and often have limited usefulness. Paul warns us not to build again those things which God destroyed (Galations 2: 18).

Tests Of A Healthy Church

Choice of church fellowship should revolve around the three co-ordinates:

- Is the word of God preached under the anointing of the Spirit?
- Is the Cross at work in the lives of the fellowship? (self-sacrifice, agape love, good works etc.)
- Is the Holy Spirit producing gift and ministry after

Romans 12: 6 – 8 and 1 Corinthians 12: 8 – 11?

After discerning whether the three co-ordinates are at work, we need to ask other questions:

- Does the church relate truth to the neighbourhood?
- Is the church related to the gospel at work in the world?
- Is it self supporting or always dependant on outside ministry?
- Can it contain friction, e.g. don't tell next door?
- Will it accomodate visiting ministry?

Marriage Guidance

In the choice of marriage partner: do the three co-ordinates work together for the glory of God? The choice of marriage partner will determine our ministry. It is the second most important choice we make. Here is some guidance:

- Has God spoken it into being?
- Does the Holy Spirit anoint prayers together and life together?
- Is there a personal cross or cost in the marriage that is for the glory of God alone?

The last question involves the reality of agape love. God's kind of love will flow when there is a holy valuation in our choice. The holy valuation depends on whether we follow the western norm of falling in love, or whether we allow divine love to inform the other levels of love. Phileo love is preferring one to another, preferring Bach to Mozart, you may prefer New Labour to the Liberal Democrats. Peter preferred Jesus to anyone else before the Cross but it was him in support of the Lord. Essentially self was still on the throne of his life. It is only when phileo love has the undergirding or the informing of agape love can it give God glory. When physical passion (eros love) has the reality of agape love it will also bring a sense of the presence of God. When eros is without agape love the seed of destruction is planted. Rising devorce rates are often linked to lust in one of the partners. Essentially marriage can only work when there is a sacrificial attitude in both people. Biblical submission is a giving up of my

preference in loving self-sacrifice. Clear and good communication is vital, but needs to be in love.

In Conclusion

The three co-ordinates properly experienced in our Christian lives will produce in the disciple who loves the Lord Jesus:

- Increased anointing for signs and wonders and deliverance ministry.
- Impartations of the glory of God to your spirit, see 2 Thessalonians 2: 14.
- Intelligent discipleship which includes: death to self and the division of soul and spirit so we escape souliness (i.e. having our soul the source of operations instead of our spirit).
- A vital union with our Lord in the adventures of true fellowship and holy intimacy.
- True spiritual warfare with Him, confronting alien powers from our position of far above all principalities and power.
- A legitimate anointing and increased discernment of the false illegitimate anointing. No cross = No true Holy Spirit.
- A pure flow of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that have no human mixture as LOVE and WISDOM are also evidenced.
- A true sharing in the intimate fellowship of the Father and the Son.

These benefits are ours for the taking on the ONE VITAL CONDITION that we make the divine agents of WORD, BLOOD AND SPIRIT our own.

Make a claim on the blood of Jesus!

Reckon yourself dead to sin through the Cross position of Romans 6!

Live in the promises of the Word!

Be filled with the Holy Spirit! Hallelujah!!

If you want the FULL GOSPEL the three co-ordinates are essential. The Word of grace builds up the new creation in our spirits. The Cross and the blood of Jesus minister to our soul, making it a vehicle for heaven's life. The Holy Spirit quickens our mortal body so we may do His will.

CONTEXTUAL TRUTHS

The glory of God is related to expositional preaching in the history of many revivals. The respect of context and the progressive unveiling of a passage of scripture, by a Holy Spirit renewed mind, is expositional preaching. It produces the glory. In South America, Africa and the Hebrides it was so. Taking bits of scripture here and there when uninspired can bring quick confusion to a church. We all know: "...Judas hanged himself..." and "... go and do thou likewise."! The word of Colossians 3: 16 and Ephesians 5: 18, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...", and "... go on being filled with the Holy Spirit..." are always in balance when the true grace produces the glory of God in preaching. People who claim things are of the Spirit, when there is no foundation of word, open the way to deception.

Jesus was and is full of grace and truth. Truth is one arm looking for another arm: either grace or love or trust. We speak the truth in love. Love rejoices in the truth. As we read scripture we will see this. Reading the context of a text helps us to interpret the scripture correctly, and rightly divide the word of truth. A good example of truth and love is John 13: 25, 26; surely in the matter of tragic truthful disclosure John is receiving the heartbeat of the Master's love – while leaning his head on his Lord's breast. A text without a context is a pretext. The survival of a revival for the glory of God is never without the Bible! A systematic reading of the Word produces real fruit in the life of the believer.

Check out the beginning and the end of a chapter, a clue will occur to help us see the meaning of the whole chapter. The monks who put in chapter and verse were not always divinely inspired, but mostly it was a job well done. Take Luke 10, a chapter on the glory of mission. See the simple divisions:

verses 2 – 24: adventure of mission
verses 25 – 37: action of mercy
verses 38 – 42: abandonment of meditation.

We see simple equations of spiritual worth here:

MISSION = MERCY + MEDITATION

ADVENTURE = ABANDONMENT + ACTION

Revelation from sitting at His feet has to be added to the compassion of mercy. Loving others without His leading and discernment can lead to disasters (Philippians 1: 9). I know believers who have taken in wayfarers, drug addicts and abusers out of a heart of love, but have been cheated, stolen from and accused. The balance of mercy and meditation will give success. Jesus often withdrew to spend time in the secret place with His Father, His ministry flowed from that.

If your Christian life is dull, repetitive and monotonous, have you failed to tap into the abundant God-kind of life Jesus promised? Adventures in the Spirit must join the impetus of love and the intuition of revelation. Some of our adventures may include the rejection of the message (Luke 10: 12 – 16).

Continuing with Luke 10, another helpful idea is to ask ourselves questions:

- 1) What did it mean to be “before His face” in verse 1
- 2) Is there a sense in the last verse that Mary was before His face?
- 3) Name the characteristics of mission Jesus style.
- 4) Why is it that different cities accept or reject the gospel? Look up Mark 8: 22 – 26; and Jeremiah 2: 27, 28; Acts 17: 11.
- 5) What were the differences of reaction from the priest, levite and samaritan to the half dead man?
- 6) Looking at Martha and Mary throughout the gospels, describe their personalities.

These two avenues of research make our Bible reading personal and instructive. The problem with daily devotionals is that you can become ministry dependent; we need to grow up and achieve a personal relationship with the word of God. Spoon-fed believers will not mature but remain clones of other men's minds. Dig for yourselves! Get a concordance and buy some decent reference works like Vine's expository of N. T. words. This narrow way will take more time, but over the years produce in you the convictions and zeal necessary for a ministry of the Word.

THE SOWER AND THE SEED

This key parable focuses on two realities: the state of your heart, and the issue of fruitfulness. The seed of scripture once planted in your spirit is successful against every satanic situation. We can see the truth of the tripartite being of man in this earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Four kinds of soil (or heart) are described:

- wayside **BODY**
- rocky INTELLECT **SOUL**
- thorny EMOTIONS AND WILL **SOUL**
- good ground **SPIRIT**

The intellect, emotions and will make up the SOUL of man. In Mark 4: 21 Jesus mentions the lamp, which in Proverbs 20: 27 is a type of your human spirit. The lamp must enjoy a place of prominence to do its light-sending work. Our spirit must be above our soul and body for the believer to flow in the Holy Spirit. The wicked and those who curse parents have their spirit unable to function according to Proverbs 20: 20 and 24: 20. These people are not even related to the wayside heart because the seed of the word is not even sown! Wayside hearts may include Cain, Esau, Michal and Lot's wife. Satan comes and robs them of the direct command of God. To receive truth in the inward parts takes diligent perseverance.

The rocky heart distinguishes itself by having "... no root in themselves" Mark 4: 17. There comes an immediate joy of the knowledge of the truth, but these stumble when persecution arrives. No root can mean four deficiencies:

- believers do not know who they are in Christ
- believers do not experience 1 Corinthians 6: 17
- believers rely on their mental assent rather than on the Holy Spirit
- believers who refuse the roots of their faith: Israel.

Saul and Absalom are good examples of unbroken men who have no fellowship with God, and are still ruled by the carnal nature. 1 Corinthians 6: 17 means that as believers we have a conscious knowing that we are joined to the risen Christ and seated with Him in heavenly places. Knowing the guidance and instruction of the Holy Spirit also roots us in Him as we obey. It is also worth noting that Israel is the root of the Church (read Romans 11), those with rocky hearts also fail to acknowledge God's special purpose and calling for the nation of Israel, the Jews, and refuse to bless them and pray for them according to God's command (Genesis 12: 1 - 3; Psalm 122: 6 – 8; Isaiah 62: 6, 7, 11, 12; Romans 11).

The thorny hearts compromise with the world, tolerate sin, are weighed down with the cares of this life, and therefore, cannot bring fruit to maturity. Anxiety and materialism still hold sway reducing any discipleship to a minimum. Look at 2 Corinthians 6: 16 – 18 and 2 Timothy 3: 1 – 5, these two scriptures spell out separation to discipleship and separation from the religious spirit. The rich young ruler and Solomon come to mind, as does early Jacob who had a contractual relationship with God.

However, if we are going to be good ground, honest and noble, we need to recognize that we all go through these three states of heart. There is a PROCESS to our PROGRESS. To hear, accept and bear fruit is very rarely all at once! We have struggles, battles and times or seasons when the Lordship of Christ fails to be a reality due to our hard hearts. The key has to be getting the SEED SOWN in our new creation spirits.

HOW? You ask. Let me offer a few solutions:

- hear the word of God as you speak it, because this encourages faith.
- pray in tongues because this makes your spirit sensitive to God's word.
- praise God by declaring His virtues, because this makes us emotionally free and produces liberty of will and thinking.
- meditation of the word of God by looking at verses you write out and stick up on your bedroom wall. Enjoying His stillness and presence.
- listening quietly to worship in Spirit and truth, so we prepare ourselves to hear.
- by obeying what God is saying to you... particularly in the area of relationships. God opens up realities after reconciliation.
- Being open to deliverance ministry. We need the seed in a broken and a contrite heart. Noble means repentant (see Luke 8: 15) and the blessing of multiplication will always follow repentance for the glory of God!

VISIONS AND DREAMS

Never trust them unless you find God's word to substantiate them. The context of the supernatural should be the word of God

because miracles are occurrences in accordance with a living word. If not, we can doubt their source. Recently a lady came to see me with a perplexing impression of gold and silver threads over her belly. The importance of finding God's word cannot be overestimated as God is bound by His Word. Ecclesiastes 12: 6 and 1 Corinthians 6: 20 brought light, and we saw the negative possibility – death, and the positive - redemption and glory. Prayerful investigation upon these scriptures revealed that jealousy which involves spiritual death was, in fact, hindering her in the manifestations of the Spirit, thereby holding back an opportunity for God's glory. The context of truth brought understanding. Visions and dreams can remain frustratingly ineffective without the Word of God based interpretation. Context of the supernatural should always be the Word. The mind should never be in a state of passivity before a vision, evil spirits take advantage of a passive state. Dreams and visions should bring mental clarity and come without odd or strange atmospheres. They shouldn't leave you dulled because the genuine quickens our faculties. Now there is a difference between passivity, which is the non-working of a faculty, and of quietness before the Lord. The peace that surpasses all understanding, a gift from the Lord, should be a registration within our spirits. This is a safeguard from deception. If you are uncertain about the source of a vision or dream, pray in the Spirit and the impression will either fade or grow stronger. If it grows stronger and there is also the confirming word of God, then you know that God is speaking. A dream is usually a way of confirmation to us once the Good Shepherd has spoken a living word to our hearts. The context of Joseph's dream in the gospel was the fulfillment of Old Testament promise "Out of Egypt I called My Son." (Matthew 2: 13 – 15)

CONTEXT IN ESCHATOLOGY

The four horses of Revelation 6: 1 – 8 relate to the signs recorded in Matthew 24. Scripture confirms with two or three witnesses, and never says anything of importance only once. We are living in days as Karl Barth said, "... reading the Bible in one hand, and the newspaper in the other." However, we need careful exegesis in the Word to assume the latest news underlines an ancient prophecy.

The four galloping horses are types:

- White DECEPTION Matthew 24: 4, 5, 11
- Red WAR Matthew 24: 6, 7
- Black FAMINE Matthew 24: 7
- Pale DEATH Matthew 24: 9

The order in Matthew is very similar. Notice “he who sat on it”, or “the one who sat on it”. Each horse has a rider. The horse is a symbol of what goes on, on the earth, in the flesh realm. The rider represents the evil spirit, that from the heavenly places, controls the event on the earth. Isaiah 24: 21 supports this claim:

“and it shall come to pass in that day that the Lord will
punish on high the host of exalted ones (demon forces)
and on the earth, the kings of the earth.”

(Emphasis mine)

Spirits of evil connect with political and royal leaders. That is why God commands believers FIRST OF ALL to pray for governments. We are not saying, however, that the devil runs the events leading to our Lord's glorious return. Jesus is sovereign Lord, but uses the enemy to fulfill His purposes. The enemy, like the fallen angels in Jude 6, is on a permissive leash. John in Revelation 6: 8 glimpses the unseen realm, where Death and Hades sit on the pale horse, pursuing an agenda of death 40 times more terrible than the 45 million killed in the second world war. That is the literal reading of a quarter of the earth's population! What an awesome context for our lives and prayers in these end-times. We live now in the climax of the ages.

The context of what's the time spiritually has a huge importance. We watch and pray in order to survive, and revive. In the last days some will know the BIBLE and REVIVAL. Is our geography in a town asleep, or where the Holy Spirit is moving?

THE TWO TESTAMENTS

Augustine said, “The New is latent in the Old Testament, and the Old is patent in the New”. Or we could say, the Old is truth concealed which is revealed in the New. Today a lack of context has brought confusion. Recently, a man in a congregation could not bring himself to sing a line which spoke of the judgment of God. He went to the elder and he changed it to accommodate this man's mistaken belief that God in the New Testament (N.T.) is only

a God of love. The wrath of God in Revelation, however, is much more catastrophic and more universal than the plagues in Egypt! The God of the New is the same God as the God of the Old Testament (O.T.). He did not have a personality change after the Cross. Unchanging, eternal Father cannot lie or camouflage His character like some super-spiritual chameleon. It is our approach to God that has changed from law to grace after Jesus cried out, "It is finished".

Today we need to see how the testaments safeguard one another. A good example of this is seeing O. T. characters as excellent illustrations for certain N.T. principles. Galatians 5: 17 says "... the flesh lusts against the Spirit...". The battle between the flesh kingdom of Saul and the Spirit kingdom of David comes to mind. Another example was one used by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 4: 21 – 31, where he uses Sarah and Issac, and Hagar and Ishmael in Genesis 21: 10 as representing the two covenants. Hagar representing Mount Sinai (the Law), which gives birth to bondage: Ishmael being born of the flesh. Sarah gives birth to Issac who is the child of promise, born under supernatural circumstances, she represents the freedom of faith and grace in the new covenant. Is the Law then bad? If you read Galatians 3: 19 – 25, we get a fuller picture. Truth must be contextual or we get confused by picking up texts here and there, and making the Bible an authority for our own opinions and ideas.

To understand the Bible we must be committed to studying the Word, submit to it, and be committed to carrying out its holy instruction. For this we are dependent upon the Helper: the One called alongside us to guide us into ALL truth (John 14: 16 and 17; John 16: 13). By seeing the stories of the O.T. as deeply relevant to our lives, as we live out the new covenant, we will be encouraged. The God of Jacob smiles on our struggles and trials before we become like Israel, a prophetic father. The key is to persevere and endure through the tests. If we desire wisdom as James admonishes us, should we not go to Proverbs 8 and Job 28? The walk of faith and its pitfalls are portrayed by Abraham. Linking the book of Joshua with Ephesians profits us. May God help us to see none of the Bible is redundant and no word of God is futile, but is strengthened by comparing spiritual with spiritual. The Old and New Testaments are both spiritual, God-breathed out words, and both in the context of one another.

In 1 Corinthians 10: 11 we read, “Now all these happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come.” The word “admonition” means to press into the mind a governing thought, so we are warned by it. We today love the promises of God but we also need the balance of the prohibitions. Today we need to paint a gospel of grace on the dark background of coming judgement. The stars of glory and grace shine out of a night sky! The ends of the ages in this verse is a poor translation. Jack Hayford has likened the phrase to, “... we have come within the circle of possibilities that have not emerged before.”. This emphasises the need to see our opportunities of grace upon a backdrop of escalating international tensions.

CONTEXT OF A TEXT

A text without a context is a pretext said someone, and we all know the story of Judas' suicide and the word “go and do thou likewise”! Indiscriminate arrangement of texts lead to heresy, a skillful intermingling of truth and error. Systematic reading of the Bible helps to see the context of a truth.

Isaiah 30: 21 has been taught as a vital verse on guidance:

“Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, “This is the way, walk in it” whenever you turn to the right hand or to the left...”

The context, however, is the Jew in the age of the Millennium. We need to see clearly the different dispensations or periods of time when God deals with His children in different ways. How many prosperity teachers are basically lifting passages that are either the Law or the Millennium in their overriding of the context? The dramatic insistence on tithing on Christian T.V. has little to do with Paul's major passages on giving in the N.T.. Read 1 Corinthians 9: 1 – 18; 2 Corinthians 8 and 9; and Philippians 4: 15 – 19. Many problems in the church exist because we do not see context clearly.

The dispensations, which are the seven ages before the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21, are briefly:

1. Innocence. Imagine the garden of Eden before the fall of Adam and Eve: total security, no fear or crime or animal savagery, a perfect climate, recognition and unclouded fellowship with God,

adventures in the Spirit, total heart satisfaction, no sin. See Genesis 1 and 2.

2. Conscience. Every sin followed the rebellion when Adam sold out to the devil and committed high treason against God. The curses of death and disease entered the human race, and only conscience in the mind of man could work toward God-consciousness. Check Genesis 6: 5; 8: 21.

3. Human government. Two things government must do to achieve fruitfulness in society: they must provide food (Genesis 9: 3) and ensure security (Genesis 9: 6). This period did not last long because Nimrod corrupted it by being against the Lord. Genesis 10: 9 is misleading: “before the Lord” means taking the place of the Lord. Politics continues this evil trend at root, despite many noble and well meaning politicians!

4. Promise. Genesis 12 and the call of Abram is a huge break with the past, because God chooses an Iraqi (in modern terms) to represent His purposes and start the Jewish race. The dispensation of promise is of faith and we today as believers are of the seed of Abraham. The name change from Abram to Abraham is due to the received Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father (Genesis 17: 1 – 5).

5. Law. From Exodus 20 until John 19 the law was God's diagnostic to point out sin, bring about wrath, and the revival of sin (Romans 4: 15; 5: 20; 7: 7 – 9). The broken law brought about the need of prophets. Jesus came to fulfill the Law and only He has succeeded . On the Cross He abolished the double enmity between man and God due to transgressions, sins and iniquity.

6. Grace. Present truth of 2 Peter 1: 12 is the church age of grace. The definition of grace is never the license to do what I want, but the liberty to do what He tells me to do. Grace, through the precious promises, gives us the power to add to our faith the virtue of moral excellence and knowledge and self-control etc. Self control is literally the new creation ruling.

7. Millennium. There is a 1000 year reign of Jesus Christ as Lord from Jerusalem, an enormous spiritual honeymoon for the bride of Christ, before the New Jerusalem, that giant cube of living light we call heaven, comes out of the sky! David Pawson in “When Jesus Returns” deals with the Millennium brilliantly. Here are 20 features of that long awaited and largely misunderstood paradise:

- 1) Satan and demons bound: Rev 20: 1 – 3
- 2) Satan's followers expelled from the earth: Matthew 13: 41 – 43; 25: 31 – 46

- 3) Restoration of Israel: Joel 2: 18, 19, 25
- 4) Holy Spirit out-poured on all flesh: Isaiah 32: 15; Joel 2: 28; Ezekiel 39: 29
- 5) Knowledge of glory worldwide: Habbakak 2: 14
- 6) Universal prosperity: Micah 4:4; Joel 3:18
- 7) Dead Sea healed: Ezekiel 47: 8
- 8) Total forgetfulness about the past: Isaiah 65: 17
- 9) Earth's atmosphere will rejoice: Isaiah 14: 7; 65: 19
- 10) Ecological harmony: Isaiah 32: 13, 15; 35: 1, 6, 7; Amos 9: 13; Psalm 72: 16; Joel 2: 24
- 11) Population increase and family life: Ezekiel 36: 38; and Isaiah 65: 23
- 12) Global peace and family peace: Isaiah 2: 4; Psalm 46: 9; 72: 7
- 13) No guilt, shame or disappointment: Joel 2: 26, 27
- 14) Very quick answers to prayer: Isaiah 65: 24
- 15) No death or sickness: Isaiah 65: 22; Romans 8: 23
- 16) Visible reign of Jesus as Lord over all: Rev. 11: 15
- 17) Everything done in the name of Jesus: Micah 4: 5; Zechariah 14: 9
- 18) Animal harmony: Isaiah 11: 6 – 9
- 19) Global divine teaching program: Isaiah 2: 2 – 4
- 20) Restoration of all things – the root meaning here is a born-again universe! Acts 3: 21

If you check these verses you'll see that they belong primarily to the age to come. Applying them to the church age of grace could be the same folly as prohibiting the eating of a prawn sandwich (shellfish are not kosher under the Law). The difference is that prawns are now allowed: the Acts 10 vision cleansed them – but there is no vision in the Bible to allow the building of the Temple (Ezekial 40 – 48) in this present age of grace. May we respect the context of truth and find our daily bread as relevant to our condition. The Kingdom comes in the Millennium in a much fuller manifestation than now. The idea of christianizing the world before the Lord comes (triumphalism), is a classic example of bringing promises that belong to another dispensation into the age of grace.

TO CONCLUDE

Truth is PROGRESSIVE in Scripture and it is CONTEXTUAL. The expositional and exegetical teaching of the word of God will encourage manifestations of His glory. God will do the unusual in our midst when there is a solid foundation. Revelation is never

opposed to reason, when reason takes second place and works out the revelation with the logic of a renewed mind. In revivals the systematic reading and preaching the word of God safeguards the supernatural glory of God. Without an appreciation of contextual truth the enemy can substitute false experiences for the true clean glory of God.

Glory is always looking for a new home. When Jesus returns the Millennial reign will have a sevenfold glory impact over our age of grace. Isaiah prophesies in chapter 30 verse 26:

“Moreover the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun. And the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord binds up the bruise of His people and heals the stroke of their wound.”

The context is Millennium glory. We praise God for His healing power today, but a deeper deliverance is coming – when Jesus returns we shall be more thoroughly prepared for heaven's New Jerusalem, during the 1000 year kingdom when King Jesus reigns from Jerusalem. We receive foretastes of the glory now, but fulfillment then. Are we being pressurized to receive deep revelations now, when in fact the glories of redemption will also be revealed in the ages to come? There is a pressure on leaders to be always finding fresh oil and revelation. Sadly, this can be a path to deception. Ephesians 2: 7 speak of the unsurpassable riches of His grace (and the resulting glory) to be revealed in Christ Jesus in the Millennium. O what a Saviour-Lord! We need to be proactive in the revelations we have already received in this age of grace, which is soon coming to an end. The Lord give us hope for revelations to come and obedience in the revelations we have received. Hallelujah!
