

Foreword by Barry Chant

the devil's playground
THE CHURCH



A call to return to the foundations
of Biblical Christianity

Gary Althorp

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The Devil's Playground:
The Church
by Gary Althorp

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Dedication

I dedicate this book
to all who have a deep
yearning and longing
for genuine revival -

a revival of
Godliness and holiness.

Acknowledgments

To my wife, Margaret, who has encouraged me more than others through the difficult stages of writing this book. She has been my constant support through many situations of ministry in different countries, willingly leaving all homely comforts in obedience to our Lord. She has shouldered the burden of ministry with me and also shares the concerns to which this book is addressed. An inspiration to me, our children and our grand-children. I love you, honey!

Also, I would like to thank all who have laboured with me in prayer and financial support to bring this book to completion. Also to Dr. Geoffrey Bingham, Rev. Ian Pennicook, and Dr. Barry Chant for their advise and encouragement.

Most importantly, I would like to thank our Father in Heaven for His indescribable gift, and the Lord Jesus for the privilege He has afforded me in being able to minister to the wider Body of Christ. It is under His direction that I have written on issues to which many are seeking Biblical clarity. Some will see only controversial issues and decry this as yet another negative attack upon their beliefs. Knowing this, I have from time to time faltered in my enthusiasm towards this project, but for the sake of His remnant Church, He has spurred me on.

It is with a deep sense of unworthiness that I have applied myself to this task. I send this book forth with the sincere prayer that it may be used in some small measure to build the Body of Christ into the full measure of the stature of the One who commissioned it.

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FOREWORD

One of the major difficulties Christians face is the almost incurable desire to add to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Most commonly, we are lured into legalism or experimentalism.

Legalism is the view that what we **do** somehow makes us more acceptable to God. So we pray more, give more, sacrifice more, work more, achieve more. If we succeed we feel gratified but if we fail, we feel unreasonably guilty.

Most Christians are aware of the world's idea that as long as we do the right thing by our neighbours, keep the Ten Commandments, don't break the law of the land and so on, we will go to heaven. We know that is not the gospel.

But we are not so aware of **Christian legalism**. In the church, it is more subtle and more sinister. Various forms of contemporary ministry are often legalistic. It's not enough to trust God to deal with past guilt and failure. We feel obligated to explore and probe into people's lives, to help God clean up the mess. Or, we don't believe that simple faith is sufficient for people to enjoy the victory of God. We must strive and sweat and exert ourselves with long prayer lines or extensive counseling sessions or fervent "spiritual warfare".

On the other hand **experientialism** is the belief that

what we feel makes us more acceptable to God. As long as we experience God's blessings in some tangible way, we feel content. This is why so many people constantly seek bodily sensations, tremblings, laughter, tears, being 'slain in the Spirit' and the like. But if these things don't happen, we feel bereft and forsaken.

Now please don't misunderstand me. There's nothing wrong with the practices I've mentioned. A Christian who does not undertake good works or have an experiential encounter with God, is no Christian at all. But these are all responses to the gospel, never the basis of it. And the reason why many of us stray into excess or heresy is that we have failed to understand this.

If we get the gospel of grace right, everything else will be right; if we get the gospel wrong, everything else will be wrong.

In this book, Gary Althorp is calling us back to the gospel. He pleads with us to stand firmly on the simple message of the Cross. If we do, he argues that our faith, our life-style, our counseling, our spiritual warfare and our experiences will all fall into line.

It is not easy to take a corrective approach without appearing to be negative. This is a hazard all prophets face. No one likes correction. Gary Althorp does take a prophetic stance in this volume. He does jolt the mind and awaken the heart. He says some uncomfortable things. But he is not negative. His approach is Biblical, positive and Christ-centered.

I hope that many people will read and hear what he has to say.

Dr. Barry Chant
Founding President, Tabor Colleges
Author and Teacher

AN INTRODUCTION TO BE READ

On the 28th. December 1989, “Our Town”, as Newcastle is colloquially known, was devastated by Australia’s worst earthquake. Being the largest non-capital city in the nation, it was never considered a likely scene for such wide spread destruction. The epicentre of the quake that claimed several lives and caused irreparable damage, was in the heart of this quiescent community. Not only was there a huge loss of property and personal possessions, people’s lives would never be the same again. Counsellors were trained to counsel those traumatised by the experience. After the event people kept asking why couldn’t we have known? Why couldn’t we have had some prior warning? I doubt very much that had there been a warning an earthquake was pending that people would have taken it seriously.

The building trade boomed in Newcastle after this tragic event, and because I was doing some ‘tent making’ to supplement a travelling ministry, I found myself working with a heavy duty angle grinder on the roof of an earthquake damaged building. Suddenly, and without warning, the roof that I was standing on gave way. I had just been thinking about the times in which we live and sensing that time was running out. I was talking to the Lord about these things when I went crashing through

the roof, landing upon the angle grinder. As I fell I cried out to the Lord "OH NO"! It was a natural reaction. I was bleeding profusely, my thumb on the left hand had been severed and the grinder had ground deeply into my wrist severing the tendons, nerves and arteries. I cried out for help, but nobody could hear me. I knew I would bleed to death if I didn't get myself down out of that roof. Throughout all of this I had a deep sense that God was in control of the whole situation.

Over the next few days, as I lay in hospital recovering from surgery, the Lord slowly pieced together in my mind a picture that paralleled what had happened in my body to what was happening in the Body of Christ. I had suffered severe trauma through the severing and brokenness that occurred to my hand. I was reminded of the truth that if one part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers. Through this experience I also gained a deeper understanding of the traumatic effect that sin has upon the Body of Christ. This became a reality to me in a way that it never had before, my own pain being the means through which deeper seeking and revelation came.

Sin in all of its aspects is taken very lightly in the Church today. We have lost sight of the truth that sin is destructive, demeaning and totally debilitating. Sin grieves the Holy Spirit of God and by it He is quenched within the believer personally, and corporately. The effects of sin can be seen clearest at the cross when the sin of the whole world consumed Christ as a seething, cancerous mass that absolutely disfigured and marred His features beyond anything we can comprehend. "His appearance was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men" (Isaiah 52:14 cf. chapter 53). In like manner the Church is marred and disfigured by sin. Jacques Ellul in his book "The Subversion of Christianity"

traces throughout history the cause and effect of a marred Church. "How has it come about that the development of Christianity and the church has given birth to a society, a civilisation, a culture that are completely opposite to what we read in the Bible, to what is indisputably the text of the law, the prophets, Jesus, and Paul? I say advisedly 'completely opposite.' There is not just contradiction on one point but on all points. On the one hand, Christianity has been accused of a whole list of faults, crimes, and deceptions that are nowhere to be found in the original text and inspiration. On the other hand, revelation has been progressively modelled and interpreted according to the practice of Christianity and the church. Critics have been unwilling to consider anything but this practice, this concrete reality, absolutely refusing to refer to the truth of what is said. There is not just deviation but radical and essential contradiction, or real subversion." He goes on to say, "If the Holy Spirit is and has been with Christians and the churches, we should not have seen the terrible subversion that has substituted the exact opposite for Christianity, replacing it with a Christianity that is remodelled by the world."¹ Ellul goes on to conclude this section on the contradictions between what is practiced in the church and what is revealed in Scripture by asking "Why have Christians taken this contrary course? What forces, mechanisms, stakes, strategies, or structures have induced this subversion?"² His answer is a sobering one; "For human aggrandisement and nothing else."³

Jesus is still the Suffering Servant and as the head of His Body the Church, He suffers deeply because His Body suffers.

"The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For

we were all baptised by (or with; or in), one Spirit into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free - and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!' On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honour to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it"

(1 Corinthians 12: 12-26).

The Body of Christ suffers today because we have a gospel that has removed the trauma of the Cross, focusing upon easy believism which cheapens Grace. We have confused the fact that grace is free but that it is very costly in that it cost the supreme sacrifice of the Lamb of God with all the suffering that that cross embraced.

We have a gospel today that unites the church with the world, whereas they should be separate.

We have a gospel today without a cross, without an offence, without a stumbling block. A crossless christianity is no christianity at all.

We have a gospel today where the cross is rarely mentioned in popular evangelism but is seen merely as an ornament to be worn around the neck of a self assured and carnal christianity. Even the blatantly godless wear this symbol, simply because it no longer carries the true Biblical significance.

We have a gospel today that entertains men, rather than slaying them, a gospel that amuses men rather than condemns them.

We have a gospel today that encourages confidence in the flesh rather than destroying it.

We have a gospel today that has replaced the action of propitiation with expiation and thus robbed some of the meaning of what actually transpired upon that cross.*

We have a gospel today that has filled our churches with people responding to an appeal to come and get their needs met and in so doing have forsaken the rugged Biblical teaching that we are called to repent.

* Propitiation means the removal of wrath by the offering of a gift, the gift being Jesus Christ. The gift is a substitutionary sacrifice in that He bears the wrath of God in punishment on behalf of those who are guilty and deserving of punishment. Many modern scholars strongly criticise this whole idea, claiming that it is barbaric and not befitting the God of love. They substitute propitiation with the word expiation that simply means the cancellation of sin. For a more

We have a gospel today that uses the wisdom of man, philosophical in its teaching, psychological in its counselling, humanistic in its thinking and New Age in its outlook. A gospel that has forsaken intimacy with God for prosperity in life.

We have a gospel today that seeks the hand of God rather than seeking His face. The seeking of miracles, signs and wonders rather than the intimacy of knowing Him, of having faith in an object (the miraculous), rather than in the Person of Father God.

We have a popular gospel today that is preached in many quarters but it is clearly another gospel.

The message of this book is not new nor novel, it is not trendy nor faddish neither is it intended to be sensational nor extremist, rather it is the age old message that arises from time to time for the purpose of calling the church back to the centrality of the Cross, back to the basics of Biblical Christianity. It is not my intention to give a scholarly treatise that would 'turn those people off' who would most benefit from its reading, rather this book is an impassioned cry from the heart.

Deception is the stamp of the last days carrying the imprint of false apostles, false prophets, false messiahs, false teachers, false ministers, false brethren, and false miracles (cf. Matthew 24; 2 Peter 2; Galatians 2:4; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15). During this time men will be "lovers of self", caught up in "doctrines of demons", "holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power". These will be "difficult times" when people will be "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:1-7). These are the days we live in, therefore we must contend for the faith (Jude 3).

Gary Althorp
Newcastle, Australia, June 2007

Part One

MOVING THE BOUNDARIES

“Tickle people with a feather and they will laugh.

Hit then with a hammer and they will accuse you of intolerance.”

(Unknown)

“Is not My word like ..

a hammer

which shatters a rock?”

(Jeremiah 23:29)

Chapter

1

DECEPTION

From of old the ancient tradition of boundary markers has been the means of determining the boundaries of personal property. On a recent tour of Israel, a friend of mine asked the guide to explain the meaning of the many piles of stones dotting the landscape. The guide explained that these were the boundary markers that determined a man's property. Even in our country, land ownership is determined by the boundary markers of the surveyors. Boundary markers determine the bounds of how far one can go without breaking the law, without trespassing into forbidden territory. The Bible speaks clearly about the promised land, the territory that we inherit, but it also gives clear warning not to move the boundaries.

King Solomon was called the wisest man in all the earth, consequently his Proverbs are a part of the 'Wisdom' literature of the Bible. Solomon's wisdom was attributed to his relationship with God. This ancient and wise king of Israel, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote "Do not move the ancient boundary which your fathers set" (Proverbs 22:28). This idea can be traced back to Deuteronomy 19:14 where Moses wrote concerning laws of landmarks; "You shall not move your neighbour's boundary mark, which the ancestors have set, in your inheritance which you shall inherit in the land that the

Lord your God gives you to possess". "Cursed is he who moves his neighbour's boundary mark. And all the people shall say, 'Amen'" (Deuteronomy 27:17). Job, whilst lamenting that God seems to ignore the wrongs that people do, says "Some remove the landmarks; they seize and devour flocks". He goes on to say "Others have been with those who rebel against the light; They do not want to know its ways, nor abide in its paths" (Job 24:2, 13).

Whereas all of these scriptures clearly refer to private land ownership, nevertheless they are also clear references to the fact that God sets the boundaries. The boundaries set for our inhabiting the promised land are clearly defined by God's boundary marker, the Bible, His Word. The great psalmist David gave credence to the Word of God by saying "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105). We are never to venture through life without the light-giving Word, lest we slip with our feet and err on our path. Spurgeon declares "He who walks in darkness is sure, sooner or later, to stumble; while he who walks by the light of day, or by the lamp at night, stumbleth not, but keeps his uprightness."⁴ Again in Proverbs we are warned "Do not move the ancient boundary" (Proverbs 23:10).

Moving the boundary marker, either adding to or subtracting from the Word of God, is the major crisis facing the Church today. This is a crisis of deception, a crisis that portrays the church as the playground in which the devil can satisfy his lust crazed desire to deceive.

"For many deceivers have gone out into the world... watch yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. Any one who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the

Son. If any one comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds" (2 John 7-11).

The Epistles of John are all concerned with the truth. The first Epistle is occasioned with the fledgling heresy of gnosticism which gained full force in the 2nd. century. Simply stated gnosticism presented a dualism, a separation between the spirit and matter. They denied that the man Jesus was the Christ and that the Christ Spirit came upon the earthly Jesus at his baptism but departed from him sometime before the cross. They claimed that only the spirit is perfect and that the flesh and the world are evil. Because of this emphasis they denied the necessity for Christ to die and shed His blood for the remission of sin as only the spirit was going to live for eternity. This excused any necessity for Holiness and Godliness in the actions of man. They claimed a state of perfection in their spirits while their fleshly appetites went unchecked. The basis for their teachings was upon a claim to divine revelation, divine knowledge. The Greek word for knowledge being "gnosis" from where the heresy is named.

These Epistles of John are a clarion call for the Church to return to the fundamentals or the foundations of the faith. I. Howard Marshall, senior lecturer in New Testament Exegesis at the University of Aberdeen Scotland, comments on the heading given to the First Epistle by the New English Bible, 'Recall to Fundamentals':

"It is an apt title, for this Epistle, and indeed all three are concerned with the very fundamentals of Christian belief and life. The reader who grasps the message of these letters will have a sound basis in Christian doctrine, ready to

be filled out by further study elsewhere in the New Testament.”⁵

John's call to return to the fundamentals of Christian belief and life is evidenced as he addresses the dangerous threat posed by heresy to the Church collectively and to the lives of individual believers.

The second and third Epistles specifically deal with and stress, the necessity for adherence to the truth. John found it necessary to write to these beloved brethren and warn them of the dangers of false teaching in their midst which was not grounded in the “Word of Truth”.

“Anybody who does not ‘continue’ in this teaching - be he a false teacher from outside or a member of the church who abandons his former belief - can be said to ‘run ahead’. Perhaps this is a sarcastic reference to the way in which the false teachers themselves proudly claimed to be offering ‘advanced’ teaching; the elder claims that they have ‘advanced’ beyond the boundaries of true Christian belief. The warning is still a valid one; any teaching which goes beyond the plain message of Scripture should at once put us on the alert lest it actually contradicts the truth revealed in Scripture. When the teaching of the Bible needs to be supplemented by some ‘key’ to the Bible or by some new revelation, it is a sure sign that ‘advanced’ doctrine is being put forward.”⁶

John's judgement that “Any one who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God;” is paralleled to the words of Christ Himself as He answers Peter, James, John and Andrew's questions to reveal when the end would come. “See to it that no one misleads you. Many will come in My name, saying, ‘I

am He!' and will mislead many" (Mark 13:5-6). The literal translation of these verses read; "Be careful lest anyone mislead you. For many will come in My name, saying, I AM! And they will mislead many". "I am He" is an attempt by the translators to give clearer meaning to the text, but the 'He' is clearly not in the original. The passage is directed to what will happen in the end times. It could mean that in those days there will be many claiming to be the Christ. I consider this an unlikely meaning. If we are living in the end days, it is hardly credible that many will claim to be the Christ, however it is credible that in the last days many will come in His name saying He is the Christ, but will mislead many. Jesus' literal words were; "For many will come in My name, saying I AM! And will mislead many."

This agrees perfectly with Jesus' warning of what will happen on the judgement day; "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; Depart from Me, you who practice Lawlessness'" (Mtt. 7:22-23).

Deception by its very nature is not easily detected from the genuine. It is clear from Scripture that the master deceiver is Satan and that he holds the whole world in a state of deception, it is the very basis of the World System. The Apostle Paul exhorts the Roman Christians in the first century not to let the "world system squeeze you into its plastic mould" (Rom. 12:1-2).⁷ He obviously saw that man had a bias towards being deceived by this world system. The Apostle John makes the point clearly when he says that it is "the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world" (Rev. 12:9). In other words, the whole world lies in a state of deception, or

is deceived by this master deceiver. The extent of this deception is evidenced in the Easter edition of the Sydney Morning Herald's Good Weekend magazine, where 50 prominent Australians were asked for their impressions of God. The then Governor General of Australia, Bill Hayden, declared himself to be an atheist as did many of those interviewed, including one of Australia's foremost columnists and radio broadcaster, Phillip Adams, who witnessed to this deception by saying "To me, God is the great redundancy, the wrong answer to the incorrect question. If you want a Trinity, how about God, the Tooth Fairy and Father Christmas? Three comparable fantasies. God is the word we use for what we don't understand, and as knowledge advances, He, She or It recedes. God is an anthropomorphic projection on to a meaningless universe." He concludes by saying, "All things considered, it is really an enormous relief to be an atheist."⁸

The greatest deception ever unleashed upon the human race has already begun. It is nothing new "for that serpent of old, called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world", is the genius behind this master deception that has escalated to fever pitch in these last days. That this deception is in the World is understand-able, but it is deplorable to think that it is in the Church.

Deception is difficult to detect immediately, and once detected it has usually taken such a strong hold that people are afraid to speak out against it. The most sinister aspect of deception is that it appeals to the carnal nature of man. The very use of the word "carnal" would cause those caught up in deception to immediately excuse themselves because their whole thrust is toward spiritual things. By carnal I mean believing a gospel that is specifically biased toward self. The Apostles constantly faced this issue in the early church;

“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel - which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!”
(Galatians 1:6-9).

The master deceiver is clearly depicted in the Scriptures as disguising himself as an angel of light and coming as a wolf dressed in sheep's clothing. These disguises are not needed in the world, they are needed in the Church. He is not so foolish to attempt to deceive by trying to introduce gross error without any disguise. It would appear so repugnant to even the coldest heart. Rather his strategy is the age old successfully proven technique that appeals to self interest. This was the sin found in Lucifer's heart when he exalted himself above God and wanted to be worshipped as God (Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:12-17; Revelation 12:7-9). This is the very same temptation he brought against Eve in the Garden of Eden when he told her she would not die as God said, rather she would be as God (Genesis 3:5). It was this appeal to self that Eve succumbed to. This has been the strategy of the enemy down through the corridors of time. It is the same temptation that he brought against Jesus in the wilderness temptations when he enticed Him to turn the rocks into bread. This was an attempt to take Jesus' focus off the Word of the Lord and to try to get Him to focus upon His own needs.

All error is based upon the deception of self. It is an attempt to worship in a system of works where a person arrives at God by their own effort, or it is a system of beliefs that have the appearance of deep spirituality yet are focused upon getting ones needs met. This latter is so strong a drive within the human heart that man will stop at almost nothing to satisfy this insatiable appetite. The prophet Jeremiah spoke forth the Word of the Lord, as God recorded for all time just how He viewed the heart of man when He declared that it is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). The truth of the matter is that man can never know the deceitful and desperately wicked state of his own heart, only God can and to whom He wills to reveal it. King David cried unto the Lord to be renewed with a right spirit within, that God should search him out and reveal to him any wicked way within himself. He even asked the Lord to keep him from presumptuous sin (Psalm 139:23-24; 26:2; 51:10; 19:13).

The Church has succumbed on a large scale to the deceptive schemes of the devil. Trying to meet people's needs by focusing upon them rather than upon the Lord has meant that we have focused upon the creature rather than the Creator. It is right and proper to meet people's needs, however it should always be within the scriptural guidelines. Our priority is to worship and serve God. The first and greatest commandment is to love the Lord our God with all our being and our neighbour as ourself. Unfortunately, the Church in many quarters has been deceived into preaching a gospel that focuses peoples attention upon themselves from the outset, which establishes them in a mind set that God is a spiritual errand boy at their disposal in order to meet their needs at their positive confession.

Many of the emphases found within the Church

today are in fact man made philosophies which have the appearance of being spiritual, but have their roots in humanistic psychology.

“I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up”
(Galatians 1:11)

“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ” (Colossians 2:8)

On this occasion the Apostle Paul warns the Colossian Christians to be alert against philosophy which he equates with empty deception. This deception is void of truth although in appearance it holds the guise of truth. This deception is according to the tradition of men, it has always been a part of man made religion. It is based in the elementary principles of the world. This is the very foundation principle from which all worldly wisdom springs.

James addresses the whole concept of wisdom in his Letter and because he is writing to Christians, he differentiates between Godly wisdom and earthly wisdom stressing the fact that they are to live in the wisdom of God (James 1:5-8), and avoid the elementary wisdom of the world. Using very strong language James warns;

“do not be so arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic” (3:15).

He gives no doubt as to the origin of this earthly, natural wisdom - it is demonic in origin. Unfortunately, much of this earthly wisdom has invaded the Church. Philosophies that are not Biblical are being taught and

practiced simply because they are trendy and appealing. These faddish trends have their roots in earthly, natural and demonic wisdom if they are not according to Godly wisdom found in the Bible. They may, and do produce startling effects, but the end result is a deceptive influence demonically inspired to ultimately undermine and weaken the Church and its effectiveness.

“Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them” (Romans 16:17). “As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ” (Ephesians 4:14-15, emphasis added).

Jesus declared that man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). Simply stated Jesus was saying that the only spiritual food man needs, is God's Word. The words that Jesus spoke are Spirit and Life (John 6:63), and in Him “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”, for in Him “all the fullness of Deity dwells” and in Him we have been made complete (Colossians 2:3, 9-10).

In order to be aware of the nature of deception we need to understand the nature of the deceiver.

Chapter

2

THE
DECEIVER

Satan's nature is revealed by his behaviour which in turn is depicted by his various names. Before we look at Satan's names and his nature, it is important to remind ourselves again, that Satan is a defeated foe. It is not our intention to become absorbed in the doctrines of Satan, but merely to have an adequate understanding in order that we may not succumb to his deceptive schemes, but rather even expose them. As Geoffrey Bingham says in his book, 'The Dominion of Darkness and the Victory of God'; "Christians who become absorbed in the doctrines of Satan, his powers, his demons, and evil forces become so obsessed that they imagine life is fraught with enormous dangers. Fear pervades them. It seems, often, that Satan is the one who has the power and not God."⁹ The truth is, that God is the all powerful One Who created Lucifer, a glorious angel of light, who rebelled and has been defeated. A study of his names and titles will assist us to trace his demise.

Lucifer is a name used of Satan only once and means 'shining one'; "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning" (Isaiah 14:12). The phrase 'son of the morning' literally means 'star of the morning' or 'morning star' and according to *The Foundations Of Pentecostal Theology*, Duffield and Van Cleave state that it signifies "light-bearer". They go on to say, "the Bible indicates that Lucifer occupied an exalted position in the heavens, possibly second only to the Trinity Itself. It is well to remember this in our thinking of him, for he, no doubt, has not lost all the dignity which was his then. We must be warned that he does not come to us as a hideous creature out of Hell, but as one who formerly occupied the heights. Thus his appeals will sometimes seem to be high and lofty."¹⁰ Lucifer was Satan's original name and refers to his original perfection and position. He was the most beautiful and most exalted of all God's creation. He literally 'shone'.

Satan is used fifty six times in the Bible and it is descriptive of him as adversary. Peter speaks of him as "your adversary the devil" (1 Peter 5:8). The name literally means hater, opponent, enemy, adversary. Satan is the greatest enemy of God and man. Because his ambition is to depose God of His Throne, he also has to enslave and demean man who is created in God's image. 1 Chronicles 21:1 tells the story of how "Satan stood against Israel...". Satan is the hater and all his actions are expressions of his hatred. Emery H. Bancroft says in his 'Christian Theology' that "Satan hates God and hates the Holy Ghost, but the full force of his hatred is directed toward the Son of God, his rival for place and power."¹¹ This great hatred for the Son of God can be traced through the Bible. It began in the Garden of Eden;

"And I will put enmity between you and the

woman and between your seed and her seed.
He shall crush you on the head and you shall
bruise Him on the heel” (Genesis 3:15)

Satan evoked Cain to kill Abel, thinking that in him was the promised line of woman’s seed (Genesis 4:25-26). King Saul, was incited by an evil spirit to kill David, through whom the promised seed was to come (1 Samuel 19:9-10, 16:12-13; 2 Samuel 7:12, 16). Satan stirred up the ten tribes of Israel through Sheba, ‘a man of belial’ (another name for Satan), to try to destroy the tribe of Judah from which the promised seed would come (2 Samuel 10:1-2). He was behind the plot of Haman to exterminate all the Jews of the dispersion (Esther 3:8-9). Satan also moved Herod to slay all the male children in Bethlehem at the time of Christ’s birth, with the hope of destroying the promised seed (Matthew 2:16-18). Having failed to prevent the promised seed from appearing, he then tempted Him to commit suicide (Matthew 4:5-6), incited the crowd to throw Him down a cliff (Luke 4:29-30), and caused a fierce storm in an effort to destroy Jesus (Mark 4:36-39). All of Satan’s hateful attempts to prevent God’s promise, His seed, a Redeemer, from coming through a woman and crushing his head, have failed. Satan understandably, hates the Gospel. He uses every cunning scheme in opposing and hindering the preaching of the good news about Christ’s victory at the cross, which was his defeat. His energies are now applied to the breaking down of all that was accomplished on Calvary’s cross. Everything good and positive resulting from the atonement instantly incurs his satanic hatred. The Apostle Paul was opposed and hindered in his ministry by Satan, “Therefore we wanted to come to you - even I, Paul, time and again - but Satan hindered us” (1 Thessalonians 2:18).

Evil one and wicked one are names given to the enemy

of man by Jesus. When giving practical instruction in His teaching on the mountain He warned the people that going beyond what God permits has its origins in Satan;

“...For whatever is more than these is from the evil one” (Matthew 5:37).

He went on to teach the model prayer, referred to today as the Lord's prayer, in which He informed them to ask to be delivered “from the evil one” (Matthew 6:13). In the parable of the sower Jesus explained something of the nature of the deceiver by saying;

“When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart” (Matthew 13:19).

Also in the parable of the wheat and the tares He clearly states that the enemy, the deceiver, has placed the tares among the wheat and “the tares are the sons of the wicked one” (Matthew 13:38 cf. 1 John 3:12). Ever since the fall of Satan, he has been the personification of evil and wickedness. God, who cannot look upon sin, said to him “you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God” (Ezekiel 28:16). As a result of his being cast to the earth, and because man sold his birthright to exercise lordship over the world for a lie (Genesis 1:28), this wicked or evil one exercises lordship because “the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one” (1 John 5:19).

Serpent is a symbol of deceit and is indicative of Satan for it depicts his subtlety, craftiness, and deceitfulness which can be seen throughout the Scriptures from the first book, “Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field...” (Genesis 3:1), to the last, “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world”; “He laid hold of the dragon,

that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years." (Revelation 12:9, 20:2).

Clearly the influence of the deceiver is such that his deception cannot be avoided in this world. However, the Church is called to be in the world but not of the world and we are clearly warned that if the love of the world is in us then the love of the Father cannot be (John 17:11-21; 1 John 2:15-18). Jesus' great High Priestly prayer tells us something of the passion He had for us as He prayed to the Father;

"I have given them Thy word; and the whole world has hated them, because they are not of the world. I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world even as I am not of the world" (John 17:14-16).

The Apostle Paul expresses something of his burden for a first century church, a church having the full expression of the gifts of the Spirit, a church where great signs and wonders were evidenced;

"But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray" (2 Corinthians 11:3).

The wisdom that God gave Lucifer in the beginning was corrupted at his fall. It degenerated into craftiness and evil cunning. The serpent is a liar, a deceiver, and a murderer.

"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar, and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

Satan's lies are not so blatantly obvious that all can detect them as such, rather they are disguised as truth, yet always contradicting the truth of God's word. He is the source and inspiration of all lies, and it was through a lie that the serpent beguiled our first parents.

As the serpent, Satan uses his devilish wisdom to seduce and tempt man into sin, constantly inciting him. As he did with Jesus, "now when the tempter came to Him" (Matthew 4:3), so with us "I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you" (1 Thessalonians 3:5). All temptation has its source in Satan, he is the tempter. It needs to be stated that though he is the tempter, he cannot read our minds for he is not omniscient, "for Thou alone dost know the hearts of all the sons of men" (1 Kings 8:39), God alone knows the inner and hidden things of the heart. Many Christians today have an unhealthy superstitious concept that the devil can read their thoughts and so bring evil against them. This simply is not so.

Satan intends to search out, harm and destroy. Just as the serpent has a poisonous bite, so Satan is poisonous and dangerous. He uses people to spread his deadly poison, "Their poison is like the poison of a serpent" (Psalm 58:4).

The first promise in the Bible was fulfilled at Calvary when the serpent, Satan, bruised Jesus' heel, but Jesus crushed Satan's head. An interesting parallel can be drawn through the fact that the serpent's poison is contained in glands located in its head. It is fascinating to note that by crushing the head of a serpent, the poison is released and it dies in its own venom. At the cross, Satan was destroyed by his own venom. What he thought was his ultimate victory, turned out to be his ultimate defeat, for it was here that his power was cancelled and destroyed;

"that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil"

(Hebrews 2:14)

“Having disarmed principalities and powers,
He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing
over them in it” (Colossians 2:15).

The deceiver has tremendous power which is nowhere better demonstrated than by the fact that he holds the whole world in a state of deception. He holds great power over the minds of men which of course affords him great power in the whole world system which is the seat of his throne. “And the dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority” (Revelation 13:2). Again we need to be reminded that all authority both in heaven and earth, belongs to Christ (Matthew 28:18, cf. Ephesians 1:10; Acts 17:24; Mark 13:25; Philippians 2:10; Colossians 1:16-17, 20; 1 Corinthians 15:24; 1 Peter 3:22). The fact that Satan’s power is over the minds of men is evidenced throughout the New Testament for “the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4). We on the other hand are encouraged to be renewed in the spirit of our minds (Ephesians 4:23), and to have a complete renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2), in fact we are exhorted to have the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5). While we are told that the mind that is set on the flesh is a hostile enemy to God and it is in fact in a state of death, the mind set on the Spirit is both life and peace (Romans 8:5-9).

The account of Peter responding to Jesus’ searching question as to who men thought He was, found Peter being affirmed by Jesus when he responded that He was the Christ, Son of the living God. Jesus affirmed Peter by telling him he was blessed because the revelation that he had received, came directly from the Father. Jesus then went on to tell His disciples that He had to go to Jerusalem and suf-

fer and die at the hands of man, to which Peter responded "not so Lord, may it never be". Jesus rebuked these words from the man who had just a few moments before spoken forth wonderful revelation. "He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's'" (Matthew 16:23). Literally this means "for you think not as God but as man". Jesus rebuked Satan who took opportunity through Peter's undisciplined mind. He did not mean that Peter was demonised, rather his rebuff to Peter was that he was a stumbling block to Him because he thought not as God on the situation.

Devil is a title used thirty five times in the Bible. The Hebrew word 'Sair' means 'hairy goat', 'he goat' or 'spoiler'. The devil is the spoiler, the one who defiles, debauches, besmirches, soils, smears, blights, and mars. He makes what was once beautiful, ugly and repulsive. He wants every one and every thing to suffer the same fate as himself.

The Greek word 'diabolos' means 'accuser', 'slanderer', 'traducer'. As it was in the beginning so it is today, that the devil lies to the world about the nature of God in order to give a false concept of Him and to cause rebellion against Him. This is in fact what happened to Eve (Genesis 3:4-5). The devil continues this attack upon believers;

"Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night" (Rev. 12:10-11).

Beelzebub signifies he is 'lord of the flies' or the 'prince of demons'. Duffield and Van Cleave say "This name suggests the vast host of demon spirits over which Satan rules as prince."¹² It was used in the Old Testament

(2 Kings 1:2,16), to describe the god of the Philistines who was believed to be the ruler of all evil spirits. Jesus used this name when referring to Satan (Matthew 10:25, 12:24-27; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15,19).

Belial means 'good for nothing', 'worthless' and 'lawless'. It was an Old Testament term often used to describe evil men, (Deuteronomy 13:13; Judges 20:13; 1 Samuel 10:27). Satan is the lawless one, the rebel from the beginning (Isaiah 14). He consequently coerced the first man to rebel against God in the garden (Genesis 3), and he goes on sowing the seeds of rebellion, wild tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43; 2 Timothy 3:15).

"Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact sin is lawlessness...He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning...This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are" (1 John 3:4,8,10).

The term sons of belial is used in the Old Testament to refer to sex deviates (Judges 19:22), idolaters (Deuteronomy 13:12-15), wine bibbers (1 Samuel 1:13,15,16), ungodly ministers (1 Samuel 2:12), vulgar and evil men (1 Samuel 25:17).

Great Dragon reveals his frightening fury, vicious rage and great strength. The Hebrew word translated dragon is 'tarmoh' which means 'howler' or 'jackal', descriptive of the noise made by the howling jackal in the wilderness. In the book of Revelation Satan is constantly referred to as the Great Dragon (Revelation 12:3-17, 13:2-4,11, 16:13, 20:2). Satan's defeat at the cross has particularly enraged him and in Revelation 12:12-17 this rage is graphically portrayed. Knowing he is doomed, he pours out his anger like a river upon "those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus" (Revelation 12:17). It is comforting to know that God has an answer for "the

flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth". Isaiah 59:19 states it clearly, "When the enemy comes in like a flood, The Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him". This standard is the Word of God.

Abaddon and Apollyon are names used simultaneously acknowledging the nature of Satan and the work of Satan.

"And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon" (Revelation 9:11).

The Hebrew name Abaddon literally means 'destruction', while the Greek form Apollyon means 'destroyer'. He is the destroyer and all of his works are works of destruction. Jesus acknowledged this when He said;

"The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy, but I have come to give life, and to give it in the full abundance it was meant to have" (John 10:10).

Prince of the power of the air suggests Satan's rulership over those spirit beings who shared in his rebellion. It also suggests his present abode. Contrary to popular opinion, Satan does not conduct his operations from Hell. Hell is the future place of punishment for the devil, his angels and wicked men who;

"walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2).

The Bible indicates that there are three heavens above us. The first heaven is the atmosphere surrounding planet earth. The second heaven is the planetary heavens. The third heaven is the Throne of God (2 Corinthians 12:2). At His ascension, Jesus Christ "passed through the heavens"

(Hebrews 4:14). This means He passed through the first (earth's atmosphere) heaven, and through the second (planetary) heaven into the third (highest) heaven, the very presence of God. Satan was expelled from the highest heaven, along with his evil hosts, and confined to the lower atmospheric heaven of earth. Jesus Christ on the other hand is exalted, and even though Satan as the 'Prince of the Power of the Air' rules over his demonic hordes in the atmosphere above us, Jesus is enthroned far above him (Ephesians 1:19-23). The Devil may be the lord of the first heaven but this dominion is according to time and space, until his time is fulfilled and Christ returns to enforce His victory obtained upon Calvary's Cross. Jesus Christ is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and rules from the third heaven, all things being under His feet.

Satan is the ruler of this world system. The Greek word translated world is *cosmos*, meaning a systematising and putting things into order. This world system is passing away, however while it remains it embraces every strata of every society. The Scriptures tell us that "the prince of this world is judged" (John 16:11). Duffield and Van Cleave remind us that "Satan is never called 'King' of this world. He is designated 'Prince', but he is still under the dominion of God Who reigns Supreme, and must recognise the One Who is above him."¹³

God did not create the world system. Satan is the genius and architect behind its creation. It was not created out of nothing for Satan is not a creator, only God is creator, but he being a creature, through the fall perverted the creation of God. In this sense he created it. Many people have asked the question "Did God create the devil?" The clear answer to this is no, God created Lucifer. Lucifer by his own rebellion and sin generated the devil, this is what he became when evil was found in his heart. This

world that Satan is prince over, all happened after the fall because before then there was no cosmos in the sense of a constituted order. Satan is the all pervading power behind this world system which is totally hostile to God, for from its very inception, it was designed to draw men's hearts away from God. Jesus states it plainly;

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belong to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you” (John 15:18-19).

James makes it very clear by saying;

“You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God” (James 4:4).

The Apostle John draws a conclusion that we are not to;

“love the world, or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world - the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lusts of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever”

(1 John 2:15-18).

J. B. Phillips translates the Apostle Paul's words in Romans 12:2 as saying, “don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould”. The finality of the world's system is stated by Jesus when He said;

“Now judgement is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out”

(John 12:31).

The Apostle Paul refers to Satan in 2 Corinthians 4:4

as "the God of this Age", and declares in Galatians 1:4 that "Christ gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil age." At the present time God has allowed Satan a limited freedom, but there is coming a time when he will be banished to the pit of Hell forever. This present time is still the 'season of grace' when every saint can work while it is still day. It is up to us to enforce the victory of Calvary's cross.

Roaring Lion. Even so, the Bible depicts the devil as a roaring lion. "The word rendered 'roaring' is used especially of the cries of wild beasts when ravenous with hunger."¹⁴

"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in faith" (1 Peter 5:8-9).

James Beal describes the devil's tactics in a pamphlet 'The World, the Flesh, the Devil':

"If you know anything about the lion, you will understand the significance of this roaring. The lion who pounces on his prey is not the one who roars. The strategy of a pack of lions is this: the leader of the pack will first find a suitable place to roar, one where his sound will be amplified. This is done in the proximity of small animals who are natural prey to lions. The small animals hear the bonechilling sound, are frightened and rush outside their holes and dens where other lions are waiting for them. The animals are deceived through fear. The roaring of the lion has frightened them into ruinous action. This is an accurate picture of one of Satan's favorite tactics - he deceives in order to destroy."

We must always remember that the only real power that the Devil has is deception, however if we submit to God and resist him, "he will flee" (James 4:7).

"For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14).

St. Augustine aptly called the Devil the 'Ape of God' or the 'Imitator of God', which depicts precisely what Satan is. He is an imitator and a counterfeiter. He is not a creator therefore has no other ability than to counterfeit God's creative design. He is not an initiator in the original sense, therefore he is an imitator of all that God initiates. He has set up a counterfeit system. Disguised as an angel of light, he can bring deception which appears plausible, intelligent and spiritual. He can do this because he once occupied the position of the angel of light, hence his deception is very believable. The only recourse that we have to determine truth from error is the Word of God.

The names of Satan give us a clue to his nature and work. These are important for us to understand in order that we be not ignorant of his schemes and devices. The way in which he goes about his deception is by imitating and counterfeiting God's design. He has a counterfeit trinity; the Devil, the Beast and the False Prophet.

"And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Revelation 16:13-14).

Paul makes no bones about the fact that Satan has counterfeit ministers who will be in the church;

"Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers

also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works" (2 Corinthians. 11:15).

'Ministers of Satan' proclaim his system of theology ;
"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiv-ing spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Timothy 4:1).

All heresy and false teaching falls into the category of Doctrines of Demons.

Quite clearly all Christians are to discern the source of teaching that a person brings, this includes their practices, for "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons" (1 Corinthians 10:20). Obviously Paul does consider it a matter worthy of warning. It ought to be so today. Paul teaches that any person found in sin, who when warned and corrected still continues in their sin, should be as an unbeliever to the believers and that they should not fellowship with them (cf. Matthew 18:15-17; Titus 3:10-11; Romans 16:17-18;).

"You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons"
(1 Corinthians 10:21).

Whilst Paul is no doubt addressing directly those who want to be involved in the things of the occult (even astrology), whilst wanting to also partake of the Lord's Table, this passage also refers to the continued rebellion and sin of the nation of Israel as they incorporated the practice of worshipping foreign gods as well as the One True God. This is idolatry and God speaking through the prophet Hosea equates it to playing the harlot. The children of Israel whored after foreign gods which is spiritual

adultery. In like manner, Christians are not to drink from the polluted cup of demons. In other words they are not to drink in of the filth and immorality of the world, not even the wisdom and thoughts of the world. Jesus clearly described that we are to drink in of Him, promising that rivers of living waters, the Holy Spirit, would then spring up within us and literally gush out of our being (John 7:37-39). Paul carries this teaching of Jesus by declaring "Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16 and again in 1 Corinthians 6:19). Paul teaches this by way of an impassioned plea for these Christians to "Flee immorality" (6:18). Throughout the Scriptures we are warned that light and darkness cannot cohabit together, we cannot partake of the cup of demons and the cup of the Lord. Satan clearly infiltrates the Church with his deception, enticing believers to imbibe his deception and thus get them involved in drinking the cup of demons. The cup of the Lord and the cup of demons are totally incompatible - the cup of demons is self seeking - the cup of the Lord is dying to self, one is darkness and death, the other is light and life.

Satan seeks to receive the worship of the world through his deception, the end result being;

"they worshipped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?'" (Revelation 13:4).

This situation will ultimately involve an apostate church.

"And Jesus said to them: 'Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ', and will deceive many'" (Matthew 24:4-5).

Whether this scripture means that people will actu-

ally claim to be the Messiah or whether they will simply come in His name claiming that their works are His works, still bring the same result - many will be deceived. Paul claimed that it was no longer he that lived but Christ who lived in him (Galatians 2:20). This claim by false teachers would mount to the same thing.

The main area of deception evident in the last days Church is;

“there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction...But these like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption ...These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, to whom the gloom of darkness is reserved forever”

(2 Peter 2:1, 12, 17).

Paul warns us that we are not to be taken;

“captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men”

(Colossians 2:8).

This reference to the tradition of men may or may not refer to church tradition but it does refer to the way in which man always responds to spiritual things in his own natural wisdom, rather than the wisdom that belongs to Christ (Col.2:2-3). Man by his very nature is enslaved to the deceiver and can respond in no other way other than according to this tradition which is “according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ”. This is the very rudimentary nature of man, the way he naturally responds. James says of these natural or elementary responses of man;

“this wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic”

(James 3:15).

“Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many” (Matthew 24:11).

John attests to the words of his master many years later when he wrote;

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

The sole strategy of the enemy working through false prophets is to deceive the brethren and to lead them captive. Paul, when he travelled to Jerusalem after a period of fourteen years, did so in order that he might submit his Gospel to the council for fear that he might have run in vain. This was and still is the protection that the Church needs from false teachers, prophets and false brethren. These Paul encountered, men who wanted to bring a yolk of bondage upon the believers by demanding that they be circumcised.

“But it was because of the false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage” (Galatians 2:4).

False brethren abound in the Church today, not demanding believers to be circumcised, but demanding they need more faith in order to be healed, demanding they pray in tongues for certain periods of time in order to be set free from bondages or they need to confess and then possess etc. These things will be dealt with at length under part two of this book, *Another Gospel*.

“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of

Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:13).

Not only can Satan counterfeit all of these things, he also counterfeits the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and his counterfeits are difficult to decipher to those who are weak in discernment. Those who are weak in an understanding of the Bible will be weak in discernment. We need to be noble minded, searching and examining the Scriptures daily to see if the word we have received really is the Word of God;

"Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with eagerness, examining (searching) the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

As Lucifer he was once the most beautiful and exalted of all God's creatures. As Satan he is the hater, adversary, opponent and enemy of God and man; he is the murderer. As the Serpent he is subtle, crafty and deceitful, being the liar and the tempter. As the devil he is the spoiler - the one who defiles, debauches, besmirches, soils, smears, blights and mars; he is the accuser, slanderer and traducer. As Beelzebub he is the god of corruption and the prince of demons. As Belial he is the worthless, lawless one; he is a rebel sowing the seeds of rebellion. As the Great Dragon he is vicious with frightening fury and great strength. As Abaddon and Apollyon he is destruction; he is the destroyer. As an Angel of Light he is an imitator and counterfeiter. As the Prince of the Power of the Air he rules the demonic hosts that occupy the earth's atmosphere. As the Prince of this World he is the architect and power behind the world system that takes men's hearts away from God. As the God of this Age although judged at the cross, he is still active in the world today. And as a Roaring Lion he deceives in order to destroy.

Deceivers had gone out into the early church, how much more are deceivers permeating the church of the last days. Paul expressed the fact that he was afraid that he may have laboured in vain in the preaching of the Gospel because they were deserting the gospel that he had preached for another ; "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel" (Galatians 1:6). Later in chapter five and verse seven he says; "you were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you", obviously it came from Satan, the deceiver. Paul follows on by speaking of the teaching of another gospel as being like leaven which will eventually effect the whole. It is amazing how gullible the Church has become today.

"For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough" (2 Corinthians 11:14).

"On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts" (1 Thessalonians 2:4).

"...but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:7-8).

John bears this out when he says "many deceivers have gone out into the world" and warns us to watch ourselves that we might not lose what we have accomplished but that we receive a full reward.

“Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.”

He goes on to say,

“If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him” for the one who does receive his teaching “participates in his evil deeds” (2 John 7-11).

Chapter

3

TURNING FROM
THE TRUTH

Paul's words to Timothy, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come" (2 Timothy 3:11), is a theme traced throughout the Epistles warning of false destructive influences within the Church. In 2 Timothy, Paul predicts this end-times apostasy within the professing Church, and that the laity will be infected with these modern trends. In 2 Peter, Peter teaches that the source of this great apostasy is attributed to false teachers. John's 2nd. and 3rd. Epistles deal expressly with these trends and in Jude various aspects of the apostasy are brought out. "Thus we have in these five books, a picture of the Church in the days in which we are living, a guide for the saints, acquainting them with the nature of the false teachers and their heretical doctrines, and warning against both." It is clear that "a study of these books should prove most timely and salutary, since we are living in the very last days of the Church Age, and in the midst of the apostasy which these books predict."¹⁵ Whereas it is not my purpose to follow this suggestion in this book, it is my purpose to touch upon

various passages which will highlight that all apostasy or deception, happens within the Church when the Church deviates from the preaching of the Word of God. This has happened throughout church history and can be evidenced by a denial of the Bible as the authoritative Word of God, nowhere better evidenced than in the present day humanistic Modernism or Liberalism.

This movement, inspired by Satan, demythologised the Scriptures, robbing them of all the supernatural and subjecting them to the scrutiny of man's intellect, which in turn became the means of validating the genuine from the false. This of course included the great debate of the "God is Dead" theory. As a result, the Churches which taught these higher forms of criticism and theories within their Theological Seminaries and Bible Colleges, have produced pastors and ministers who have taught these man made philosophies to the Church, resulting in a great decline of numbers and the ineffectiveness of these churches. As a result, church buildings have closed and denominations have merged in order to try to consolidate their resources and to salvage their declining influence within society.

At the other extreme, and which is equally dangerous, are the many overemphases, or extra-biblical teachings that promote self help philosophies and remedies to attract people back into the churches. Many Christian leaders today teach, in effect, that the Bible is deficient for modern man and his needs, and supplement it with false revelations, inflated without cause by their fleshly minds (Colossians 2:18). Without doubt, the tactic of the deceiver is to so pervert the Word of God that those professing to be Christians will fall into error and sin.

The major problem in the Church today is that so few have an intense yearning for the Word of God. A healthy infant is a hungry infant and a healthy Christian is one who

hungers after the Word of God. Psalm 1 likens the man who delights in, meditates upon and obeys God's Word day and night, to be like a healthy tree growing besides streams of water. The Holy Spirit is spoken of here, and these Holy Spirit empowered lives will produce fruit in their season, and their leaves will never wither.

King David declared, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgements of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether" (Psalm 19:7-9). This Word of God converts the soul, or restores the soul, it gets the sluggishness out of the soul. David went on to say that God's Word is more desirable than wealth and pleasure for "by them Thy servant is warned". Through posing a question he declares that no man can discern his own errors, hence the indispensable reality that the Christian needs to feast upon God's Word. As a result David asked to be forgiven of hidden and presumptuous sins (verses 10-13). Sin in the life of a believer destroys any appetite for the Word of God. If there is hungering after the things of the world, there is no appetite for the things of God.

"I have given them Thy word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth", "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth" (John 17:14-17, 19).

When Jesus asked the Father to sanctify us in the truth, He was in actuality asking the Father to sanctify us in, or by means of His Word, the Bible. To sanctify anything is to set it apart from ordinary usage and to separate it for Holy use. For the believer it means being set apart unto holiness. This can be traced through the Bible from the time that God commanded Moses to sanctify the people prior to the giving of the law at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:10, 14); all the first-born are sanctified to God (Exodus 13:2; Numbers 8:17); the priests are sanctified (Exodus 28:41); Israel as God's chosen people are sanctified (Ezekiel 37:28). Jeremiah is sanctified and set apart for being a prophet before his birth (Jeremiah 1:5); property, cities, places, the tabernacle and its vessels are all sanctified (cf. Exodus 19:23, 30:29; Leviticus 8:10; 2 Chronicles 7:16; Joshua 27:14ff.), and even Jesus was sanctified by the Father (John 10:36).¹⁶

The Apostle Paul tells us that "everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer" (1 Timothy 4:4-5). He tells us that by God's doing, Jesus Christ "became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30), and that God has chosen us "from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth" (2 Thess. 2:13). It is clear that because man is not an inanimate object, having been created in the moral image of God, he has freedom of choice, and that for him to be sanctified, the initial action of salvation is of God. Once a man has been born again of the Holy Spirit unto a living hope, he is then able to respond to the Spirit of Grace and grow in holiness.

This is the process of sanctification which can never happen apart from the truth of God's Word, for it always deals with the flesh or carnal nature that needs to be put

to death.

“For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. It is the will of God, that you should be sanctified: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honourable”

(1 Thessalonians 4:2-4).

“God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. Consequently, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you” (4:7-8).

Sanctification is clearly used in the Bible of believers separating themselves from evil things and ways. This is God's will for every believer, it must be learned from God as He teaches it through His Word (cf. John 17:17, 19; Psalm 17:4; 199:9) and it must be a priority of earnest undeviating endeavour. We are to “pursue the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). Sanctification is not something which is imputed to us, nor can it be transferred, it needs to be pursued and built up as a result of obedience to the Word of God and of following the example of Jesus (cf. John 13:15; Ephesians 4:20; Philippians 2:5; Ephesians 3:16).¹⁷

Christians are often times referred to in the Scriptures as “saints” which simply means set apart ones. They are “believing sinners set apart from sin to holiness, set apart from Satan to God, thus being consecrated for God's sacred fellowship and service. The word ‘saint’ as a designation of a Christian, brings at once to our attention the duty of every believer, that of living a separated life. The words, ‘saint, sanctify, holy,’ are all translations of this same Greek root. They all speak of absolute separation from evil and dedication to God, that must always be true of

the Christian believer.”¹⁸

In his farewell address to the Elders of the Ephesian Church, Paul said;

“I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified”

(Acts 20:29-32).

It was the Apostle’s ambition to so instil the Word of the Lord into the hearts of those who heard him in order that when deception entered the Church, they would be able to discern it because of their grounding in God’s Word. Not only would they be grounded in the Word in order to avoid heresy, they would by the very action of the Word in their hearts, be built up in their faith and participate in the inheritance of the sanctified. This is the action of the Word of God (cf. Acts 26:15-18).

It has always been the devil’s strategy to cause the Church to turn from the Word of God. This is simply because he has come to rob, kill and destroy, whereas Jesus has come to give life (John 10:10). The devil’s deceptive word brings forth death, while “the Word of God is living and active”. Because this Word is living and active and sharper than any two edged sword, it is able to pierce right through the hardness of man’s heart to discern and judge between his soul and spirit, his thoughts and intentions (Hebrews 4:12). It is also fact that every other thing will perish, the philosophies of man and the devil, “but the Word of the

Lord abides forever". The true believer has "been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God" (1 Peter 1:23-25). In commenting on this passage, Kenneth Wuest says, "The words 'have purified' are from a perfect tense verb in the Greek. That is, a past completed process, that of a consistent, habitual obedience to the Word, had resulted in the purifying of their souls as they obeyed, with the result that their souls were in a present state of purification. They also rectified an existing evil practice in their lives, that of a hypocritical affection for their Christian brethren. The lesson for us is that when we obey God's Word, our heart-life is being purified, and this purification puts sin out of our experience."¹⁹

Jesus referred to the Word of God as being the seed that the sower spread. Where the seed produced a great harvest in those who received it, their hearts were broken and ploughed in response to the Word, yet in others it was received superficially, never taking firm root so that when the heat of the day came, when the trial and testings of faith occurred, the seed died within them (Luke 8). In explaining another parable Jesus said,;

"The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels....The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness" (Matthew 13:37-41).

The Word of God is a seed that requires the right conditions in order for it to be productive. We have

already established that by the process of submitting to this Word we are being made complete, or sanctified. It is through a correct understanding of the Word that we are able to know what action needs to be taken on our behalf in order to be vessels set apart for holy use by our Master. This same Word is the means by which we are able to please God, for “faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17 cf. Hebrews 11:6). Faith is synonymous with obedience which is why James says “faith without works is dead” (James 2:17, 20). We are called not to merely be hearers of the Word but doers of the Word (James 1:21-23), which is what Paul testified to when he said “our gospel did not come to you in word only, but in power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit and with conviction”. Those to whom he preached became an example also by their lives (1 Thessalonians 1:5-9). We are called to walk in obedience to the Word, “that the word of God may not be dishonoured” (Titus 2:5).

It is apparent that there is a large turning from the truth of God’s Word today. There are many who add to and subtract from the Word of God. There is no doubt that this phenomenon has been clearly predicted in the Word and that it is a clear sign that the End times are near. The devil is the master-mind behind this diabolical deception. We are instructed to resist him firm in our faith; having a firm resolve to walk in obedience to God’s Word.

A popular faith emphasis that is propagated by many faith teachers states that whatever one wants he can have if he can find a Scripture to justify what he is asking for. He is encouraged to visualise the thing he is asking for and confess that he already has it until he possesses it. This is a dangerous diversion that enables people to make the Bible say whatever they want it to say. It is possible to search the Scriptures and find obscure verses that will say whatever

you require them to say. Simply stated, to take a verse out of context is to make a pretext. We are exhorted that "all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Prior to his warning about false prophets, Peter cements the argument in the right context by teaching that all genuine prophets speak prophecy according to Scripture and that no prophecy of Scripture is open to private interpretation. All Scripture is a prophetic Word (2 Peter 1:16-21). Peter also warns against distorting the Scriptures just because they are hard to understand, as was the custom of some who did not understand Paul's letters. He equates this practice of distorting Scriptures with unstable and untaught men who do it to their own destruction. Peter warns his readers, "you therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of undisciplined men, you fall from your steadfastness" (2 Peter 3:15-17).

There is much private interpretation and revelation that abounds in the Church today. People are constantly searching the Scriptures for personal guidance and revelation on personal matters. This lowers the Bible to subjectivism where it ceases to be God's objective revelation. The Bible is the revealed Word of God profitable for faith and conduct. It is an open book and nothing is hidden or secret. It has never been, nor will it ever become a source book for personal and subjective guidance. The Bible is God's means of revealing His nature and character. It is objective in that it is designed to reveal man's heart, expose his sin and draw him into intimacy with the Father. It is God's revelation of Himself to man which is deep calling unto deep. Many today claim that

God told them to do this and to do that, often times one action contradicting the other. Is God fickle minded? The answer is clearly no. The quandary lies in the problem of subjectivism. The more inward and subjective, the more distorted the Word becomes.

History is coloured by the blood of the martyrs who have been burned at the stake, beheaded and subjected to gruesome atrocities, simply because they have defended the Bible as God's Word. They were branded as heretics by the religious Christian leaders of their day. They died so that we might have this most treasured Book because it is the revelation of God to man. They died in order to place this revelation into the hands of every believer and thus silence the practice of an apostate church from interpreting the Scriptures subjectively.

William Tyndale was one such man to whom we owe so much for his English translation of the Bible. He was burnt at the stake as a heretic by the Roman Catholic response to the reformation in 1536, when he said, "I call God to record against the day we shall appear before our Lord Jesus, to give a reckoning of our doings, that I never altered one syllable of God's Word against my conscience, nor would this day, if all that is in the earth, whether it be pleasure, honour, or riches, might be given me."²⁰

Oh that we would have such men again today that could boast that they have never altered one syllable of God's Word.

There is a vast difference between knowing about God and knowing God intimately. To know God intimately and to be known of Him, is the desire of His heart, this is why He has revealed Himself to us, and why He sent His Son to be the means of renewing us into right relationship with Him. Jesus said that we actually behold the Father as we behold Him, or "He who has seen Me has seen the

Father" (John 14:8). Our first priority in knowing God should be the Bible, for which He has gone to such great lengths at such great cost, to provide this revelation of Himself to man. Our attitude should be that of Jeremiah;

"Thy words were found and I ate them, and Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart" (Jeremiah 15:16).

Moses shows the intent of God's heart by declaring "He humbled you and let you be hungry, ...that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord"

(Deuteronomy 8:3).

Jesus gave the full meaning to these prophetic words when He used them to counter the temptation of the devil (Matthew 4:4), and when He declared that He was the "bread of life" (John 6:35). Jesus commanded us to keep His words, His commandments, and by so doing we express and prove our love for Him, indeed we are His friends.

The Word of God is our guide, for it is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119:105), and as such is our guidance in our conduct, our relationships, our affections, our faith, and in fact, all issues of life. The Word of God is a fire which purifies and refines and like a hammer that shatters the hardness of man's heart (Jeremiah 23:29). Our steps are ordered by the Word of God (Psalm 119:133) that every decision in life is done according to it. We are to meditate upon the Word of the Lord (Psalm 119:148) that we might have understanding (v.169) and be delivered according to it (v.170). The Word of God is true and we are to rejoice in it (Psalm 119:160-162; John 17:17). The Word of God stands forever (Isaiah 40:8, 59:21; Matthew 5:18) although it can be invalidated because of man's traditions (Mark 7:13).

The Word of God can be received and can increase

(Acts 6:7, 12:24, 8:14, 11:1) and the one who receives it can grow mightily by it (Acts 19:20). Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17) and it is also the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17) being quick and sharp (Hebrews 4:12).

We are expected to fulfil or obey the Word of God (Colossians 1:25) and it is not to be blasphemed or dishonoured (Titus 2:5). The true believer has been born again by the Word of God which is imperishable, living and abiding in us (1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 2:14). People have been, and will be killed for the Word of God (Revelation 6:9; 20:4). We should be those who speak forth this Word with great boldness (Acts 4:29). Jesus Christ is called "The Word of God" (Revelation 19:13).

When all of this is removed, or just a portion of it is ignored, we are like a ship upon the ocean that has a percentage of its steering capacity removed. Without full use of the rudder the ship will eventually run aground and become shipwrecked. Because the Word of God has been added to, or subtracted from, the Church today is fostering a weak introverted and self centred Christianity. Our desperate need in this hour is a return to the foundations of the Word of God, in the public ministry and also in private devotion. According to Wuest's translation of the New Testament, Paul's exhortation of "Preach the word" to Timothy, is better translated "Make a public proclamation of the Word with such formality, gravity, and authority as must be heeded and obeyed."²¹

This solemn charge laid by the aged Apostle to the young Timothy, exhorts him to fulfil his ministry by being ready in all circumstances to;

"reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumu-

late for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths”

(2 Timothy 4:1-4).

This time that the Apostle prophesied would come, has now come. These are the days that we are living in. The great need for this hour is for correction in the Body of Christ and a return to Biblical Christianity.

Part Two

ANOTHER GOSPEL

“I am marvelling that in such a manner suddenly you are becoming of another mind and deserting from Him who called you in the sphere of Christ’s grace to a message of good news diametrically opposed to the gospel, which message is not an alternative gospel. Only, there are certain ones who are troubling your minds and are desiring to pervert the gospel of Christ. In fact, even if we or a messenger from heaven should preach a gospel to you which goes beyond that which we preached to you as good news, let him be accursed”

(Galatians 1:6-8 Wuest’s Translation).

Chapter

4

**THE FAITH
GOSPEL**

The Gospel is the good news. From start to end it is the gospel of grace. Every action of God towards man is totally undeserved and is therefore grace upon grace. We can well respond with the words of the great grace hymns, “Oh to grace how great a debtor, daily I’m constrained to be” and “Amazing grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me”. The good news of the gospel in the early church was “He is risen”! The implications to this great revelation impacted the disciples into great faith.

Grace is the undeserved action of God towards us in Jesus Christ. Faith is our response to what He has done. Faith is always evidenced in obedience. It is always our response to the Lord and is therefore always in Him. Before we look at the true nature of faith, it is important to see that there is another gospel being preached today, the gospel of faith. By this we mean that God is no longer the recipient or the object of our faith, but faith is. This is hyper faith.

“Hyper” means over, above, more than the normal, excessive. Hype is a shortened form of hyper and carries

the meaning of deception and exaggerated promotion; to stimulate, excite, enliven etc., artificially.²² Today in the Body of Christ there is much confusion regarding the topic of faith due to the hype and hyper emphasis given. This confusion has come about by the many exaggerated teachings of the faith preachers and teachers. Many believers have been devastated after naming, claiming, confessing, visualizing and speaking into being, for their miracles, only to find that what they had been believing for, has not, and never will eventuate.

The verses so often used by the faith preachers are wonderful promises from God given for our instruction as examples of how we ought to pray. "Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father, He will give it to you in my name." (John 16:23), "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:14), "And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith" (Matthew 21:22), "Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asks receives, and to him who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8). "Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you will receive it, and you will" (Mark 11:23-24). "Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18). "Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven" (Matthew 18:19).

The Hyper-Faith Teaching is tremendously popular and can often be mistaken for the real thing. It unfor-

tunately draws great followings simply because it appeals to the self or fleshly nature, while holding to a form of Godliness. Many who espouse this teaching do so for personal gain.

On one occasion I attended a large Charismatic Rally where a well known faith preacher was speaking. During his faith message he made the statement that he was believing God for a million dollars and that if anybody in the meeting felt to donate it, he would be pleased to speak to them after. Many of these faith teachers use the privilege of the platform to appeal for funds, also using extensive mailing lists, encouraging unsuspecting people to exercise faith and give, because 'you cannot out give God', promising that 'if you give, He will give back to you good measure pressed down and running over'. These ministries have huge budgets and often their leaders live in luxury.

When those who give to them try claiming their wealth they find nothing happens, simply because God is not involved in this perversion of the truth, and they do not have the same opportunities to appeal for funds as their favourite faith preacher does.

The Bible clearly tells us that we are to live by faith, and that without faith it is impossible to please God. Whereas the faith preachers tell us that you can ask anything that the Bible doesn't expressly forbid, claim it as yours, it will eventually come to pass because God is obligated to fulfil his Word. God becomes obligated to us, and the previously quoted scriptures are used as a lever to get God to do what we want. This very approach is a denial of Biblical Faith. It denies the many other scriptures that teach us about what we are to pray for.

The Blank Cheque teaching suggests that God has given us certain promissory notes and all we need to do

is write our own cheque. The tragic story is told of three young Korean ladies who attempted to walk on water and cross a flooded river. They knelt down to pray, claiming the promise that if Peter was able to walk on water, they too could claim this miracle. They filled in their blank cheque, confessed their stated belief, visualized themselves walking on the water, thanked God for the miracle and waded out into the river. The flood waters swept them away and their bodies were found three days later out to sea. Their sin was the sin of presumption. They were sincere, but sincerely wrong. The 'anything' of Mark 11:23-24, Matthew 18:18-20 and John 14:14, obviously does not mean anything we want, but must be taken in context with the surrounding verses and with the whole testimony of Scripture.

John 15:7 tells us what the 'anything' really means: "If you live in Me - abide vitally united to Me - and My words remain in you and continue to live in your hearts, ask whatever you will and it shall be done for you" (Amplified Bible - emphasis added). "And this is the confidence - the assurance, the (privilege of) boldness - which we have in Him; (we are sure) that if we ask anything (make any request) according to His will... He listens to and hears us" (1 John 5:14 Amplified Bible - emphasis added).

These Scriptures clearly link the "whatever you will" and "anything", to God's will. If this story is true, then the young Korean ladies failed to realise that the Scriptures they quoted about Peter didn't apply to them. In the incident of Peter walking on the water, the Lord Jesus told Peter that it was His will for Peter to walk on the water (Matthew 14:22-32), Peter acted upon a direct command of the Lord, not on presumption.

This brings us to what Faith is. Faith is acting in obedience to the Word of the Lord.

“If anyone desires to be My disciple, let him deny himself - that is, disregard, lose sight of and forget himself and his own interests - and take up his cross, and follow Me [cleave steadily to Me, conform wholly to My example in living and if need be in dying, also]. For whoever is bent on saving his [temporal] life [his comfort and security here], shall lose [eternal life]; and whoever loses his life [his comfort and security here] for My sake, shall find [life everlasting]”
(Matthew 16:24-25 Amplified);

“If you abide in My Word - hold fast to My teachings and live in accordance with them - you are truly My disciples. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free”
(John 8:31-32);

“Do not be deceived and deluded and misled; God will not allow Himself to be sneered at - scorned, disdained or mocked [by mere pretensions or professions, or His precepts being set aside]. - He inevitably deludes himself who attempts to delude God. For whatever a man sows, that and that only is what he shall reap”
(Galatians 6:7 Amplified);

“For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life”
(Galatians 6:8 N.K.J.).

The Bible is pregnant with verses that show us clearly that we are to live as Jesus lived, He came to serve and to lay down His life. We are not above our Master, are we? Jesus showed us how we ought to live. He and He alone is our example, not some man, no matter how convincing his arguments appear to be. Jesus is our example, He lived in

sweet simple obedience to His Father. He did only those works He saw His Father doing (John 5:36, 7:3-7, 9:4, 10:25-35, 14:10-11). He spoke what He heard the Father speak:

“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works”

(John 14:10).

Jesus likewise promises that the same works that He did and greater would we do because He was going to the Father and He would send another Helper to abide with us forever, “Even the Spirit of truth” (John 14:12-31). Jesus was obedient to His Father and in four out of ten verses, immediately following “If you ask anything in My name, I will do it” (John 14:14), Jesus speaks of total obedience:

“If you [really] love Me, you will keep (obey) My commands” (14:15 Amplified).

“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to Him” (14:21);

“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him” (14:23);

“He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me” (14:24).

As a closing statement on the matter Jesus states clearly that the world would know that He loved the Father because “as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do.” (14:31).

The teaching of Jesus is no more clearly seen than in His parable of the Vine and the Branches. We can produce no lasting fruit unless we abide in Him and His word abides in us. If this is the extent of our surrender

and obedience he promises:

“If you abide in Me - abide vitally united to Me - and My words remain in you and continue to live in your hearts, ask whatever you will and it shall be done for you” (John 15:7 Amplified).

It is abundantly clear from Scripture that whatever you will, must be whatever He wills, otherwise we are not living in union with Him as He was with His Father. It is ludicrous to suppose that Scripture can mean anything other than this. Jesus again clarifies the situation and puts it out of doubt by saying:

“If you keep My commandments - if you continue to obey My instructions - you will abide in My love and live on in it; just as I have obeyed My Father’s commandments and live on in His love” (John 15:10 Amplified).

Faith has to do with truth believed, involving trust in God and restful reliance upon Him. Faithfulness and trustworthiness are indispensable characteristics of faith. These qualities are the fruit of faith, or the result of living faith. Faith, by its very nature, is self renouncing, it has no place in the pride of life, which God hates, rather it exercises trustful reliance upon God. It is not a characteristic of natural unregenerate man. It is absurd to claim, as some do, that every time we sit on a chair we are exercising faith that it will hold us up, or that we exercise faith every time we get on a plane. This is not faith. This is calculated reasoning that we employ in our decisions of life whatever they be. We have confidence to sit on the chair or to travel in a plane, simply because we have deduced that it is a safe thing to do. In this sense we place our confidence in the accomplishments of man.

Faith is specifically a God ordained action of the human heart that can only be exercised toward Him. He insti-

tuted faith, it emanates from His very being and therefore it is personal and relational. Faith has to do with relationship between God and man and it is a life-style that man is to live, for without it, it is impossible to please God. The faith life-style, or the walk of faith, signifies commitment flowing from personal conviction. It is a simple life-style of receiving and walking in the truth.

Some call intellectual understanding of the things of God, faith. James blows this concept out the window when he says that the demons believe, but it does them no good (James 2:19). He goes on to talk about the necessity for works to accompany faith (James 2:26; cf. Galatians 5:6; 1 Timothy 5:8). In other words James and Paul are saying that if you claim to have faith without the accompanying fruit, you don't have faith at all. There are those occasions in Scripture that speak of "the faith", which is simply a way to speak of the body of truth that the faithful believe and live (Jude 3; Galatians 1:25; 1 Timothy 4:1, 6).

Faith is that firm persuasion and conviction that is based upon hearing truth, resulting in obedience to that persuasion and conviction. Therefore, faith in God, or faith in Christ, is that persuasion and conviction that is resolved to absolute unconditional obedience to God and His Word. It cannot add to nor subtract from God's Word, for that would be a lie emanating from the father of lies. All such teaching and practice is lawlessness, originating from the man of lawlessness. "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. And then that lawless one will be revealed... that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness" (2 Thess. 2:7-10). Again it is well to remind ourselves of the words of Jesus;

“Not every one who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness’” (Matthew 7:22-23).

Lawlessness is any action that does not have its origin in faith obedience to God's Word. It may sound feasible and have the appearance of being deeply spiritual, but if it is not according to the whole counsel of God, it is lawlessness. There are many works being done today in the name of Christ which are works of lawlessness and there are many teachings that are leading many astray, into works of lawlessness. Subjective, emotional and superstitious practices are acclaimed as Christian and ascribed to the works of Christ, but because they contradict the Word of God they are in fact a false christianity and a false christ.

Faith is one such area that appeals to the mystical nature of man and which suffers such wide spread deception. It behooves the child of God to so search the Word of God concerning faith, and to test the teachings of men, and to flee from what has the form of Godliness but is error which will produce lawlessness.

Concerning faith for miracles, Jesus narrowed it right down to little faith or great faith (cf. Matthew 6:30, 8:26, 9:28, 14:31, 15:28, 17:20; 1 Corinthians 12:9; Acts 14:9). The amount of faith is not measured by any other thing than by our actions upon what we believe, all of which determines our surrender to the Lord. The enemies of faith are fear and the anxious cares of the world, which have to do with doubt and unbelief. It needs to be remembered that Jesus said

He did only what He saw the Father doing and therefore His works were not His but His Father's. In other words, Jesus was not acting impulsively, He was not dictated to by the tyranny of the urgent, nor was He moved to action by emotionalism, empathy or any other human emotion. Because He did the works of His Father, He could expect confident accompanying faith from those He was ministering to. In fact, people often declared that He must have been from God because of what He did. He did the works of the Father. He rightly expected them to act upon who He was and what He was doing. Today we need to know the same confidence, we need to know the will of God and act upon it, this is faith. It is not some ooze mystical substance we store up for a rainy day when we might need to use it for a healing or some other need. Faith is a walk of obedience to the will of God.

"The object of Abraham's faith was not God's promise (that was the occasion of its exercise), his faith rested on God Himself (Rom. 4:17, 20-21)."²³ In other words, Abraham did not put his faith, his actions of obedience, in the promises made to him. He didn't set out to the promised land because of the benefits of being an inhabitant of the promised land, and he didn't offer Isaac on the altar because God had promised to bless him if he did. Abraham placed his faith in God Himself, in the person and not the promise. God is always the object of faith, never a thing. To say that we have faith in the miraculous or even in faith itself, is a contradiction.

A. W. Tozer warned "Faith in faith is faith astray. To hope for heaven by means of such faith is to drive in the dark across a deep chasm on a bridge that does not quite reach the other side".²⁴ We are called to have faith in God because faith is personal and is by its very nature, relational. If God chooses to work the miraculous, that

is His business, He is the God of the miraculous, but we do not love Him and obey Him because of the benefits, though they are innumerable. We obey Him because we love Him for who He is, not because of what we can get out of Him. This is exactly the strategy used by Satan in the account of Job.

“And the Lord said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and an upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause.’ So Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!’ So the Lord said to Satan, ‘Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life.’ Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and struck Job...” (Job 2:3-7)

As a consequence, in one day Job lost all his possessions and his children, the thief using the so called ‘natural’ circumstances of life prevalent in that day, to rob Job.

“Then Job arose, and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord.’ In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong” (Job 1:20-22).

The thief was given his hand to play, and in one foul blow, stole from this righteous son of God his cherished possessions, yet ‘in all of this Job did not sin nor charge

God with wrong.’ Having failed, the thief brings his reviling accusation against God by insinuating that He only has sons who love Him because of the good things He does for them.

The scenario continued as Satan asked God to allow him to attack Job’s body;

“So the Lord said to Satan, ‘Behold, he is in your hand, only spare his life.’ Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.... Then his wife said to him, ‘Do you still hold to your integrity? Curse God and die!’ But he said to her, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good things from God, and shall we not accept adversity?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips” (Job 2:3-10).

Job had a wonderful understanding of God’s character. He passed the test with flying colours, and yet the misery was to be outworked for some time as the thief used every effort, and every convincing argument to entice Job into renouncing his love/trust relationship with Father God. This relationship proved the test, Father has sons who love Him for who He is and not for the benefits that come from belonging to His family.

In his attempt to discredit Father God, thief Satan, establishes a hearing in the presence of the hosts of heaven. It is here the trial is set and the accused is God. Thief Satan is the accuser/prosecutor, the chief character witness is Job. The whole of creation looks on to witness the outcome, both the fallen angels as well as the holy angels. The whole case revolves around this one man Job. Will he curse God to his face as the accuser predicts and then die as his wife encouraged him to? In order to prove his case,

the accuser uses nothing that appears to the natural eye of man to carry any comfort. Father God's hand is stayed. He cannot intervene for He would be perjuring the witness, and would by that very action fall guilty of the accusation. No the case must be tried to the very end without any intervention from God. Job either loves Father God for who He is, or as the devil suggests, he doesn't really love God at all, his motives merely selfish. I cannot but wonder how the church would stand on this issue today.

Faith is the assurance or confidence, of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1). If faith is the assurance of things hoped for, then we need to understand hope in order to have the assurance of faith. Biblical hope has nothing to do with the wishful thinking of today's usage that maybe something will or wont happen. Biblical hope is the sure and certain expectation, that what God has said, is going to come to pass - because God said it. Faith lives not in the uncertainty of this world, for it is passing away, but in the certainty of God's Word which will never pass away. Therefore, the person of faith is in a vital living relationship, submitted in obedience to the God whose Word is eternal. Jesus Christ is returning to earth, I fix my hope on this, I have a sure and certain expectation about it because God said it in His Word.

My faith is in the God who said it, so I live according to what He said and my life evidences to the God in whom I have faith. Faith in God enables and releases me from the fleshly drive to store up treasure here on earth. It is the power that enables me to lay down my life and to take up my cross, to heal the sick and to cast out demons and even to raise the dead. This enabling of faith obedience is the action of grace, we start in grace, we live in grace and we will die in grace. This is God's undeserved and unmerited favour. Because faith is vital, dynamic and

personally intimate with God, I can therefore faith it, and do what He commands.

“this is the confidence which we have before Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him”

(1 John 5:14-15).

This is simply another explanation of the action of faith.

John’s Epistles are dealing with heresy within the church, and after affirming the Christians he is writing to, that they are in Christ and have eternal life, he warns them, “guard yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21). This idolatry that he is referring to is “the worship of man-made unreality”,²⁵ or adding and subtracting from the Word of God. This is tantamount to witchcraft;

“O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you... did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?... Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by the hearing with faith?”

(Galatians 3:1-5).

There are many today in the hyper-faith movement who advocate that God is a faith God, but this is incorrect, God is the God of faith. This twist is not mere semantics for if God were a faith God, it would place Him under the power of a force called faith. Rather God is the author and perfecter of faith, shown in Jesus by His obedience to the suffering and shame of the cross (Hebrews 12:2). The faith teachers twist Hebrews 11:3, “By faith we understand that the worlds were formed by the Word of God” to say, ‘We understand that it was by faith that God formed the worlds’.

“By this simple twist, faith is not man’s belief in God and what He has revealed, but a force that God uses to make the universe and that man can also use by following the same ‘law of faith’. Attention is subtly turned from God to faith and the results are devastating”.²⁶

Chapter

5

POSITIVE CONFESSION

or

NEGATIVE DECEPTION?

Is there power in our words, and if so, is God obligated to act according to what we say, either negative or positive? Can I change my circumstances of life and become more prosperous, healthy and happy through my positive confession? Can I gain a healthier self esteem, become more optimistic about the future and dream my way to success?

These and many more such questions, are being asked by thousands of Christians world wide. Are they spiritual principles to live by or are they a diabolical deception? It is my firm conviction that though there is some measure of truth in some of the statements made by people who teach these principles, they are in fact contradictory to the whole testimony of Scripture and are therefore error. It is my firm belief that these teachings are some of the most diabolically deceptive because they have the ring of truth about them, yet they draw people away from a living and dynamic personal faith in God. "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul" (Mark 8:36). Previous to this statement, Jesus summoned the multitude with the disciples, and said to

them;

“If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; and whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s shall save it.” (Mark 8:34-35).

Clearly Jesus distinguishes between the deep seated desires of the human heart. The heart that is self seeking, may find worldly prosperity, but will eventually forfeit its own life. The heart that forfeits its own right to life for Jesus and the gospel’s sake, will find life. This is the crux of this deceptive teaching that is abroad in the Church today as an evil wind.

When Jesus rebuked Peter, Jesus was not inferring that Peter was demon possessed, otherwise He would have cast the demon out of him. He was simply rebuking Satan who was tempting Him at that time through Peter because Peter was not centring his thoughts on God’s interests but man’s. We can deduce from this, that whenever we pursue our own interests, it is because we do not have the mind of Christ.

We are to “do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this mind in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant...He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:3-8).

We are told that the carnal mind, or the mind centred upon man's own interests, is at enmity with God, or hostile towards God, for it does not subject itself to the law of God (Romans 8:7).

Multitudes are basing their lives upon this deception of greed. During my travels I constantly come upon people who have been so devastated by this error. They've fought many battles that they needn't have and therefore wasted much time. Whilst ministering in the city of Perth in Western Australia, a man approached me after one of the sessions and said, "I've been a Christian for eight years and I have never heard anything like what you preached tonight". He went on to say that if I was right, he would have to go home and throw away his library. He went on to explain that his wife had divorced him, but that he was standing upon the promises of God, and that he had been for quite some time. I asked him what promises he was standing on. He quoted all of the usual verses and confidently declared that God was a faith God. He continued his defence of this heresy by stating confidently that what God said always came to pass. "God speaks things out in faith and everything He speaks, comes to pass" he said. "This proves that God is a faith God". This is why he also lived by the same principle. He was believing in his heart, visualising in his mind and confessing with his mouth that his wife would return. I again explain to him that God is a God of faith, in that He is the author and perfecter of our faith and how far different that is to God being a faith God. Even though he could see how the scriptures can be twisted, and how dangerous that was, yet he still would not budge from his loyalty to those who had taught the opposite. Finally I asked "Are you absolutely sure that everything God says, comes to pass?" "Yes" he replied. I went on to show him many instances in the

Scriptures where the Lord said He was going to do certain things, then changed His mind. "Why does God record in His Word that He doesn't desire any to perish but that all would come to everlasting life?" Immediately he saw the folly of this false teaching. He realised that isolated verses need to be balanced with the testimony of God's Word, which is what I had been teaching. He understood that though God said this, not everyone was going to be saved because He has given man the freedom of choice. It didn't matter how much this man confessed and tried to possess the return of his wife, God has given her freedom to choose. He wept as he realised the shallowness of his own relationship with the Lord, it was built upon demand rather than trust. This is not faith, even though it travels under the name of faith. Faith trusts implicitly in God, no matter what the outcome.

Stephen did not confess and possess that stones were not pounding into his flesh. He had faith in God and trusted implicitly in Him, neither did Paul confess and possess wealth and comfort, a wife and home, security and influential friends. Rather the Apostle boasted in his weaknesses, his trials, sufferings and tribulations. According to some of the teaching in some of the largest churches in the world today, the Apostle Paul would never be invited to preach in their pulpits, because his life is contradictory to positive confession (2 Corinthians 11:23-33, 6:3-10).

This false teaching appears very successful if we measure success by numbers, but God never measures success by numbers. In fact he showed His anger at David when he took a census of the people;

"Now David's heart troubled him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the Lord, 'I have sinned greatly in what I have

done. But now, O Lord, please take away the iniquity of Thy servant, for I have acted very foolishly” (2 Samuel 24:10).

The result of this great sin was that “the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel...and seventy thousand men of the people...died” (v.15). God is not impressed by our criteria for success. The easiest way in the world to get buildings filled with people is to give people what they want. Charles Colson senses the devilish implications of this trend within the churches when he writes;

“For the church, this ought to be an hour of opportunity. The church alone can provide a moral vision to a wandering people; the church alone can step into the vacuum and demonstrate that there is a sovereign, living God who is the source of Truth. BUT, the church is in almost as much trouble as the culture, for the church has bought into the same value system: fame, success, materialism, and celebrity... Preoccupation with these values has also perverted the church’s message. The assistant to one renowned media pastor, when asked the key to his man’s success, replied, without hesitation, ‘We give the people what they want.’ This heresy is at the root of the most dangerous message preached today: the what’s-in-it-for-me gospel”.²⁷

The teachers of the positive confession and positive thinking message are very persuasive in their arguments. They tell me to confess my healing, my prosperity, my dominion, and to command God to bless me. God on the other hand tells me to confess my sin and repent of it (Matthew 9:13; Like 24:47; 2 Peter 3:9; Matthew 3:8 Acts 26:20; 17:30; James 5:16; 1John 1:9).

Popular catch phrases are the order of the day. They are intended to be positive confessions that will bring about altered lifestyles. We are encouraged to have 'seed-faith' and to release 'faith words'. The seed-faith concept of course has to do with sending in a donation along with a prayer request. False claims are made in these appeals that each prayer request will be prayed through by the leader. This is a lie and false advertising because at best the leader will pray a general prayer over thousands of requests. The emphasis to obtaining your miracle, is placed upon your positive confession in your 'faith words'. You are told that if you do not get your miracle, it is because you did it wrong. Either you did not exercise enough faith or you failed to confess with your mouth, and so the cycle begins again as you try harder. This type of leader is presented as a man with great virtue and power flowing from God through him to his supporters. It is through dependence upon the man that people obtain their miracles and answers to prayer. Never is there any mention of turning from sin and disobedience to the Word of God. Never are the people encouraged to a walk of holiness and godliness. Never are they challenged to die to self and live to God. This is flesh pampering to flesh and it is a stench unto a Holy God.

The whole of this emphasis is self. This was the very first deception ever recorded in God's Word and has been the basis of all deception. Self interest and self seeking are condemned in the Bible and clearly depicted as a major sign immediately preceding the return of Christ to this planet.

"But realise this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,

unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these”

(2 Timothy 3:1-6).

Every aspect of this scripture is evident in the Church today. The very fact that Paul addresses these comments to those who hold to a form of godliness, although they deny the power of it, is proof that he is describing the condition of the Church and not the world. We are in perilous times, perilous because it is popular to teach a gospel that centres around self. This self emphasis destroys the very basis of biblical hope.

“Men will be lovers of self” is fulfilled today in that many pulpits preach and teach the deception of self- help philosophies. We hear about having a positive self image, a healthy self esteem, self worth, self acceptance, self love etc. Church solutions to the worlds problems have become psychological solutions. Jesus said that knowing the truth would set us free, and if He set us free we would be free indeed. The fact of the matter is that everything is passing away except one thing, the Word of the Lord, it will abide forever. (John 8:32-36; 1 Pt.1:23-25).

The Bible speaks the opposite to these self help philosophies. Jesus said, “If you try to find your own life you will die, but if you die to yourself you will live” (cf. Matthew 10:39, 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24, 17:33; John 12:25).

Jesus’ teaching of denying self and taking up your cross is almost never heard today, it is not popular. The problem today is not that man does not love himself, he is preoccupied with this self love to the exclusion of others. Jesus did not say love your neighbours as you fail to love

yourself. Ephesians 5:29 shows us that we already love ourselves. This sin of self love, inspired by the devil himself, is seen in the outworking of the following list. All of these things flow out of inordinate self love and as Jesus warned in His parable of the tares and wheat, would be a part of the life of the church. In Matthew 13:47-48 Jesus depicts the Kingdom of God as a net that catches both good and bad fish but at the end of the age the bad fish are thrown away. Again in Matthew 24 Jesus clearly states what will take place in the Church in the last days.

“At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved”
(Matthew 24:10-12).

“Lovers of money” is evidenced in the Church by the prosperity teaching that is so popular today. I have spoken to numbers of people around the world who have been devastated by this teaching. Believing that they cannot outgive God they have gone into debt to support some prosperity teacher’s vision, yet the Bible says;

“For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have” (1 Corinthians 8:12).

The prosperity teachers have testimonies of accumulating great wealth and when unsuspecting hearers, who are motivated by greed try to put their teachers’ techniques into practice, they find themselves in financial ruin. The simple fact of the matter is that they do not have a mailing list of thousands of gullible people that will respond to their requests as their teachers do.

“Boastful” clearly describes the heart attitude of

thousands in the Church today. Claiming that they are possessors of this gift or that, when clearly the Bible teaches that they are the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and are never given to glorify a man. We have people claiming all sorts of ministries, as though what they were exercising was because of their abilities. Ministry reports are full of the boastful claims of their leaders, all carefully verbalised in order to convince the reader that what they are doing is a worthy project to support. God declares in His Word that he hates the “boastful pride of life”. Rock groups and entertainers that call themselves christians, are idolised, many strutting their stuff arrogantly and boastfully. This is an abomination unto a Holy God and wherever these people perform in churches, it is a desecration of God’s House.

“Arrogant” are those who elevate themselves beyond any form of checks and balances. Many saints in the Body of Christ who have had a check in their spirit about the practices of their church and have gone to their pastor, have been met with the teaching of “touch not God’s anointed.” They have been told that they are unsubmitted and in rebellion, leaving them devastated. This teaching is derived from David’s refusal to kill Saul (1 Samuel 24:6, 26:9; Psalm 105 :14-15). It is clear that it referred to killing Saul and had nothing to do with rebuking Saul. David did rebuke Saul publicly which resulted in Saul coming under conviction and repenting (1 Samuel 26:17-21). Paul clearly tells us that we are to be submitted to one another in the fear of Christ, that we are to correct, chasten reprove, rebuke. Even Paul rebuked Peter publicly (Galatians 2:14). The desperate need of the Church today is for correction. (Job 5:17; Proverbs 3:12; 2 Timothy 4:2; Hebrews 12:5-11; Revelation 3:19; Ephesians 4:15).

Proverbs 9:7 ff. says it as it is;

“He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonour for himself, and he who reproves a wicked man gets insults for himself. Do not reprove a scoffer lest he hate you, reprove a wise man, and he will love you...” (cf. Proverbs 15:10, 1:7).

“Revilers” is a clear reference to the slinging of insults at others and even the devil. It has been my experience to be in pre service prayer meetings to hear people refer to the devil by such insulting names as ‘sleuth foot’, ‘hairy legs’ and the like. There is much ado made of spiritual warfare where people get involved in binding this spirit and that spirit and the devil himself. Jude says of certain men, whom he likened to those of Sodom and Gomorrah, that had crept into the church and by their “Dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgement, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you.’ But these men revile the things which they do not understand..” (Jude 8-10).

“Disobedient to parents” is a characteristic of the Church today. All too often in church services the young people sit up the back talking, passing notes etc. I have been involved in countless hours of counselling with distraught parents whose children are in rebellion, having no respect, doing the very opposite to that required of them. The reasons for this are many and varied, and we can not deal with them here, it is enough to simply comment that this is sadly the state of the church today.

“Ungrateful” is a word that is constantly being heard upon the lips of parents, pastors, counsellors, in fact I have heard this cry from almost every area where people are involved in trying to minister to other people. We live in a welfare state, where the work ethic has slowly but

surely been replaced by the hand out mentality. People are out for what they can get. Jesus faced this situation with the ten lepers, only one returning to thank Him for his healing. Paul, when talking to the Roman Christians, explains that, "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness" showing that "they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honour Him as God, or give thanks" (Romans 1:18-21 emphasis added). Ungratefulness is a refusal to give thanks. The church today spends a great deal of its time trying to get from God, but little in giving Him thanks.

"Unholy" truly depicts the life of the church today. Holiness is not a popular theme in today's church. Accountability and adherence to the Holy Word of God is no longer vogue. Every man does that which seems right in his own eyes. Never before in the history of the church has there been such wide spread sin, corruption, unholy and ungodly living. Almost daily we hear accounts of how people are being found out for their sin. A well know Christian magazine reported on a Christian Broadcasters Conference in Washington, declaring that upon examination of all the delegates hotel bills, it was found that 80% of these Christian leaders had paid to watch X rated movies in their rooms.²⁸

"Unloving" is a reflection upon a lack of intimacy with the God who is love. Today we believe that we can improve upon God's way, and so we rename what He calls sin as, sickness, disease, behavioral problems etc. People turn to false comforts to satisfy the insatiable appetite created by their lack of personal intimacy with their creator. Because of this lack, the church has often created innovative, novel, trendy, faddish tendencies to try and meet people's needs. This is a catch 22 situation. These

very trends entrench people further into a selfish lifestyle. In an attempt to get their needs met, they demand what they have been led to believe are their rights, God becoming their errand boy to do their bidding. This of course can never happen. He did come to serve us in His Son who layed down His life as the greatest demonstration of love. He calls us to so lay down our lives and become the agents of His love. Love is the deed that meets the need. Unloving is a get mentality, another way of describing a taker. Loving on the other hand describes a give mentality, another way of describing a contributor - a giver.

Jesus says some very strong things concerning ministry derived from a life of taking (or getting) rather than a life of giving (or loving), and although we have looked at this verse before, it does us well to look at it from a slightly different angle. "In the last days many will come to Me and say 'Lord, Lord, did we not heal in your name, and prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name', but I will say to them 'Depart from Me you workers of lawlessness, for I never knew you.'" (Matthew 7:22-23). Clearly it is not enough for a man to claim to know Jesus, does Jesus know you? Is He involved intimately with and in every area of your life? Are you walking in intimacy, surrender and sweet simple obedience to Him? "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

"Irreconcilable" or as the NIV states "unforgiving". When children are disobedient to parents and parents are not affectionate towards their children we have the seed bed of unforgiveness, bitterness and resentment. When people are consumed by these things they are irrecon-cilable. Forgiveness is the only power on earth that can shatter the irreconcilable and cause it to yield

in reconciliation. Jesus broke the irreconcilable state of man's bondage by forgiving. Reconciliation has taken place through God becoming our reproach and bearing our alienation. This is seen clearly as Jesus cried out "my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Jesus tells us that if we do not forgive, neither will forgiveness be fully worked out in our lives. "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matthew 6:14-15).

True repentance, of necessity, involves the change of heart that extends in forgiveness toward all who have trespassed against us. The outworking of unforgiveness is shown by Paul in his warning, "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled" (Hebrews 12:15). Unforgiveness is the most singular destructive force that is at work upon the human race and it stems from an inordinate self love.

"Malicious gossips" are slanderous people. They are those who undermine and never have anything good to say about others. They take every opportunity to speak ill of others. They are mischief makers. "Help, Lord, for the godly are no more; the faithful have vanished from among men. Everyone lies to his neighbour; their flattering lips speak with deception. May the Lord cut off all flattering lips and every boastful tongue that says, 'We will triumph with our tongues; we own our lips - who is our master?'" (Psalm 12:1-3).

"Without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited" all depict the outworking of self love. The inability to control self shows that the person is led by their own passions, desires and impulses. Brutality is the forcing or imposing of ones self upon

another. It is the disregard of another so as to satisfy self. Haters of good is better translated "not lovers of good". In other words while believing in themselves that they are pursuing good and indeed doing good, their very actions betray the motive. This person is treacherous, appearing to have a form of godliness, they undermine, recklessly seek their own end, even their own "ministry", to the detriment of the Body of Christ. They operate without regard to others, puffed up with their own importance, they portray conceit, being full of their own fanciful notions.

"Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God", depicts the whole description of self-lovers. When men pursue their own interests over and above the interests of God, when men are more concerned with their own lives than with the lives of others, "whilst holding to a form of godliness", then the times are evil indeed.

The common denominator in all that we have so far said, is self. False teachers teach a gospel of self exaltation, self help and self accomplishment. We don't ask God, but command Him to give to us what is our divine right to possess and enjoy. We can do it if we learn the laws and principles and put them into action by faith. In other words, we manipulate by our positive confession. Biblical supplication has been replaced by the idea that we can get God to do what we want if we follow the rules of the game. Of course this is the game that the false teachers set. Most, if not all of these teachers are not purposefully leading people astray, they honestly believe that what they are teaching is right. They are sincere, but sincerely wrong according to God's Word. They have imbibed the success syndrome of the world and their sight has become dim; "The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If

therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is your darkness!" (Matthew 6:22-23). This teaching of Jesus is in the context of the state of the person's heart "for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also", followed by the truth that we cannot serve two masters (v. 21, 24).

The terminology of these teachers and their doctrines, sounds Biblical, but they promote concepts that are not found in the Bible, but are found in occult literature, such as the books by Napoleon Hill "Think and Grow Rich" and "Grow Rich With Peace of Mind". The principles of these books are referred to by many teachers and used as a text book by "Christian businesses", yet Hill clearly states that he received his secrets from spirit entities he called "The Ascended Masters".²⁹ The basis of all this teaching is witchcraft!

David Wilkerson, founder of Teen Challenge agrees; "There is an evil wind blowing into God's house, deceiving multitudes of God's chosen people. It is a scriptural take-off on Napoleon Hill's book, Think and Grow Rich. This perverted gospel seeks to make gods of people. They are told, 'Your destiny is in the power of your mind. Whatever you can conceive is yours. Speak it into being. Create it by a positive mind set. Success, happiness, perfect health is yours - if you will only use your mind creatively. Turn your dreams into reality by using mind power.' Let it be known once and for all, God will not abdicate His Lordship to the power of our minds, negative or positive. We are to seek only the mind of Christ, and His mind is not materialistic; it is not focused on success or wealth. Christ's mind is focused only on the glory of God and obedience to His Word. No other teaching so ignores the Cross and the corruption of the human mind. It bypasses the evil of our ruined Adam nature, and it takes the Christian's eye off Christ's gospel of eternal redemption and focuses it on

earthly gain. Saints of God, flee from this...!"³⁰

The Bible declares that "With the fruit of a man's mouth his stomach will be satisfied; He will be satisfied with the product of his lips. Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit" (Proverbs 18:20-21). These verses are stated in the context of "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and contentions are like the bars of a castle" (v.19). In other words, if our lips contend and offend a brother, he will be hard to win back. In this sense men will feel satisfied with what they say. In this situation a man has the power to kill a relationship or bring life to a relationship.

The tongue is described as "a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. Behold, how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell" (James 3:5-6). The context of these verses is instruction to teachers, warning them that they will "incur a stricter judgement", particularly when they expect others to obey their teaching, that this in fact directs or determines the direction that the entire body will go. There is no doubt that James is also giving practical advice to everyone as he declares "If any one thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless" (1:26). James here links the issues of life with the heart as does Jesus when He says "the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man" (Matthew 15:18). Jesus showed that words reveal character when He rebuked the Pharisees by saying "You brood of vipers, how can you being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart" (Matthew 12:34). It is clear therefore that

the destruction that the mouth brings, flows out of an evil heart. In other words, the tongue reveals the heart.

If a man's heart is centred on getting, or of finding his life, he will speak it out. If he is a religious man, he will justify his end by creating a belief system that justifies this evil in his heart. God described the heart of man when he said through the prophet "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). He goes on to say in the next verse that it is "I, the Lord who does search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds". The truth of the matter is, it is God alone who understands the deceitfulness of the human heart. The question is raised to show that no man can understand the state of this wickedness apart from the revelation that comes from God. Sin is so deceptive, it excuses itself by saying it isn't sin. This happens in the heart, the seat of the affections.

Positive confession, possibility thinking and dreaming our way to success, all deny the command of Scripture to walk as Jesus walked, in obedience to His Father. This false teaching denies our dependence upon God and destroys intimacy with Him. God always calls us to do that which we can never accomplish. This is in order that we realise our weakness and His strength and our desperate need of Him. Our need of Him in ALL things, is the cause that effects intimacy in relationship. Man's bias is away from God to independence. This issues out of our deceitful hearts that want to be independent and prove that we can do it. The truth is we can do nothing that will impress God and effect anything of eternal significance. Jesus said "apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). He is the vine and we are the branches, unless we abide continually in Him and draw our sustenance from

Him, we will be unfruitful. The Father will take away every branch that does not bear fruit. The only way we can produce fruit of an eternal nature, is to abide in Christ which means that His words abide in us. Jesus said "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love" (John 15:1-11). Our need is not to assert our positive confession. Our need is to abide in Him and let His word abide in us. Our desperate need is for intimacy with Him.

All self-help and self-effort denies our total dependency upon God and therefore robs us of intimacy with Him. All self effort denies the principle to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness". Jesus promised that if we do this, all other things that we need will be added to us (Matthew 6:33). He told us not to be anxious for our life nor to be concerned with its necessities. Our heavenly Father feeds the birds of the air without them storing into barns, and He arrays the lilies and the grass of the fields with more glory than Solomon who had the best craftsmen spinning and toiling to create the finest clothing so that he could be arrayed in splendour. Yet this does not rate with the splendour of the flowers of the field and they did not toil nor spin. "Will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith?" (Matthew 6:25-34). This faith that Jesus speaks of here is not naming and claiming, not confessing and possessing, it is the faith of a life surrendered in obedience. To name it and claim it, or to confess it and possess it, is in fact disobedience, because it comes from being anxious for things. To faith it, is to rest upon the promises of God as we walk in obedience to the Word of God.

Paul asks the question "did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith" (Galatians

3:2). Of course no man is justified by the Law. We received the Spirit by the hearing with faith, that is, we were saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). We responded to the action of grace in our lives which enabled us to act in obedience to it. It was hearing with faith, or hearing with the accompanying action of obedience. Paul suggests to the Galatians they had abandoned grace for “works of the Law”. Law is anything we do in order to bring about God’s favour. Positive confession is going back into law, it is the practice of doing something in order to get God to act. It is a denial of grace which is God’s undeserved and unmerited favour.

“And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him” (Matthew 6:7-8).

The simple formula we are called to follow is to deny self, to lay down our life and take up our cross and follow Him. We have no rights, we were bought with a price, we are no longer our own, we belong to Christ. We are no longer to be a slave to the flesh but slaves of righteousness.

Positive confession is negative deception because it denies the lifestyle of the kingdom of God. King Jesus was born in a stable, lived a simple and humble lifestyle of radical obedience to His Father. His life denied everything that this false teaching espouses. The writer to the Hebrews instructs;

“Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have;” clearly showing the words of Jesus are to be our contentment, “for He Himself has said, ‘I

will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you'' (Hebrews 13:5).

Our King of kings and Lord of lords calls us to this lifestyle of His kingdom and He promises "lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

Chapter

6

INNER HEALING
of the MEMORIES

Inner healing and healing of the memories is said to deal with healing those subconscious areas within us that are not able to be reached because they are locked away, but although locked away they govern our behaviour. It is argued that a person when born again is born again of the Spirit and that the spirit of man becomes a “new creation”, but that this does not deal with the soul. Many teachers in this area define the soul as the psychological nature of man. They agree that the soul is made up of the faculties of mind, will and emotions, but they limit the immediate work of regeneration to man’s spirit. This of course necessitates continued ministry to the area of the soul in order to sanctify it and present it blameless. This is where the ministry of inner healing and healing of the memories comes in.

Those who are involved in this ministry consider it to be a valid means of sanctifying the soul and thus setting the individual free from life long oppressions. They firmly believe that these oppressions may not be understood or perceived by the person because they are deeply embedded in the subconscious, but which nevertheless dictate to his everyday life. This is known as the repressed

memory syndrome. The people who practice inner healing or healing of the memories are usually strongly motivated by a mercy heart and genuinely want to minister release to people plagued with emotional and psychological problems. They are in the main, very sincere and earnest Christians trying to help others. They do not appear to have any ulterior motives. However they are basing their ministries upon man's wisdom and humanistic psychology rather than the eternal Word of God.

Positivism, supernaturalism and triumphalism will stand out in history as a blight upon the church in these times but underlying all of these is the great plague of twentieth century Christianity - MEISM. J.I. Packer wrote that modern Christians "spread a thin layer of Bible teaching over the mixture of popular psychology and common sense they offer, but their overall approach clearly reflects the narcissism - the "selfism" or "meism" as it is sometimes called - that is the way of the world in the modern West."³¹ The sad truth of the matter is that inner healing and healing of the memories is introspective in nature and therefore falls into this dangerous category of meism. Subjective experiences are often used as a justification of the practice rather than the Bible being the standard that determines practice. Experience should never be the basis to justify what we do. Rather it is the Bible which should determine whether an experience is genuine. The writer of the Proverbs highlighted this when he said;

"there is a way which seems right to a man, but
its end is the way of death" (Prov.14:12).

He goes on to talk about the naive person who "believes everything". This person will "inherit folly", but the "prudent man considers his steps" being "crowned with knowledge" (verses 15, 18).

The most disturbing aspect of these introverted healing techniques is that they add to the completed work of Calvary. Clearly the Bible declares that when a person is saved by grace through faith he becomes a new creation. This new creation is not limited to his spirit but indeed he is entirely a "new creature; the old things passed away". In fact the "new things have come" (2 Cor.5:17). This is the state of any person who is in Christ. It is interesting to note that prior to this the Apostle Paul declared: "From now on we recognise no man according to the flesh" (v16). This can only be seen in the context that Paul has just said that Christians "should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf" (v15). Paul is saying that Christians should not be judged as once they were - according to the estimate formed by the unregenerate man and by the world at large - but ours is to be the spiritual appraisal of a new creature. The status of "new creature" only applies to those who have died with Christ and been raised with Him - in other words, to one who has truly repented or turned from his past evil and wicked ways. This action of itself means a turning from the old and all of its associated practices.

It is true that people have been subject to extreme deprivation, abuses, neglect and the myriad of other terms given to those actions perpetrated by others that hurt and wound the personality. It is also true that these devastating influences create love deficits within people so hurt, particularly when the perpetrators are authority figures like father, mother, uncle, aunt, school teacher, pastor etc. Any such action by one person against another is, at the least, severe to the point that it incurs Jesus' consternation when He declared:

"It is inevitable that stumbling blocks should come, but woe to him through whom they

come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he be thrown into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble" (Luke 17:1-2).

It is clear from scripture that each man will give an account of his own transgressions. It is equally clear that unforgiveness, bitterness, resentment, hatred and the like, are sin. We can only deduce from this that the action perpetrated against another is going to be judged by God, but so also is the reaction to the action. Jesus commanded us to love our enemies and to bless those who misuse and illtreat us. In the natural this is impossible. To the person who has been badly traumatised in their being as a child by an adult and has had to adjust and live with the pain and shame and depravation, the command of Jesus to forgive and bless is beyond their natural ability. This subject held great priority on the Saviour's agenda as is evidenced by His statement:

"If you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions" (Mtt.6:14-15).

Many people have put their interpretation to this passage but Matthew Henry's commentary bears heeding:

"If you forgive, your heavenly Father will also forgive. Not as if this were the only condition required; there must be repentance and faith, and new obedience; but as where other graces are in truth there will be this, so this will be a good evidence of the sincerity of our other graces. He that relents towards his brother, thereby shows that he repents toward his God....but if you forgive not those that have injured you, that is a bad sign you have not the other requisite

conditions, but are altogether unqualified for pardon and therefore your Father, whom you call Father, and who, as a Father, offers you His grace upon reasonable terms, will nevertheless not forgive you. And if other graces be sincere, and yet you be defective greatly in forgiving, you cannot expect the comfort of your pardon, but to have your spirit brought down by some affliction or other to comply with this duty"³²

All attempts at inner healing and healing of the memories is an attempt to heal these deep seated hurts. Because these hurts are often caused by active violations of an innocent party it is therefore erroneously assumed that the wronged party is a passive partner in the whole affair. All too often, the one violated becomes actively involved through deep seated resentment and like emotions. These unchecked emotions, whether they are vented or suppressed, become the debilitating factors in the human personality. The danger in humanistic philosophy is to blame shift and therefore take no accountability for ones actions or reactions. Individuals are pacified by being persuaded that they are but a product of their environment and what was once called sin is now called by a new name.

In the Christian sense, there is only one way to come to God - through repentance. This means taking accountability for one's life. Unforgiveness is the singularly most destructive force within human experience. These new modes of healing attempt to pacify the agitated heart and bring it into a state of tranquillity. They go to such ends as to convince the sufferer that Jesus was in the situation when they were hurt and that He too was deeply hurt and that He therefore understands. They then attempt to delve into the area of the subconscious, often highlighting

things within the individual's life that they are not aware of. Some even go as far back as when they were in their mothers womb.

When I was ministering in New Zealand a few years ago, I was asked to assist a young woman who was on staff at the Bible College where I was lecturing. Her whole personality had changed dramatically over a short period of time from a productive, enthusiastic and contagious worker and witness for Christ, to an introverted and timid woman who was emotionally a mess. She had become gripped by fears of all kinds and seemed on the verge of a total breakdown. As I questioned her it became clear that her problems started at the same time that she submitted herself to a person moving in the realm of inner healing and healing of the memories. She had been told by the counsellor that they had discerned she had things in her past from which Jesus wanted to release her. From this she attended prayer counselling sessions where it was revealed to her by the counsellor that she had been sexually assaulted as a young child. The woman could not recall this but continued to listen to the counsellor having counselling sessions to heal her memories which she could not remember anyway. These continued sessions resulted in her present condition. She had not been able to verify that she had ever been sexually molested but did not dare question the sincerity and devotion, caring and concern that the counsellor gave her. The deception became even more acute as the prayer counsellor started to command different demons to release her. She started to have demonic manifestations and so the counsellor assumed he was on the right path and so intensified his efforts.

I spoke simply but forthrightly to her. I told her that in Jesus Christ she had become a new creation and that all of the old had gone. I spoke to her of the danger outlined

in Hebrews when the writer cautioned that we should take care lest there should be found in anyone an unbelieving heart that would cause us to fall away from the living God (Heb.3:12). The writer to the Hebrews makes it abundantly clear when he says we are to leave “the elementary teaching about the Christ” and to “press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith towards God” (Heb.6:1). She had been set free from the curse of sin and death and all of their resulting effects, yet she was now trying to find what she already had received through repentance and faith. She had stopped growing in maturity and was again seeking false foundations which only drove her into complete instability. This woman was not demonised, but rather the counsellor was causing her to be a medium through whom the commanded demons manifested. Both were at fault - the counsellor for ministering in deception, and she for submitting herself to such ministry. She was wonderfully set free when she saw the truth and turned from the error of this ministry.

Repentance is a lifestyle of humility in grace, which enables the Christian to be reproved and corrected by God, resulting in the acknowledgment that he was wrong and God was right. This will always result in a transformed life. Forgiveness, likewise, is not an optional extra for the Christian. We are commanded to forgive. The very fact that Jesus told us we were to forgive up to seventy times seven for the same offence every day (Mtt.18ff.), shows the extent of the eternal nature of forgiveness. Forgiveness is therefore something that we live. It is a life-style.

Unlike the teachers in this field, the Bible clearly shows that the soul is more than the psychological nature of man. “The soul is the impalpable essential core of man, the bearer of thought, will and emotion, the quintessence of

human life".³³ A study of the Greek and Hebrew meanings for soul show that this is a vast area which incorporates a study of the whole man - spirit, soul and body. Man most definitely is a tripartite being. However he is a unit, a whole. In man is a wonderful picture of unity in diversity. Man's soul affects his spirit and his body as indeed does each to the other.

" *Psuchê* (soul), is always my life, never the phenomenon of life as such... it can denote man as a whole, a person... the locus of joy and sorrow and love and hate; it can thus describe man from the standpoint of inward participation."³⁴

Jesus said: "He who would save his life (soul) will lose it, He who loses his life (soul) will save it" (Mtt.10:39). This is not translated soul in our Bibles but rather "life", and does in the true sense relate to life because man is a unity and to dissect him or to remove just one element of his being (spirit, soul or body), would result in his death. However it is true that Jesus is talking about more than physical life otherwise he would have used the word, *zôê* from which is derived zoo, zoology, signifying physical life or *sôma* (body), signifying the instrument of life. Jesus used the word *psuchê* or soul which suggests that when man becomes preoccupied with seeking out these experiences of the unregenerate soul through inner healing and healing of the memories, he is in fact trying to find his soul life in order to heal it.

Jesus quite clearly says that the unregenerate soul life is to die and if it does, then it will spring into the newness of life in the full abundance that it was meant to have. The truth is, we do not heal ourselves by any means other than repenting for our past life and putting it to death. Doctor Luke recorded Jesus as saying:

"If anyone wills to come after Me, let him say

‘No’ to self and let him take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whoever wills to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake, this man will save it” (Luke 9:23-24).

Leon Morris in commenting on this verse says:

“Those who have been saved by the cross of Christ find that they have a cross of their own. The Christian has been crucified with Christ (Gal.2:19) and buried with him (Rom.6:4). Salvation by the cross of Christ means relying wholeheartedly on what Christ has done. It means a total rejection of the notion that we can save ourselves by our own merit. It means being humble in the light of the facts (a) that we cannot save ourselves, and (b) that Christ has saved us at great cost to himself. If our will is firmly set on saving our life, on making the fullest and richest life we can for ourselves, then by definition we have not entered into the life that Christ has won for us, for that is a life in which we are not set on achieving selfish aims.”³⁵

Every effort to resurrect that which has been put to death in Christ is tantamount to saying that His sacrifice was insufficient to meet the needs of suffering humanity. The opposite is the truth. Nothing can be added to the sacrifice of Calvary and its completed work. Jesus bore the penalty of our sin which is in fact our old nature, and this must include the soul. He was punished in that He bore the wrath of God for the fallen sinful nature of man, this includes the soul. Not only are we told in scripture that there is no such thing as a good man (Rom.3:12 cf. Ps1.14:1, 3, 53:1) but that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom.3:23). The wages of sin is death (Rom.6:23) and the soul that sins it shall surely die (Eze.18:4, 20). Therefore it is

clear that the soul is a part of the fallen sinful nature that has to die. For the Christian the new birth is the restoration from death of the old life, to a full and abundant life where all things have become new. Jonathan Edwards, the great theologian of revival, said in his sermon entitled 'The Peace which Christ Gives':

"true grace naturally tends to peace and quietness, as it settles things in the soul in their due order, sets reason on the throne, and subjects the senses and affections to its government, which before were uppermost. Grace to tranquillity, as it mortifies tumultuous desires and passions, subdues the eager and insatiable appetites of the sensual nature and greediness after the vanities of the world. It mortifies such principles as hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, envyings, and the like, which are a continual source of inward uneasiness and perturbation; and supplies those sweet, calming, and quiet principles of humility, meekness, resignation, patience, gentleness, forgiveness, and sweet reliance upon God".³⁶

Clearly the Christian has been crucified with Christ (Gal.2:19), which is past tense. It happened on the Cross. This mystery is effected in the believer by faith. F.F.Bruce, in commenting on this verse says:

"As Christ's death was death by crucifixion, the believer is said not only to have died with him but to have been 'crucified with him' The figure is deliberately bold, designed to emphasise the finality of the death which has put an end to the old order and interposed a barrier between it and the new life in Christ".³⁷

Healing of the memories and inner healing have only

been in vogue over the past decade or so. Prior to that, church history testifies to the myriads of people who have been totally transformed by the completed work of the Cross, people who have had great devastation in their lives and yet been totally set free. Corrie Ten Boon is a shining example.

People who have been subject to this deception can never be set free. They always remain dependent upon a person or ongoing ministry and never mature into transformed sons and daughters of the living God who have a fire and godly zeal in their bones knowing the dynamic of obedience. This blessed state only comes from genuine heartfelt repentance. It is only the action of truth that sets a person free - "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free" (John 8:32). Quite clearly Jesus is the truth and to know Him is to know freedom from all that binds and constricts.

Paul tells the Galatians: "It was for freedom that Christ set us free" (Gal. 5:1), and again in verse 13 he tells them they were "called to freedom". It was for this dynamic state of freedom that Christ died. Prior to this we were all our life time subject to fear and bondage (Heb.2:15). The warning comes to the believer who has been set free into this dynamic state by no other means than Christ, to "keep standing firm" in it and not to "be subject again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal.5:1). True, Paul is talking about moving from our state of freedom from the law back into doing the works of the law again. Doing works is doing anything by which we try to obtain the favour of God. This is exactly what inner healing and healing of the memories is. It is moving from faith in the completed work of the Cross back into working towards freedom. It is trying to gain the full favour of God whereas the favour of God is freely bestowed upon us in the Beloved. This is grace.

The ministry of inner healing and healing of the memories is a deception. The following true story dramatically illustrates the point:

It was a hot smoggy summers day in the San Fernando Valley when all hell broke loose upon our home. We were not the typical Australian family nor was our home the typical Californian home. It was a ministry home for prostitutes off the streets of Hollywood. It all started two weeks earlier when a social worker from the Methodist Church in Hollywood introduced us to Trudy.* This was not a casual introduction, for Trudy was being interviewed as to her suitability to enter the program, which meant living with us in our home. During the interview she stood rigidly with her back against the wall, her sweaty palms pressing the plaster, her eyes dark and sunken staring continuously at the floor. When she did move from her fixed position the only things that moved were her legs as she backed along the wall in what appeared to be a traumatised trance. It was not difficult to discern that here was a young 19 year old girl who was deeply hurt, scarred, rejected and demonised. Trudy was also an epileptic, suffering the most severe grand mal seizures which necessitated heavy medication.

Following each interview we had a cooling off period of 24 hours which allowed the person to change their mind about entering the program and also gave us the freedom to defer any one whom we considered not ready for such a commitment. We were surprised the next day when she called personally wanting to come. The first two weeks of a girl's stay with us was a bonding time when little real ministry was offered other than to love and accept them. Trudy's bonding time was traumatic.

* Trudy is a fictitious name for a real person, her name has been changed to protect her privacy.

We were told that for her to have more than 12 grand mal seizures a year was medically dangerous. Trudy had at least that many in the first two weeks. Each time as she was coming out of a seizure, she would rock on the floor talking to demons. We knew that her problem was more than a medical one. Trudy was a modern day 'Gadarene Demoniac', the only difference being that he had been bound by chains, she by medication. Both were designed to restrain the sufferer. The whole of her body, apart from her face, was covered in scars. On one occasion under demonic torment, she attempted to amputate one of her legs with a broken bottle. As a result of this and all the other scars, she could not wear shorts or go swimming and her clothing was of such a nature that her legs and arms were covered to hide the scars of devastation.

The whole house was in a tranquil state as each person was having their regular quiet time. My wife and I, along with another staff worker, were praying in the office. Suddenly the quietness was shattered. Violent thudding sent a tremor of momentary fear through our hearts before we isolated the commotion as coming from Trudy's bedroom.

Racing up the stairs and into her room we found her being thrown with such violent force around the room, her head smashing against the edges of the furniture. I quickly grabbed her head to protect her from permanent damage and commanded the unclean spirit to leave. She went limp, and though sweating profusely, she became instantly tranquil. After a few moments I told her to take a shower and then come down to the office for prayer and counselling.

Still reeling from what we had just witnessed, we never anticipated that the worst was yet to come. There was a heavy thump on the door. My wife Margaret

opened the door and gasped with shock, calling for me as she stepped backwards into the room. I jumped up and was confronted by Trudy brandishing the window frame above her head which she had ripped out of her wall with supernatural force. Her face was so contorted and disfigured it resembled a grotesque voodoo mask. Blood was trickling out of her eye sockets down her cheeks and onto her clothing. She lunged at me with the window frame. I again commanded the unclean spirit to come out. She was rent to the floor, frothing and vomiting as the unclean spirit left her.

Trudy had been delivered from demons, but she was not yet free. The next day I found her fossicking in the dirt at the front of our house. As I questioned what she was doing she replied, "You don't understand, someone has to pay and I don't want it to be Margaret".

During these first two weeks Trudy identified Margaret as her mother. She had made a potion and demonic pact that resulted in a familiar spirit taking on Margaret's form and bringing comfort to her late at night. After her deliverance, Trudy had rationalised that because the demons had extracted punishment from her in the past, so now they would again extract punishment for what she had been doing. Seeing she was no longer under their control she feared they would punish Margaret. I explained that I would not allow any form of superstition in our house and told her to go inside.

She ran into her room and slammed the door. The girls were only allowed to have their doors closed while they were dressing, but seeing she was upset, I sympathetically thought she needed her privacy. As I was walking down stairs I felt an urgency from the Lord that something was wrong. I rushed into her room without waiting to knock to find she had made a fire in a container and was

holding her hand over the naked flame. I extinguished the flames and escorted her to the office. With tears streaming down her face and in great pain, Trudy could not look at us. Grasping her hand tightly I simply said, "Trudy, the devil has come to rob kill and destroy and to extract punishment from you, but Jesus has come to give life - in Jesus' name be whole!"

I loosened my grip to reveal no sign of any burning whatsoever. Where only moments before there had been blistering, redness and all the signs of severe burning, now there was brand new flesh. Instantly the revelation that God loved her evidenced as she grasped her hand in a mixture of sheer delight, tears and laughter.

Trudy then revealed the tragic details of her life leading up to that moment. As a child she was an above average straight A student, always popular and showed exceptional talent on piano, that is, up until she was 11 years old when her father started going into her room at night. Her mother would not believe her until she fell pregnant and was sent to a back yard abortionist which resulted in her never being able to have children of her own. At 13, Trudy was not the same girl she was just 2 years earlier. She had become dramatically antisocial and aggressive in her behaviour, was now in the lowest classes at school, had no friends and had ceased playing piano. As a result she was placed under psychiatric treatment. Her psychiatrist, seeing the anger and aggression, placed her in a padded room with a padded bag and told her to let out all of her anger. Kick, punch, scream, only let it all out. She started, at first tentatively, to punch the bag. As she continued her aggression became more intense until she was kicking, screaming, punching for what seemed to be hours. The therapy appeared to be working, until as she said, "I suddenly knew an evil black thing entered

into me." It was out of this treatment that Trudy became demonised.

From this point on she started having epileptic seizures and was heavily sedated. She was declared incurably insane and for the next 6 years spent her life in various asylums, until she eventually escaped and ran away to Hollywood and a life of prostitution. It was while she was in one of these institutions that a friend told her about making a pact with spirits. If she followed the formula they would give her whatever she wanted.

This brought us back to the present and I asked her if the spirit had a name. After some consternation she confessed the name was Beelzebub (meaning prince of demons). After renouncing her involvement with Beelzebub, she openly was able to confess her sin and surrender her life to Jesus Christ. At this point I told her she needed to forgive her father and mother and everyone who had violated her in any way. Her reaction was, as expected,

"I can't." In the natural I could understand, but I had to agree with the Word of God and said, "No Trudy, it's not that you can't, it's that you won't." Again she protested. How could this girl, who in her innocence had been violated, abused and butchered, had every trust and confidence shattered resulting in 6 years internment in psychiatric hospitals, forgive? I explained that her father, mother, psychiatrist and every person who had ever violated her were answerable to God for what they had done, but she was answerable to God for her reaction to what they had done.

Jesus told us to forgive our enemies and even stated that if we did not forgive, neither would our heavenly Father forgive us. "Trudy, your unforgiveness, resentment, bitterness and hatred is sin."

She simply asked forgiveness at this point. I then looked at this little girl and said, "Trudy I want to stand in the place of your father and ask you to forgive me. Trudy will you please forgive me?" At first her crying words were softly spoken "I forgive you Daddy", but soon the gentle sobs gave way to gut wrenching weeping as she continued her utterances of forgiveness - "I forgive you Daddy, I forgive you, I love you Daddy, I forgive you....." Margaret then stood in the place of her mother and the same cries of forgiveness filled the room. Afterwards as she gained composure, I explained that forgiveness was not something that we do on just one occasion but that it was a lifestyle. Christians live forgiveness.

At this point Trudy was totally set free, she was able to laugh, to cry, and able also to hug us with genuine warmth. She decided she wanted to call her psychiatrist in Dallas. I agreed and listened on the extension to the most amazing conversation. After talking to her for 45 minutes, his attitude gradually changed as he listened to her with great warmth in her voice calmly and rationally explain all that had happened to her. Eventually she asked, "Do I have to come back?" After a moment's pause he replied, "Trudy, I don't understand what has happened to you, but something has definitely happened. No Trudy, you don't have to come back. I will sign your release." Trudy made one other mammoth decision that day when she asked could she go off her medication. We felt that we were not to stand in her way. To our knowledge she has never had another epileptic seizure from that day. Trudy was free indeed. She went on to complete high school and college and is a school teacher today.

This story of Trudy graphically shows that she was totally set free from deep psychological problems that were caused from early childhood by being violated by the

authority figure that was meant to give her security, love and protection. Trudy needed to be set free from demons but this did not effect her release. She was totally set free when she realised her own sin of bitterness, resentment and even hatred. It was at the point of taking full accountability for this that she repented, asked forgiveness and then was released to forgive.

At this point the power of the devil over her life was broken and as a new creation she experienced all things made new. The Apostle Paul places the emphasis where it needs to be when he says:

“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also forgave you” (Eph.4: 31-32).

The writer to the Hebrews goes even further when he says:

“See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled” (Heb.12:15).

Bitterness is the well-spring of unforgiveness and hatred and is like a cancer that eats the person away. But not only this, it also causes trouble in all relationships and thereby many people become infected and defiled by this hideous curse. Rather the people of God are to repent of this and forgive, for this is the action of love. This is to become the lifestyle for the Christian.

It is true that Trudy encountered the wiles and schemes of the devil as he bombarded her with thoughts from the old life. He is the accuser who accuses the brethren day and night. Yet she learned to overcome him, not by having healing for past memories, but as the saints

did in Revelation chapter twelve;

“And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death” (Rev. 12:11).

The shed blood of the Lamb on Calvary’s cross is where the battle is won and the word of testimony is simply testifying to the accuser that his accusations are useless against you because you are a new creation and the old is dead.

Nowhere in the scriptures are we told to have our memories healed. No, we are to live in the victory of the cross. We are to leave those things which are behind and we are to press on to the high and upward call of God in Christ Jesus. We are in a battle between the flesh and the Spirit ;

“for the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the thing that you please” (Gal.5:17).

This is good conflict because it is the ministry of checks and balances preventing us from doing as we please. In Romans, Paul tells us;

“those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh”; that is, as opposed to that which is revealed in the Word of God. Paul goes on to show the dangerous plight of such a one “for the mind set on the flesh is death... because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God... and those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom.8:5-8).

We are not to yield to our own fleshly reasonings nor the humanistic philosophies of the world which may have the appearance of wisdom but produce death. We are to

be in the process of having our minds renewed, we are commanded to put on the mind of Christ and to have this attitude in ourselves which was also in Christ. We are to be renewed in the spirit of our minds.

“This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart... that in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth...” (Eph4:17-25).

Clearly we are to lay aside the old self and not to try to heal it, for the old self is being corrupted by the lusts of deceit. Deception is a lust for it is craving after or insisting upon something other than God's way. It is true that what I have outlined here will incur the consternation of some but to others it will provide the way of escape. Someone has said that there are so many doctors (PhD's) in the church today that anybody would think that God is sick. No matter how you react to this statement it is true that all of our higher forms of education need to be subjected to the Spirit of God and to the Word of God. We are not to walk according to the wisdom of this world but according to the wisdom of Christ.

DeVern Fromke wrote a book back in 1964 in which he warned about the rise of modern day gnosticism. “Indeed the issue has not changed

one whit since that first hour. Would Adam develop his own natural mind, or choose rather to share in the mind of God? His choice meant either seeking full natural stature or it meant allowing the Holy Spirit to realise full spiritual stature. Men are still facing these same two trees. However, they now stand in a different setting. It is either the old rugged Cross or the modern smooth cross. But they are the same tree. The first tree offers a new philosophy which is so similar that apart from discernment many are sacrificially giving themselves to a new way of life so as to gain and achieve success, but all the while they are escaping the ignominy of the old rugged Cross and the Lordship of Jesus".³⁸

He goes on to say how subtle this modern Gnosticism is.

"It uses terminology like the true message; outwardly the likenesses are superficial, but basic differences are fundamental. Gnosticism has an amazing appeal to the intellectual mind for it offers all the laws of success and achievement without any of the embarrassment which comes in the demands of the old rugged Cross".³⁹

He further states that "the modern gnostic prides himself in vast discoveries of knowledge in the laws of the mind, of believing, of cooperating with God, but they are always for his own ends which are often disguised...yet basically selfish at root".⁴⁰

This heresy is the very heart beat of the deceiver and has been abroad since the early church and has continued to raise its head in various forms throughout church history.

There is no doubt that the trends of healing of the memories and inner healing have evolved from what Fromke saw back in 1964. He said:

“Surely the great sifting and testing is upon us. Many believers who could hardly be tempted to gross sins or to indulgence in fleshly habits are being tested as to whether they will live by the natural resources of the old life, or live only by a divine union with HIS NEW LIFE.”⁴¹

Saints of God believe only in the all sufficient work of Calvary. Here is your victory and only here. Here is the only place where a man can truly see his own nature and be exposed to the divine nature. Here is the only place that the old nature can be put to death. Here is the only place where the old nature can be replaced by the divine nature. Here is the only place where a man can put on the nature of Christ and go on being renewed in Him so that he can claim it is no longer I that live but Christ that lives in me. It is only here that a man can know the truth and be released into the dynamic of freedom. No wonder the Apostle Paul purposed to know nothing among the churches save Christ and Him crucified. This is the place to where the church must return, this is the place of our freedom.

“If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). Jesus also claimed that he was sent to “proclaim release to the captives” (Luke 4:18). This He did when He cried “It is finished”. This cry out of the greatest anguish ever, is the cry into the greatest release ever. The child of God is freed from the curse of the old through forgiveness and freed into the state of liberty that demands forgiveness.

Chapter

7

DELIVERANCE
and

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

The enemy has invaded our ranks by perverting the truth about himself and his evil fiends. The Apostle Paul clearly warns “that in the latter times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons” (1 Tim.4:1). In his book “The Struggle for Men’s Hearts and Minds”, Charles Colson says: “I have spoken of the frontal assaults and the sneak attacks. There is something worse.... The enemy is in our midst. He has so infiltrated our camp that many simply no longer can tell an enemy from a friend, truth from heresy.”⁴²

Over the past twenty years the emphasis on deliverance ministry has slowly given place to the more popular emphasis of spiritual warfare. It actually comes as a shock to some when they find out that there is no such ministry gift as deliverance. Through the popularity of this teaching there is a lasting legacy of superstition that affects many. There are travelling ministries that specialise in deliverance and even some churches have their experts in this area. The tragedy of this teaching is that it has

produced a generation of believers who are uncertain of their security in God. It has spawned a superstitious approach to spiritual matters. This is the deception of the enemy.

What are the facts concerning demons? In order to answer this question we must not resort to human experience because human experience can be controlled by the deceiver in order to deceive. The only source of information concerning demons that is reliable, is the Bible. It stands to reason that the Author of all life, who is Himself truth, is the only reliable source on a subject that is steeped in deception. The demons do not want us to know the truth about them or their activities. On the other hand, they are more than happy if they can get Christians preoccupied with them. If the Christian allows this, he has been deceived into taking his focus off the Creator and onto the creature.

Demons have a greater strength than man but they are no match for Jesus. The story of the Gadarene demoniac (Mark 5:2-4), demonstrates this fact. The story of Trudy in the last chapter, and countless others, graphically show how individuals perform feats of super human strength when possessed by demons. Demons have a greater knowledge than man but they are not omniscient, (all knowing). They do not know what is in the heart of man, only God knows:

“... hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling place,
and forgive and act and render each according
to all his ways, whose heart Thou knowest, for
Thou alone dost know the hearts of all the sons
of men” (1 Kings 8:39).

Demons know much concerning the Deity of Christ and of their own eternal doom: “And behold they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son

of God? Have you come to torment us before the time? (Mtt. 8:29 cf. Mk.1:21-24). They have knowledge of our position in Christ as is evidenced in the story of the seven sons of Sceva. Sceva was a Jewish chief priest and his sons were Jewish exorcists who were trying to emulate the Apostle Paul by using the name of Jesus over those who had evil spirits. "And the evil spirit answered and said to them, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?'" (Acts 19:15). James attests to the knowledge that demons have when he says "You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder" (James 2:19).

It is important for us to keep our perspective of demons true to the Word of God. The Bible has almost 300 references to Holy Angels and only approximately 80 to devils and demons. This means that there are more than three times as many references to the angels than to the demons. Duffield & Van Cleave tell us that "while it is inspiring, and most encouraging, to learn of God's great guardian angels watching over, ministering to those who are the redeemed children of the Lord, it is also very important to recognise the reality and presence, in this area of our spiritual warfare, of a vast host of enemy spirits whose purpose seems to be to thwart all spiritual progress. One of the fundamental maxims of warfare has always been study the enemy. We would be very unwise if we did not do this in this most important of all areas - that of spiritual conflict." ⁴³

"Our fight is not against any physical enemy: it is against organisations and powers that are spiritual. We are up against the unseen power that controls this dark world, and spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil" (Eph.6:12 J.B.Phillips).

Jesus was accused by the Pharisees of casting out

demons by 'Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.' He replied:

"But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you"
(Mtt.12:27-28).

It is obvious from our Lord's statement that the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil cannot exist together, and that the natural expression of the Kingdom of God is to expel invading demons. Jesus' words of commission to His disciples leaves no doubt: "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons; freely you received, freely give" (Mtt.10:8). "And these signs shall accompany those who have believed: in My name they shall cast out demons" (Mark 16:17). Upon the return of the seventy whom Jesus had sent out, they reported with amazement, "Lord, even the demons are subject unto us in Your name" (Lk.10:17).

God created angels perfect, and they were originally sinless beings. However some "kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation" (Jude 6). Scholars over the years have wrestled with the question of 'where did the demons come from?' There is no doubt as to the scriptural support for demons but there are conflicting views as to their origin. One theory is that the demons are disembodied spirits of inhabitants of a pre-Adamic earth. This idea basically states that before Adam was created, there existed on earth a race of beings under the leadership of Satan in his fallen state as "the anointed cherub that covereth" (Ezek. 28:14). It is held that this was the arena of Satan's revolt (Is.14:12-14), which resulted in the invasion of sin into the moral universe which finally ended in chaos (Gen.1:2). The members of the preAdamic race were involved in the rebellion and somehow had their material bodies destroyed, becoming 'disem-bodied spirits', or demons. Those who

subscribe to this theory use as evidence the fact that demons are constantly looking for bodies to inhabit, even to the entering of a herd of swine (Lk.8:32).

The second theory is based upon Gen. 6:1-4, that demons are the offspring of angels and the 'daughters of men'. Those who hold to this theory believe that there was "a totally unnatural cohabitation between evil spirit-beings and the women of that day".⁴⁴ Duffield and Van Cleave say that those who hold this view believe that this sin is the explanation of why some fallen spirit-beings are confined in chains while others are allowed to go free.⁴⁵ This theory purports to show that the consequent product was an unhappy mutation, and that from this union came demons. This theory has many flaws as I see it, the main one being the contradiction to Jesus' teaching that in the resurrection men and women will not marry, 'but are like the angels in heaven' (Mtt.22:30). As Geoffrey Bingham says: "This surely means that angels are sexless. The idea of sex in an angel seems incredible... we cannot get demons from such an unnatural and impossible union."⁴⁶

The third view simply declares demons to be fallen angels. Duffield and Van Cleave argue that the majority of Bible teachers have come to believe that the evil angels are the demons of which the Bible has much to say. They go on to say: "We recognise that the Bible is not explicit with regard to this point, but with what evidence from the scripture we have, this explanation seems to be the best supported and most clearly authenticated."⁴⁷ Henry Thiessen says: "Some distinguish between evil angels and demons, but it seems more likely that they are one and the same. They are actively involved in opposing God and His program."⁴⁸

Satan has at his command a vast army of demons. Like Satan, they were among the many angelic hosts that

God originally created good, but sinning with him, they fell from heaven and became angelic fiends, or evil spirits. Demons have all the characteristics of angels except that instead of being holy like the angels of God, they are perverted in nature, wicked, unclean and foul. Jesus points to the fact that there seems to be degrees of wickedness among the demons when He tells the story of a demon going out of a man, but finding nowhere to rest returns, and finding his former habitation swept clean and empty, "takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first" (Mtt.12:43- 45).

Demons are actively involved in opposing God and His program. Conversely, they employ their talents in promoting and extending the power of Satan. They endeavour to separate the believer from Christ (Rom.8:38; Eph.6:12; 1 Thess.2:18). They oppose the holy angels in their work (Dan.10:12 ff.); cooperate with Satan (Mtt.25:41; Eph.6:12; Rev.12 :7-12) and cause mental and physical disorders (Mtt. 9:33; 12:22; Mk.5:1-16; Lk.9:37-42). They, as unclean spirits, lead men into impurity (Mtt.10:1; Acts 5:16); spread false doctrine (2 Thess.2:2; 1Tim.4:1) and oppose God's children in their spiritual progress (Eph.6:12). Sometimes they possess human beings and even animals (Mtt.4:24; Mark 5:8-14; Lk.8:2; Acts 8:7; 16:16). At times they are used of God in the carrying out of His purposes (Judg.9:23; 1 Kings 22:21-23; Ps.78:49).

Merril F. Unger in his synopsis of demon activity in the New Testament states: "demons afflict men with mental, moral, and physical distempers (Mk. 1:21, etc.). They enter into men and control them in demon-possession (Mk.5:121), instigate 'doctrines of demons' (1 Tim.4:1), exercise power in the government of the satanic world system (Eph.6:12; cf. Dan.10:13), energise idolatry, immorality and human wickedness (1 Cor. 10:20; Rev.9:20-21), inspire false

teachers (1 John 4:1-2), and in general assist Satan in his program of opposition to the will of God."⁴⁹

C.S.Lewis says in his immortal book, 'Screwtape Letters', that there are two equal and opposite errors about the devil into which our race can fall. One is to disbelieve in his existence. The other is to believe and feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in him.⁵⁰ To the Christian, it is obvious that the first error, disbelief in his existence, is well and truly entrenched into the majority of the non-Christian world. It is not obvious, however, that the second error mentioned by C.S.Lewis is abroad in the church. It is this very state of having an excessive and unhealthy interest in the demonic that needs to be addressed.

The record of church history shows that whenever God brings 'new insight' into the church, the church becomes preoccupied with the 'new' emphasis and it quickly becomes imbalanced. (I use the term 'new' simply for clarity.) There is nothing new that has not already been revealed. New truths seem to break in upon the church from time to time, but it is clear that they have always been in the revelation of the Bible. Not all that is 'new' is a part of the biblical revelation and as such is deceptive heresy. Over the past century there has been wide spread rediscovery of "new" things, not all of which are truth.

Firstly, there was the great 'pentecostal awakening' which burst onto the evangelical arena. To those who experienced this wonderful infilling of the Holy Spirit and the accompanying gift of speaking in tongues, it brought great zeal and enthusiastic renewal, so much so that tongues became the central issue and an imbalance was already setting in. Almost going hand in hand with this 'new' discovery was the rediscovery of the gift of healing. This emphasis spread into large healing crusades and thousands were touched and blessed by these 'new' movings.

They were more than rediscoveries. If they were merely rediscovered truth, the credit would be placed upon man for being the rediscoverer. Rather these truths were revealed afresh to man by the sovereign God of grace. He was reviving His Church. The church got carried away with the 'new discoveries'.

On the one hand the Church moved into a preoccupation with the new. On the other hand, those who did not subscribe to the 'new discoveries' moved into an active resistance, even stating that the gifts of the Holy Spirit ceased at the close of the Apostolic Age. From the sheer impact of these awakenings, the church was again effectively divided. The new strand became known as the Pentecostal Church, the other the Traditional Church. However, it wasn't long before the impact of the Pentecostal awakening started to reach into the traditional church and the Charismatic Renewal took place.

A new breed of traditional church member started to emerge. They enjoyed all of the benefits of their Pentecostal brethren but they remained loyal to their particular denomination with the hope that they could be the agents of renewal. Into this climate sprang all sorts of excesses that have come from a mixture of human emotions, psychology, humanistic philosophy and the Bible. These included 'Slaying in the Spirit', 'Deliverance', 'Inner Healing', 'Healing of the Memories', 'Spiritual Warfare' and some others less prominent. These 'new' trends within the Church in this generation, show that an enemy is at foot. The Church truly is the devil's play-ground.

In his book "Pentecostal Doctrine", George Canty an evangelist in the Elim Pentecostal Church says:

"A Christian service when no demons are cast out is not necessarily a failure as some would suggest, which indicates an obsession with one small aspect of Satanic activity. Nevertheless, Jesus insists that casting out demons is part of the

gospel commission (Mark 16:15-20); Luke 9:1-2; 10:1, 17; Mtt.10:8). Remarkably, nothing is said about this in John's Gospel or in any apostolic letter, though they frequently urge the preaching of the gospel as a continuation of Christ's own work. He was 'manifested to destroy the works of the devil' (1 John 3:8), and 'went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil' (Acts 10:38), as should we.

This work, in recent years, has been called for by the increased interest in the occult, spiritism, Satanism and experiments in magic. The effects upon people have been typical. People become aware of "presences" near them in an unpleasant sense, with unnerving apparitions, nightmares, supernatural hauntings, voices, impulses that cannot be refused, depressions, tendencies to suicide, constant fear, inner urges to commit violence or murder, fits, unendurable tensions, sexual obsessions, hysteria, and so on. Sheer madness or death can be the ultimate result. That there is a call to care for those who are in this distressed state is obvious, and there should be a special alertness to discern such needs.

No precise instructions for dealing with foul spirits are laid down in the New Testament, therefore the manner in which Christ and the apostles acted has to be our guide. From it we make the following points.

The name of Jesus is the primary secret... Christ's great commission said, 'In my name shall they cast out devils' (Mark 16:17). Paul rebuked a spirit in the words: 'I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her' (Acts 16:18), just as Peter, when healing the lame man, said, 'In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk' (Acts 3:6, cf. 3:16; 4:10)....

The casting out of demons does not require a barrage of words with voluminous repetitions of the word 'Jesus' or 'Christ'. We have authority, and can use it, as 'ambassadors' (2 Cor.5:20), but we must avoid treating it as a 'magic' incantation, like a piece of abracadabra or spell. When we utter 'Lord Jesus Christ' it indicates that he is Lord of the one who speaks, otherwise we are like the sons of Sceva, unknown to the spirits.

The particular 'method' is of very small consequence. Some may lay hands upon the patient; some feel that they should not. There is no actual record of deliverance from demons by the laying on of hands, but most instances make no mention at all of what was actually done. If it was of any importance, we would have a clear instance or some instruction about it.

In one case, Jesus asked the spirits their name and they replied 'Legion' (Mark 5:9). From this, some have said it is necessary to do it always, but this rule was not followed by Paul...

One wonders what is the use if the spirits are lying spirits? They could lie about their identities for the sake of putting us off.

There is nothing, either, in Scripture about coughing up or spitting out demons. A demon is a spirit and as such is invisible. Nor are we given any encouragement to hold conversations with demons. Once they are known to be there, they should be told to leave. Jesus 'suffered not the devils to speak, because they know Him' and He charged unclean spirits 'that they should not make him known' (Mark 1:34; 3:11-12). Certainly, demons suffer from egotism and nothing pleases them better than to be the centre of interest.

In this connection, nobody was ever given a special gift for "exorcism", only for discernment, as part of the protection of the Church, chiefly against false teachers with lying and deceitful doctrines of demons. Nobody manifested a ministry exclusively for dealing with demons. This would draw attention more to Satan than to Christ. Preoccupation with this sphere of things is a kind of tribute to the power of Satan. 'The end of our conversation' says Hebrews 13:7-8. is 'Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever', which hardly can be said of some whose continual thought is about 'the powers of darkness'.

If 'method' does matter, it would be at another level. While it may be possible to cast out a demon, very often a person needs more than this. They need deeper help, in fact. Life situations, strong temptations, affecting the willingness of a person to give up their sin, cannot be ignored. Unless sin is forsaken, then, as Jesus said, the last state of that man may be worse than the first, for the devil will return with several more. It is the will of a man which makes a way in for the devil, and therefore repentance is required as well as exorcism. Patient pastoral interest may have to be taken to get down to the roots of a man's trouble, of which demon possession is not the cause but the result or symptom. It is wrong to assume that a particular evil in a man's life is the result of demon control. It is more likely that the evil was there first, permitting the entry of satanic power.

Again, 'method' must not underestimate the power of the Word of God. The preaching of the gospel is deliverance - it is the power of God in itself 'unto salvation' (deliverance). It could well be that great conversions are sometimes straightforward cases of the Word of God overcoming Satan in a man's life. It would be absurd to think of a great conversion of a man leaving him with demons still in his heart. Can a man be saved through faith in the gospel and then need a second experience to save him from Satan? From what was he saved in the first instance? 'The anointing breaks the yoke'." ⁵¹

Contrary to much popular ministry and writing in this area, it is impossible biblically for a blood washed, Spirit filled, born again believer to be demon possessed. As George Canty has said, at conversion a person is saved and delivered from the work of the devil. He has become a new creature where the old has gone and the new has come to such a degree that all things have become new. Jesus Himself destroyed the work of the devil on Calvary and so it stands to reason that those who have been set free, have been set free by the work that He did on the Cross. Those whom the Son has set free are declared free indeed. Not only this but it is incongruent to suppose that at the New Birth, when a person is born again of the Holy Spirit, that the Holy Spirit would take up His abode in the same temple as a demon. Some teach that at the New Birth, the Holy Spirit takes up residence within the human spirit and that the demons can still reside in the person's body. This quite clearly is contrary to the teaching of Scripture for Paul declares:

“Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?... for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are” (1 Cor.3:16-17).

If this were not enough evidence, he goes on to say:

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you..” (1.Cor.6:19).

There is no biblical evidence to the fact that a true believer can be demon possessed. With all of the excesses and problems that the New Testament writers faced when they wrote their instruction to the churches, they would clearly have given instruction regarding the casting out of demons if demons were the problem. On the contrary the believers were rebuked and corrected to deal with sin and to bring their lives in order. They were exhorted to

glorify God in their bodies. The practice has long stood of casting out demons of lust, nicotine, anger, envy, immorality, jealousy, and the like. Again there is no biblical evidence for this practice. These things are sin and need to be repented of.

Because of the confusion in this arena, the General Presbytery of the Assemblies of God in America adopted the following statement in May, 1972:

"Some, for example, teach that since the Bible speaks of a spirit of cowardly fear, any deliverance from fear must be by the casting out of an evil spirit or demon of fear. But an examination of the same passage (2 Timothy 1:7) shows it speaks also of a spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind or self-control. If people interpret fear to be an evil spirit needing to be cast out, to be consistent they would need to beseech three good spirits to come in. The fallacy of this reasoning is obvious. Love and self-control are fruits of the Holy Spirit in our lives. By a spirit of love and of self-control is meant the attitudes that result from our cooperation with the Holy Spirit. Actually, the word 'spirit' in many cases means an attitude or a disposition. David spoke of a broken spirit (Psalm 51:17); Solomon of a humble spirit (Proverbs 16:19); Paul wanted to come to Corinth, not with a rod, but with love and a meek or gentle spirit (1 Corinthians 4:21). Peter spoke of the adorning of the heart with the imperishable gift of a meek and quiet spirit (1 Peter 3:4), actually meaning a quiet disposition. This is in line with the frequent uses of the word 'spirit' for one's own spirit and its expressions (Haggai 1:14; Acts 17:16; 1 Corinthians 2:11, etc.). Thus, unless the context shows that an independent spirit-being is meant, it seems best to take most phrases such as a haughty spirit, a hasty spirit, a spirit of slumber, a spirit of jealousy, etc., to be sins of the disposition or lusts of the flesh (Galatians 6), and not demons. A serious danger in considering all these sins of the disposition to be demons is that the individual may feel no responsibility for the actions and feel that the necessity for repentance is removed. Actually, the Bible calls men to repent of these things and to put off these attitudes. The great conflict with us is not between the Holy Spirit and demons, but between the indwelling Holy Spirit and the flesh (that is, all the sensory apparatus that tends toward sin)."⁵²

What then is the answer to all of the testimonies of people who, as believers, have had deliverance from demons? There can only be two possible explanations.

Either the person was genuinely demon possessed, and if so, he was not genuinely saved. He therefore needs salvation after deliverance. Or, the person is genuinely saved but has become a medium through whom demons can and will manifest if commanded by an exorcist. George Canty puts it well when he says:

“Discernment should not only detect demons, but also detect when there are demons. It is quite common for people to have hypochondriac tendencies. They insist that they have an illness, but they are really quite well and live to a good old age. There may be psychological motives present, unrealised by the patient himself, such as finding illness useful for his own schemes or to attract attention or sympathy. That the condition extends to simulated demon-possession is obviously likely. Where there is a ministry to the demon-troubled, it automatically suggests to some that they also have such a condition. Their very fear of it can bring on pseudo-symptoms, especially if they are told that they may be possessed.

For this reason it becomes extremely dangerous to tell people that they are victims. It is much easier to create the idea than to get rid of it. Some go from healer to healer wanting deliverance but getting no better, simply because it is not realised that they are not possessed, but are the victims of suggestion, either autosuggestion or imposed by some other person. This again calls for careful counselling. If a person has sufficient confidence in the counsellor a cure may be wrought by saying directly, ‘You have no demon’.

Demons themselves enjoy having attention paid to them, and tend to turn up where they are talked about a great deal. Demon-hunters also, exhibiting their fancied powers in some pride, can annoy Satan. He in turn oppresses those who provoke them by their efforts at exorcism. This is perhaps the modern lesson to be learned from Jude’s warning that even the archangel Michael showed a healthy respect for the dignity of the devil and said merely, ‘The Lord rebuke thee’.⁵³

When the Apostle Paul was giving his testimony before King Agrippa, he recounts the call of God on his life “to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God” (Acts 26:18). Later, when writing to the Colossians, he describes the effect of the Gospel by declaring that the Father has “delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred

us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin" (Col.1:13-14). Again the Apostle declares that when Jesus "had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them", and that because of this we are then decreed as "having triumphed over them through Him" (Col.2:15). Clearly there is no place for demons here. If this were not enough evidence then John declares that if a man has been born of God, "the evil one does not touch him" (1 John 5:18). Jesus Himself put the matter out of question when He said: "Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the work of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:19).

The Christian is instructed not to give the devil an opportunity (Eph.4:27). This does not mean that he can be demon possessed any more than Peter was possessed when Jesus rebuked him by saying "get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's" (Mark 8:33). Jesus did address Satan when He said 'get behind me' but then he addressed Peter, rebuking him for the state of his mind. Does this mean that every time a believer doubts, that he is demonised? Of course not. We are to resist the devil, being firm in our faith.

As to the matter of bondages in an individual's life, Paul leaves no doubt as to the action necessary; "repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth" that "they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will" (2 Tim.2:25-26). When Jesus told Peter, "Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31-32), Jesus did not rebuke the devil, nor did He pray that this would not come to fruition. He simply prayed that Peter's faith would not fail.

Because of the great confusion, the lack of security and

the increasing superstition in this area, there has arisen another equally dangerous deception - that of Spiritual Warfare.

There is no doubt about the conflict in which each believer finds himself. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph.6:12). We are called to put on the full armour of God in order that we be enabled to stand firm against the schemes of the devil (Eph.6:11, 13). The Christian needs the fullness of the power of the Holy Spirit upon his life because of the very nature of the task that has been committed to him. The commission of Jesus to "go into all the world" aligns with His statement to the disciples that He was sending them out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Knowing full well that the task before them could not be accomplished by human resources, Jesus promised to baptise them with the Holy Spirit and power. This baptism for empowering was to be the prerequisite before going. In other words they needed spiritual power to perform a spiritual task.

The classic example is Peter on the day of Pentecost when, with great boldness, he preached with power and three thousand were added to the church in one day. Nobody needed to tell these men that they now needed to put on the whole armour of God. They had it on. Some today believe this passage of scripture is a literal putting on. They put their clothing on when they dress of a morning and likewise symbolically put on the various pieces of armoury in order to protect themselves from the devil. They are so superstitious about it that they feel totally vulnerable without it. This type of superstition gives more power and credit to the enemy that he ought to have. To gird your loins with truth does not mean to wrap your loins

about with an imagined garment of truth. Even confessing that you are in fact doing it, does not make it a reality. This is the finite wisdom of man trying to perform what the infinite wisdom of God has accomplished. This is not only a futile waste of time and energy, it is erroneous. The clear fact of truth is that the Apostle Paul is encouraging the believers to a life of "righteousness and holiness of the truth" (Eph.4:23). The whole of chapter four is dealing with the Christian walk. Chapter five logically deals with right relationships. This lengthy discourse continues right through to chapter six and verse nine.

At the commencement of this section on the armour of God, the word finally is used denoting that this is the conclusion on the previous subjects. As Wuest's translation puts it, we are called to put on the armour of God "at once and once for all". This is a position in Christ which has already been attested by Paul when he prays that "the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power in us who believe" (Eph.1:19-20). Again in chapter three and verse sixteen the Apostle tells how he prays for these believers "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man". This inner power and inner strength is in Christ; that is, living and being in vital union with Christ. This is a relationship of dynamic intimacy. Into this setting we are told to put on the whole armour of God.

The word translated armour is "panoply". We are commanded to put on the "panoply of God". This word is found only one other time in the New Testament in the parable of the strong man in Luke 11:21-22. In this parable the strong man has his "panoply" stripped off him

by one who is stronger. A panoply is a complete outfit of personal armour.

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses”

(2 Cor.10:5).

This reference to spiritual warfare and the necessary spiritual weapons that will enable the pulling down of strongholds, refers to the strongholds of speculations and arguments. We are to stand firm in Christ and His panoply, which will not only enable us to destroy these lofty things but also to take every thought captive and bring it as a prisoner to the obedience of Christ. In keeping with this, we are to be renewed in the spirit of our minds (Eph.4:23), and not give the devil an opportunity (Eph.4:27).

“We are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming” (Eph.4:14).

Paul does not mean that we will be in the ocean, tossed about by literal waves. Likewise he does not mean for people to symbolically dress themselves with the various pieces of armour which he describes. No! The devil and his demonic hordes are behind and energising the crafty and deceitful scheming, the lofty speculations and arguments, the destruction of relationships and the like. He does use human instruments but we are to recognise they are energised by the powers of darkness. Paul is simply stating that as a church we are to be alert, having the mind of Christ on these issues. We are not to tackle them from the perspective of man’s natural mind and powers of reason, for they are not the arguments of natural man, they are demonically inspired. We are to stand firm in

the panoply of God, in His armour, in His strength as compared to our natural wisdom.

Paul has disclosed that the “manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places” (Eph. 3:10). He has already shown that the hidden wisdom, or mystery of God which had been hidden for ages past has now been revealed. This mystery is the church, and the church manifests this manifold wisdom to the demonic hosts. It does not do this by a few positive confessions, or by symbolically putting on spiritual armour and then commanding and binding demons. It happens through Christ, who alone is the wisdom of God. “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God” (1 Cor. 1 :30), for Christ is “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:24).

It is important to note that while we are to take the Word of God personally and apply it to our lives, these epistles were written to churches. They were instructions to the Body corporately. Paul is giving instruction to the church on its spiritual warfare. He clearly describes the individual's warfare when he declares that we all battle the war between the flesh and the Spirit.

In writing to the Colossians, Paul describes how the certificate of debt was cancelled when God nailed it to the Cross. He then goes on to say that through the Cross Jesus “disarmed the rulers and authorities” (Col. 2:15). F.F. Bruce in his commentary on Colossians asks, “how can disarmed powers still constitute a threat? The answer is that they constitute no threat to those who are united by faith to the victorious Christ and avail themselves of His resources... “the panoply of God”.”⁵⁴

Nowhere in the Bible are we told to bind spirits, demons or even Satan in prayer. The parable already men-

tioned, of binding the strong man, is set in the context of Jesus being accused of casting out demons by “Beelzebul the ruler of the demons” (Mtt. 12: 24). In His reply, Jesus told the story. Clearly He was referring to Himself as the binder of the strong man. Jesus has defeated the strong man Satan, his sting, and his power. Who does man think he is that he can go around binding spirits, demons and Satan. Only Jesus had the authority to do it and He has done it and it is finished. No more needs to happen.

What then of the battle? We are more than conquerors through Christ who loved us and gave Himself for us. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. We are able to do exploits, and pull down strongholds. But it is not merely through words. It is by faith and faith is obedience to the Word of God. Faith is actional. It is not talking, but doing. It is resisting the devil, taking every thought captive. It is all only possible as we know who we are through vital submitted relationship to Jesus.

The warfare we fight is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this age and the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:12). In order to “withstand” and to “stand”, the Christian needs to take up the whole armour of God. Remembering the rule not to take any verses out of context, we need to note that in verse ten, Paul commences this section with the word “finally”. This word links his teaching on the armour of God to the preceding verses where he teaches on relationships. It is clear from this that the onslaught of the enemy will come through flesh and blood. However we are to remember that the battle is never with people, but with the powers of darkness that energise them. This is why Jesus rebuked Satan for taking opportunity through Peter, simply because Peter gave him the opportunity by not centering his thoughts

on God's interests but man's (Mtt. 16:23).

Clearly Paul is instructing the Ephesians to walk in love (5:1-7), light (5:8-14) and wisdom (5:15-21) before going on to teach them on relationships, marriage, children and parents, and servants and masters. To this instruction he brings his final word to be strong in the Lord and the power of His might. Clearly he is exhorting them to stand firm in their wrestling, knowing that the battle rages in the area of the flesh against the Spirit. This is not a battle with the demonic directly, but indirectly. It is the battle that affects us through relationships, particularly when our relationships are out of order and not functioning according to the Word of God. This battle we must wage. However we do not wage it by hurling insults at the devil and his cohorts.

The battle is more waged within than without. It is the battle against unforgiveness, bitterness, hurts, anger, resentment, envy, hatred and the like. We are to remember that it is not the person with whom we wrestle, rather it is the powers of darkness that seek to take opportunity through the person. This brings new light onto the words of Jesus when He told us to love our enemies and to bless those who misuse us and ill-treat us. We are to love our enemies and to bless them rather than curse them. We are to move in the opposite spirit. This is impossible apart from the whole armour of God. The battle is won by subjecting the flesh, conquering it and putting it to death, which must mean every thought as well. This is the walk of sanctification, the walk of holiness.

The warfare against the demonic or spiritual forces has already been fought and the victory won by Jesus upon the Cross. He publicly displayed these spiritual forces as defeated and disarmed. According to Rev. 12, their tactic now is that of deception. Yes, they do manipulate

sinful humanity. Yes, they do seek every possible way to deceive the elect of God. Jesus, when talking about the perilous times to come said that “false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect” (Mtt.24:24). They never tire in their deception. Yes, the devil rages around like a roaring lion seeking to devour people and take them captive. Yes, he is the thief who has come to rob, kill and destroy. But the biblical answer to all of this is that Jesus Christ has overcome on our behalf, and the instruction given to us is to stand firm under the panoply of God. No matter what he might throw at us, we can be in no more secure place than under the panoply of Almighty God.

Our God is not so weak that He cannot defeat an enemy. No, the enemy is defeated and we are given the privilege of living in the spoils. We have the victory because He won it. We have all necessary authority when, and only when, we are under His authority. Therefore we are not to live as we please and then yell abuse at the devil because we have given him place. Neither are we to cast demons out of unsuspecting carnal Christians. We are not to blame the devil for our sin. We are not to command spiritual entities, prince demons etc. over cities and locations. Our clear authority is that we can say no to the flesh, exercise the victory of Jesus in our lives and then live under the panoply of God. Our authority is His authority. Our authority comes as we live in obedience to the Word of God. Only then will we fulfil the great commission to go and in our going we will heal the sick, raise the dead and cast out demons. Not because of our formulas, nor even our effort, but because we have freely received therefore we can freely give.

The truth of the matter is that we have a church today that is so steeped in superstition concerning the

devil and demons, that it has succumbed to this deceptive influence. With all of the hype and inflated activity in this area, the church has been infiltrated and it has become the devil's playground. Never before have so many boasted such great things and delivered so little. Never before has the church been so steeped in immorality. The answer to this malaise is not, as some suppose, in waging warfare over the unseen hosts of hell. This has already been done and won. The answer lies in heartfelt repentance. Clearly the church today needs a reformation. We need to return to Biblical Christianity. This can only happen as men individually, and churches collectively, repent of the errors and purpose in their hearts that in all of their seeking, they will again seek the Lord. We need to return to the centrality of the Cross.

Chapter

8

THE CENTRALITY
of
THE CROSS

“For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Cor.1:21-25).

It is quite obvious that on a large scale the church does not agree with the tactics of God. We try to make the Gospel appealing and so in our preaching we appeal to the wisdom of man. We do this by presenting a message that does not centre around the Cross and its demands upon sinful

humanity. We do not want the Gospel to divide people, nor do we want to appear foolish to them and so we subtly change the demand that "God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent" (Acts 17:30).

This was part of Paul's sermon on Mars Hill as he stood in the Areopagus and preached to the men of Athens. He was in good company, for Jesus Himself preached: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15, cf. Mt.3:2, 4:17; Lk.13:3,5). When Jesus sent the disciples out, they too "went out and preached that men should repent" (Mark 6:12). Clearly the message that we are to preach is the message of the Cross, which is not to be watered down, nor sugar coated to make it more palatable and less offensive to the hearer. The Cross is a message that is to divide. It is to be a stumbling and an offence. But the preaching of this Cross and all of its ramifications, is God's way, for it is the power of God to those who are being saved. It is the only way by which a man can be delivered out of darkness and transferred into His marvellous light.

Yes, it is only through the foolishness of this message that the power of God is released into the individual's life and he is set free. This so called 'foolish' action of God is far wiser than all of the collective wisdom of man. All of his collective efforts, be they secular or religious, can never accomplish what that Cross has accomplished. It is the most dynamic force in the creation, able to destroy every evil work of the enemy of mankind and render it useless. It is the place where the enemies of God were defeated and man reconciled to his God. No wonder the devil seeks to minimise its importance. It is the place of his defeat and of the victory and release of the people of God. No wonder he does everything he can to distract man from the magnitude of what actually transpired on

that Cross.

All that we have so far seen; the deceptions, heresies and additions to the truth, are all because man has failed to understand the magnitude of the Cross. The devil has succeeded today where he failed with Job. He has successfully infiltrated the church and permeated it with the mind set that God only acts towards us if we initiate the action and perform the right religious duties. This totally undermines and disregards the Cross. We do not initiate anything with God:

“In this is love, not that we first loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins”. “We love, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:10, 19).

The Cross brought redemption. Redemption carries the meaning of deliverance and is almost totally confined to religious jargon. This was not the case in the New Testament days. It was not a religious term, but a term used in everyday language. It was used in the everyday terminology of slaves, debts and obligations that needed by law to be met. The word ‘ransom’, which is derived from the Greek word ‘to loose’, was used in every day language to loosen anything from tethered animals to clothing. When the early Christians started using these terms, they did so to vividly portray what transpired on Calvary. Jesus, the redeemer, delivered and loosed the sinner from his sin by becoming the ransom. A price had to be paid for sin, for the wages of sin is death which God clearly communicated to Adam in the Garden.

Geoffrey Bingham succinctly explains:

“God is holy. Man has sinned. The dimension of man’s sinfulness and guilt are equivalent to the dimensions of God’s holiness. Man’s guilt is not merely temporal but eternal, otherwise

his conscience would have no power over him. God in His holiness may not forgive sin gratuitously. Even he does not have the right. Man for his part cannot cover his own sin, or morally compensate for it. In his fallen state he does not even wish to do so. He lacks the moral incentive and power to do so, were it even possible. Man, then, is in a dilemma.

So is God, so to speak. Because of His law and holiness He cannot, may not, must not, and dare not, forgive man. To forgive one man one sin is to be bound to forgive all sins for all men for all time, in which case His holiness has been dissipated, His law been made foolish, and the moral structure of His creation fully fractured.

What then does God do? If he forgives gratuitously it does nothing for the conscience of man. If he sweeps man's sin under the carpet, and puts a cover over his moral defilement, then the anguish of the human spirit is increased to destruction point. The truth is that there is no humanly conceivable solution to the problem. There is, however, a divinely conceived solution. It is the Cross. This Cross is no mere matter of mental juggling, a clever manipulation of profit-and-loss figures, nor a clever manipulation of law, the holy law of God. The Cross alone is the solution to man's problem".⁵⁵

In his appeal to Titus, Paul reminded him that it was "our great God and Saviour, Christ Jesus; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds" (Titus 2:13-14). This is in

accord with the words of Jesus when He spoke concerning His own death by saying, "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

Here Jesus describes the ransom as the giving of His own life. Peter expounds this even further when he writes a warning to us that God judges each man's work; encouraging us to conduct ourselves in fear during the time of our stay upon earth; knowing that we were not redeemed with perishable things like silver and gold from our futile way of life inherited from our forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19). There is no way around the fact of a bloody Cross. It was brutal and ugly. It was the ultimate act of the Creator serving the creature by Himself becoming the blood sacrifice. The sacrifice of Jesus was vicarious; it was substitutionary. He died in our place.

The Cross was a horrible disgrace, as is testified by the statement "cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" (Gal.3:13, cf. 3:10; Duet.27:26). Geoffrey Bingham, in his book "Christ's Cross Over Man's Abyss", asks the question "Why then a cross?". To which he replies, "Was it some expedient to meet a regrettable exigency? The answer must be 'No!'. The thrust of Scripture is that what God does in time He has planned in eternity. Of Christ we read, 'He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake' (1 Pet.1:20). The context of the passage quoted tells us that the precious blood of the Lamb (Christ) was planned to be shed for the sins of the world. Similarly in another place it is said, '...everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain' (Rev.13:8). Whilst therefore the Lamb was slain in time, His death was planned before time. Those

who have their names written in the book of life are those whose salvation has been planned before time. Thus we conclude the death was also planned before time".⁵⁶

The Cross has always been in the heart of God, even before He created the heavens and the earth. The urgency and the necessity of Christ's mission is evidenced in His words that "He must go into Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests, and be killed, and be raised again the third day (Mtt.16:21). He declared, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (John 3:14). "But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation" (Luke 17:25). Even the testimony of the angels at the empty tomb declared "the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men" (Luke 24:7, cf Acts 17:3). Contrary to popular belief, the devil did not put Jesus upon the Cross. He was handed over by the predetermined plan of God. God foretold His intentions through Isaiah the prophet when He declared :

"but the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief" (Isaiah 53:10). Isaiah clearly prophesied that Jesus was "smitten of God, and afflicted" (v.4). This took the shape of being "pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed" (v.5). And again, "the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on him" (v.6). "He was oppressed and afflicted" and "by oppression and judgment He was taken away" (v.7-8). The prophet goes on to reveal the heart of God by saying : "as a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied" (v.11).

Yes, the devil did take opportunity through the crafty scheming and trickery of men to incite the crowd. Yes, he was active in the whole horrifying actions of that momentous day. But his was not the active role that he thought. God was the active one who handed over His Son in the fullness of time according to the eternal plan. The devil was the passive instrument in the hands of almighty God. Yes, the devil bruised Jesus on the heel but even this was part of the eternal plan. This act of redemption is the one act of history by which the enemy of both God and man is humiliated and defeated. The deceiver played into the hands of God because what he thought was his victory was in fact the predetermined plan for his defeat and the redemption of those whom he had bound. This act of redemption is the action of deliverance from all the clutches of the devil and it was accomplished as a completed work.

It is important to dispel some of the myth surrounding the Cross. Some believe that the action of the Cross was an action to counter-balance the weight of man's sin, to bring about a sort of moral equilibrium, the act of an innocent man dying to balance the scales heavily weighted down by the injustice and sin of humanity. They argue that the death of Christ was the means to counter this weight and bring the scales back to a balanced position which will allow man to now choose to serve God and receive His forgiveness. They suppose that forgiveness is simply offered by God as a royal decree and that when they say sorry to God and ask for His forgiveness, He merely has to say "I forgive you". This is a lie. God cannot just bring a moral balance into His creation and then gratuitously hand out decrees of forgiveness. If He were to do this, He would become an accomplice to sin or an accessory after the fact. God cannot turn a blind eye to sin and say "Ok, I'm in a benevolent mood, I'll forgive you". For Him to do this would mean

that He would cease to be Holy, and therefore He would deny His own nature and cease to be God. This is an absurd impossibility. No, He must judge and punish man's sin. He does this through pouring out His wrath, His holy anger, upon His own Son. In doing this He can spare no measure. He cannot be lenient. He must expel all of His Holy fury and punish His own dear Son.

To comprehend what this cost both the Father and the Son is beyond human understanding. For the human heart to fail to realise these things will mean that the individual will always be left in a state of indifference towards sin and of insecurity when confronted by the devil and the flesh. This action by our Redeemer, as He took all of our punishment and extinguished the anger of God; when He became sin and confronted death in order to break the power of sin and death over our lives; when He defeated the destroyer and cleansed our guilt; when he freed us from all of the work of the enemy, He totally freed us into the liberty of the sons of God. We were set free indeed! This could only have happened by Jesus being the propitiation of God's wrath and the atonement.

The word atonement refers to the total provision of salvation which God made for sinners in, and through, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Hebrew word literally means 'a covering'. The only occasion it is used in the New Testament is in the Authorised Version when it renders Romans 5:11 as: "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement". All other translations render the Greek word 'katallage' as reconciliation, which is the correct translation. Atonement is the violent taking of life through the shedding of blood. In the passover ritual the blood is that which atones for sin. Some use the simple, yet affective, phrase that atonement means 'at-one-

ment' with God. Jesus was the sacrificial Lamb and it is the shedding of His blood that makes atonement. It needs to be remembered that the action of atonement was the action of an angry God who violently sacrificed His own Son. In this way the shed blood of Jesus turns away the wrath of God. This was the action of love.

The concept of God being angry at sin has very much been watered down in these days. This is, of course, clearly seen by the way in which we excuse our behaviour and blame shift. This is why the church has developed so many extra teachings to that clearly given in Scripture. They are attempts to remove guilt. On the other hand the Cross calls for accountability. Many modern scholars and some modern translations of the Bible, substitute the word "propitiation" with "expiation". Expiation is meant to do all that propitiation does without the wrath of God. This according to the Bible is impossible.

"The word 'propitiation' properly signifies the turning away of wrath by a sacrifice. Thus it signifies appeasement".⁵⁷ Leon Morris says: "The idea of the wrath of God is stubbornly rooted in the Old Testament, where it is referred to 585 times".⁵⁸ Duffield & Van Cleave say: "It is also mentioned a number of times in the New Testament: 'He that believeth not the Son of God shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him' (John 3:36). 'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men' (Rom.1:18). 'Let no one deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience' (Eph.5:6). (See also Rom.2:5; 5:9; 1 Thess.1:10; Heb.3:11; Rev.19:15).

In the passages quoted above it will be seen that Paul views Christ's death as the means of removing God's wrath (Rom.5:9). The amazing paradox is that God Himself provided the means of removing His own wrath. We also

observe: that it is the Father's love that 'sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins' (1 John.4:10); that the reason Christ became 'a merciful and faithful high priest' was 'to make propitiation for the sins of the people' (Heb.2:17); and that His propitiation is adequate for all (1 John 2:2)".⁵⁹

According to Leon Morris, the consistent Bible view is that the sin of man has incurred the wrath of God. That wrath is averted only by Christ's atoning offering. From this standpoint His saving work is properly called propitiation.⁶⁰ Concerning this saving work, Geoffrey Bingham adds: "It is not a brilliant expedient to meet a dismal contingency. It is not quick thinking, or forensic adjustment which lets man off the hook of guilt. Far from that, it is the expression in time of the eternal love of God, but love which is no less than holy, and no more than grace".⁶¹

John 3:16 clearly defines the action of love: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life". John uses the word 'gave' in two senses. God gave His Son when He sent Him into the world, but ultimately He gave His Son on the Cross. The Father sent His Son to bear His punishment on behalf of sinful humanity. The Cross therefore shows the love of the Father embracing all of His wrath and judgment. Those who oppose the idea of the wrath of God manufacture a god after their own choosing, but clearly it is not the God who so loved that He gave. As Leon Morris says: "The atonement proceeds from the loving heart of God. It is not something wrung from Him...it is not 'God loved so as to give' but, 'God loved so that He gave'. His love is not a vaguely sentimental feeling, but a love that costs. God gave what was most dear to Him".⁶² John 3:17 relates the giving with the awful concept of judgment. Clearly God

knows that for man to face His judgment means that man will perish.

For God to be true to Himself, He must judge sin. Out of His great love, His judgment is poured out upon the Gift that He sent. It is clear that the magnitude of the punishment metered out upon the spotless Lamb was the punishment that the whole race deserved, from Adam until the last man. The punishment was so horrendous that Jesus cried, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?", "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?" (Mtt.27:46).

This was the action of love. Love is the deed that meets the need. Our need was that we were lost and deserving of judgment, His deed paid the debt in full. Jesus was not passive in this whole affair. Paul declares:

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me" (Gal.2:20).

The Father gave the sacrifice and this was His love; the Son delivered Himself up to the Father to take the punishment and this was His love. If wrath was not a part of the nature of God, He would not be love. To take away any part of God means that He would not be love. Love is not something that he does, it is the very essence of His nature. It is composed of all that He is.

God is not silent concerning His free gift to us. Jesus "has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us" (Gal.3:13). The Law consisted of God's holy moral law. Man is unable to keep this law and so is deserving of death. Clearly we have been redeemed from the penalty of the law. Not only this but He declares that we have been redeemed from the Law itself: "Therefore,

my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ" (Rom.7:4). Having been redeemed from the penalty of the Law and indeed from the Law itself means sin shall not be master over us, for we "are not under law but under grace" (Rom.6:14). God also declares that He has redeemed us from the power of sin:

"Our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin" (Rom.6:6).
"How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" (Rom.6:2).

He has also redeemed us from Satan:

"Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives" (Heb. 2:14-15).

This of course means that He has redeemed us from all evil:

"Who gave Himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil age, according to the will of God the Father" (Gal.1:4).

"We have received an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation - having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption

of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory" (Eph.1:11-14).

What an awesome event the Cross was. What powerful things it accomplished both in heaven and on earth. This Cross has always been the only solution to the human predicament, whether it be the predicament of sin, guilt, Satan, demons, sickness or death. This Cross has redeemed man totally from the curse and set him free:

"Therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal.5:1).

This is the desperate message for this hour of great deception. This is the call to return to Biblical Christianity, the call to return to the centrality of the Cross. The words of the Apostle Paul need to be heeded today:

"For when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified...And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God" (1 Cor.2:1-5).

BROKEN ON A TREE FOR ME

God is love; but where
The perfect expression to see?
Who are you to me?
Who am I to you?
How can I see?
Broken on a tree for me!

What a Father is yours,
It pleases him - Your death;
It seems senseless
A good one to die;
Why?
Broken on a tree for me!

There is a crowd
Screaming blood
Crucify; Crucify; Crucify;
Crashing blows
Nails piercing
Suffering; Pain; Agony;
Broken on a tree for me!

Mocked crown; stinging thorns,
Trickling blood; jeering scorn,
Visible pain;
But more, much more I see;
Broken on a tree for me!

Vile rotten
Cancerous growth of sin,
Seething; Festering; Consuming you;
Beauty transformed; hideously deformed
You became what I am;
Broken on a tree for me!
This is love,
Not that we loved God,
But that He loved us,
He sent You, His Son
To be the means of forgiving;
Broken on a tree for me!

Guilty for all,
Guiltless yourself;
Alive! raised from death;
No one knows God until they can say,
I met you,
Broken on a tree for me!

Many look
but are too proud
to bow the knee and meet you
Broken on a tree;
But, Oh what joy; liberated; free;
Perfect love has ransomed;
Broken on a tree for me!

Now I know,
for when we met,
You became I; I became You;
This life of Yourself You offer
to all who come to You;
Thank you Jesus for being
Broken on a tree for me.

Chapter

9

THE POWER
of

BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

Jack Hayford, celebrated pastor and author, is also known as a Pastor to pastors. In a recent issue of *Charisma* magazine, he wrote an article entitled 'A Remedy for Imbalance', concerning the great need for the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements to "listen to the voice of the Scriptures". He says: "Charismatic Bible interpretation exhibits a general propensity for looseness, an inclination to strain the limits of God's 'sure Word'. This frightens many Christian leaders who, while welcoming the refreshing that some of these emphases introduce, deeply regret the casual disregard of Scripture by some who claim 'revelation' or 'prophetic insight' as conclusive or authoritative of their teachings. Without a will to bend our private 'revelations' to the plumb line of the Word, trouble is certain." He goes on to say: "Protection against such error is assured when we don't insist on supporting our own insights or emphases with selected proof texts. We

must remain willing to accept honest inquiry into apparent weaknesses in our systems of doctrine. To do otherwise is to chart a path to short-lived spirituality".⁶³

It is clear that there is a rising concern both outside and within the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements regarding excesses in teaching and practice. There is a growing tide of people who are calling the church back to the solid foundations of biblical doctrine and practice. There is a great need for sound doctrine today. Many church members know little or nothing of what the Bible teaches about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, sin, redemption, grace, heaven and hell etc.

Many Christians are afraid of the term 'doctrine' because it has been associated with dead orthodoxy. Existentialism has been the order of the day - people want to experience or feel their Christianity. The problem here is, that this emphasis has produced an immature church, unable to discern truth from error, friend from foe. The Greek word for doctrine is *didaché* which means teaching, (cf. Mtt.7: 28 - A.V. 'doctrine', N.A.S. 'teaching'; Tit.1:9; Rev.2 :14-15, 24). It carries both the meaning of that which is taught and the act of teaching or instruction (cf. Mark 4:2 A.V. 'doctrine', N.A.S. 'teaching'; Rom.16: 17). This word is derived from *didaskalos*, meaning teacher.⁶⁴ The spiritual gift of teacher is a designation from the Lord for the correct teaching of doctrine. Our doctrine is that which we firmly believe. It is obvious from this that teachers teach doctrine and doctrine is taught by teachers. However, not all teachers teach doctrine. Doctrine is the foundation of Christianity. Bible doctrine reveals God to man and man to himself. It shows the Christian the foundations of his faith and establishes him in his faith. Bible doctrine will lead a Christian to a Spirit-filled life of active service and, if studied and believed, will keep the Christian from worldliness and

sin. It will set the hungry soul on fire. Most importantly, Biblical doctrine will save us from error.

The doctrines of men and of demons produce error. Jesus said to the Pharisees: "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures, or the power of God" (Mt.22 :29). The reason so many false cults and doctrines prosper and spread is because professing Christians do not know what the Bible teaches. Jack Hayford says: "Many charismatics burn out on church and drop out from fellowship altogether. Others cruise from congregation to congregation, looking for a new spiritual 'jolt'. Meanwhile, free-wheeling teachers tend to spin out questionable or even cultic doctrines. And even legitimate teachers shy away from explaining their biblical foundations because they view criticism as an attack by outsiders who haven't experienced the power of God. Charismatics face a challenge common to renewal movements: How do we ground the experience of a fresh move of God in the truth of the Scripture in order to achieve stability and durability?"⁶⁵ Continuing on, he states that the emphases of "'Kingdom Now', 'Demons and Deliver-ance', 'Prophets and Prophecy', 'Signs and Wonders', 'Confessing the Word', 'Healing and Prosperity'...are just half a dozen of the emphases that ricochet through the charismatic movement. They delight proponents, dismay critics and provide fodder for innumerable questions and fiery postulations. But they also create serious concerns. Those concerned generally point to a theological imbalance that many charismatics either fail to recognise or choose to accept as normative or even desirable. 'It's as though large segments of the charismatic movement are either indifferent to or unaware of the theological thin ice on which they skate', one classical Pentecostal leader observed".⁶⁶ Pastor Hayford, who is a leader and statesman in the Pentecostal Church

in America, suggests that the remedy lies partly with the necessity for the Pentecostal/charismatic community to “trust more readily the intentions of sympathetic critics. Rather than judging appeals to greater carefulness in theology as a threat to our style or liberty, we might listen to them....we must avoid the arrogance that supposes theology is arthritic or that history is a waste of time. We must take time to investigate the church’s history. We must bother to examine the theological implications of our experiences. If our experiences truly verify the Word, they’ll fit into sound theology. Remember, vital revivalists and reformers of church history - such as Luther, Wesley and Finney - were not theological wimps. Both distant and recent church history remind us of the folly of free-wheeling revelation without foundation. “⁶⁷

The Apostle Paul also faced the same issues in the early church as evidenced by his instruction to Timothy to “remain on at Ephesus, in order that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines” (1 Tim.1:3). One does not have to be too discerning to be aware that wherever there is renewal, awakening, revival etc. in the church, the enemy infiltrates through his subversive tactics by introducing strange doctrines. There is no doubt that these are designed to lead people back into captivity. This has always been his strategy. In the last days it will escalate to such magnitude that it will pave a smooth path for the entrance of the antichrist.

Again, Paul instructs Timothy that “if any one advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing” (1 Tim.6:3-4). The introduction of different doctrines usually comes into a vacuum of biblical illiteracy by those who succumb to them. It is interesting to

note that Paul equates sound doctrine to the sound words of Jesus as well as conforming to godliness. He goes on to say that those who teach strange doctrines, do it supposing they are teaching godliness, but their motive, that godliness is a means of gain, is what identifies them.

There is no doubt that the many 'prosperity' teachers fit into this category. Yonggi Cho, who is the pastor of the largest Christian congregation in the world, was interviewed by the editor of 'Charisma' magazine about his outspoken criticism of unbalanced prosperity teaching. He said: "Spirit-filled people in your country really want to seek after God with a fervent heart, and this is very good. But I think many of them emphasise prosperity too much, neglecting the life of holiness. The foundation of Christianity is putting our flesh on the cross and killing it. Once we have surrendered to God and have died to ourselves, we must learn how to live by the constitution of the kingdom of God....When our Christian lives are based on holiness and obedience to God, then we can receive prosperity in the right way to build up the kingdom.... American Christians tend to equate prosperity with money. However, in the Orient we have a different idea. Prosperity means successfully fulfilling the goal. One must not connect prosperity with financial success, because in many cases, having prosperity means losing all.... We must repent and we must now promote the gospel of holiness".⁶⁸ What he says concerning America is no doubt true of many areas of the world.

Holiness and godliness are the most neglected aspects of sound doctrine in the church today. God the Father has chosen us in Christ "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him" (Eph.1:4). He has called us "unto holiness" (1Thess.4:7 AV); "that we should have our "fruit unto holiness" (Rom.6:22); that our

hearts should be established 'unblameable in holiness' (1 Thess.3:13); that we should abound in 'all holy conversation and godliness' (2 Peter 3:11); that we should be 'a holy priesthood' (1 Peter 1:15); 'called with an holy calling' (2 Tim.1:9); 'holy and without blame before Him in love' (Eph.1:4), presenting not our souls alone but our 'bodies' as (not only a 'living') but a holy sacrifice to God (Rom.12:1); remembering that these bodies are not merely 'a sacrifice,' but ;the temple of the Holy Ghost' (1 Cor.6:19)."⁶⁹

Back in 1949, Paul Stewart wrote: "There is something fundamentally and radically wrong in the world today... The shallow and superficial may locate and discover the trouble in a thousand different places, but the deep and discerning know that man is essentially outward what he is fundamentally inward. Therefore, man's basic trouble is not in his head, his hands, or his heels, but his heart."⁷⁰ He goes on to say: "The clarion-call and trumpet-toned message of the Church to this devil-captivated and sin-infatuated world is condensed, compressed, and expressed in the possessing, the preaching, the practising, and the promoting of holiness...centrally our deepest, highest, and greatest message is second-blessing, carnality-crucifying, sin-eradicating, heart-cleansing, red-hot holiness".⁷¹

The word 'hagiasmos' is translated 'holiness' in the A.V. while other translations often render it 'sanctification'. God is Holy; "and holy is His name" (Luke 1:49). Jesus addressed His Father as "Holy Father" (John 17:11), while Peter declared: "Like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behaviour; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am Holy'" (1 Peter 1:15-16). The living creatures "do not cease to say, Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come" (Rev.4:8). Holiness to the Lord is graphically portrayed by Paul Stewart when he describes

the activity of the church;

“preaching and practicing, teaching and trumpeting, singing and shouting, exhorting and exemplifying, ‘Holiness unto the Lord’, with a God-called, Spirit-filled, fully-equipped, thoroughly-prepared, equally-balanced, properly-proportioned, fiery, fearless, and fascinating ministry and a prayer-prevailing, truth-proclaiming, sin-uncovering, carnality-crucifying, holiness-promoting, hell-upheaving, church-electrifying, and heaven-populating program ...Preaching may be scholarly and homiletical and yet be the beautiful flowers on the coffin lid of the corpse. We need to preach, practice, and promote sin-killing, devil-driving, jealousy-lancing, anger-amputating, sin-eradicating, ambition-decapitating, joy-percolating, hallelujah-articulating, second-blessing holiness. There is a danger of a nice, cheap, pale, stale, sickly, anaemic, fireless, juiceless, powerless, dignified, theoretical, stereotyped, artificial, superficial, shallow, counterfeit profession of holiness that makes angels weep and devils laugh, heaven put on mourning and hell celebrate a jubilee... We should not be looking forward to superannuation but for some superammunition to rescue the perishing, get believers sanctified wholly, blast out new churches, resurrect old churches, exalt Christ, magnify the Blood, honour the Holy Ghost, and glorify God. In spite of demon opposition, human supposition, and philosophical composition, we must keep on preaching holiness, living holiness, and spreading holiness to the ends of the earth”.⁷²

The Christian is called to a lifestyle of holiness. It is not something that can be turned on and off in order to impress. It is not an optional extra that we can discard when it pleases us. Holiness is relationship with a Holy God. He has cleansed us by His own blood so that we may be holy temples of the Holy Spirit. This is not a principle of life, it is life. It is not obtained by doing good things. We cannot work our way into a holy position. Holiness is in God, it is relational. He alone is Holy and we can only derive holiness from deep intimate relationship with the Holy One. Holiness happens in the heart. It cannot be legislated. The Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' day thought they were holy because they kept the Law, yet Jesus called them white washed tombs and dead men's bones. He accused them of being of their father the devil and of making other people twice as fit for hell as they were themselves. We see from this that doing good works does not qualify a person as holy.

The power of biblical Christianity does not comprise of things that we do. This is where so many errors are being made in the church today. Many of the false teachings, as outlined in this book, are grounded in this error. Man cannot command God to supply his needs, heal his body, make him a millionaire, or anything else. We cannot get God to move on our behalf because of the words we speak or the formula that we use. An understanding of the major doctrines of the Bible would dispel many of these errors. A study of the Doctrine of God would show us the knowability of God, the nature of God, His absolute attributes and His moral attributes, the Triunity of God, the persons of the Trinity - The Person and work of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This would be a good place for pastors to start to teach their people. This is where the overcoming power of biblical Christianity will sustain a

person through the hardships of life.

There is a great emphasis upon the overcoming power in the believer's life. The messages to the seven churches of Revelation bear this out. These seven churches represent the state of the churches at various times throughout history. To each of the individual churches the Spirit of the Lord brings the appropriate message. To the church in Ephesus the message is given and concluded with;

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life; which is in the Paradise of God" (Rev.2:7).

The church at Smyrna receives its message followed by;

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death" (Rev.2:11).

The Pergamum church had the message delivered to it concluded by;

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manner, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but him who receives it" (Rev.2: 17).

The Spirit of the Lord reveals the message to the church at Thyatira, concluding with;

"And he who overcomes, and who keeps My deeds until the end, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev.2:26-29).

Sardis likewise receives its message followed by;

"He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in

white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev.3:5-6).

The church in Philadelphia had its message followed by; "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God.....He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev.3:12-13).

And lastly, the lukewarm church which thought it had need of nothing because it was rich, had its message followed by;

"He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev.3:21-22).

As if this were not enough evidence to overcoming, Jesus Himself says at the end of the Book:

"It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son" (Rev.21:6-7).

The Lord leaves no mistaking of His intentions for His Church to be an overcoming Church and for each individual believer to be an overcomer, for He goes on to describe the terrible fate of those who do not fit into this category:

"But the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolater and all liars, their part

will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Rev.21:8).

The key to this overcoming is found in the Overcomer. Jesus said to His disciples:

"Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (John 16:32-33).

His overcoming was that which enabled Him to "open the book and its seven seals" (Rev.5:5). In describing the victory over the great harlot in Revelation 17, the saints are included and their description is stated clearly:

"These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful" (Rev.17:14).

It is obvious from this description that the called and chosen and faithful are the overcomers who participate in the overcoming of the Lamb. Paul describes the practical application of this when he says: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom.12:21). Here the Apostle describes moving in the opposite spirit to those who do evil to us. He is describing the practical demands of love. This is in the context of verses one and two: "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." The overcoming is in the context of relationship, a relationship with the Overcomer. We will overcome, as He overcame,

if we are living in dynamic surrender, a living and holy sacrifice. This is dying to self and living to God. It is no more clearly stated than by John:

“I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one” (1 John 2:13-14).

To know the Father is to be in intimate relationship with the Father. Those who overcome are in intimate relationship with the Living God. In his warning not to believe every spirit because the antichrist spirit was already in the world as well as many false prophets, John confirms them by saying: “You are from God, little children. and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). It is clear that intimacy with God is the very pressing need for this hour. Rev.3:20 has been used by evangelists to plead with the unsaved. They have declared that Jesus is standing at the door of their hearts pleading to come in. This is tantamount to heresy. Jesus does not stand at the door of the unbelieving heart as though He were a beggar, imploring people to open the door of their hearts and let Him in out of the cold. No, this is a cry from the Father heart of God for intimacy. It is a cry from the Lord of Glory who declared, while He was on the earth, that when we pray, we are to go into our inner room, and when we have shut the door, pray to our Father who is in secret (Mtt.6:6). He is calling the church into intimacy with Him.

Never before in the history of the church has it had at its disposal such a wealth of resources - cds, videos, books, movies, radio and television, conferences, seminars etc. Even with all of these resources, even with the Charismatic Renewal, even with the signs and wonders, healings, prophecies, words of knowledge, preaching, teaching, church growth, church programs and evangelistic effort, the church is at large impoverished and destitute of overcoming power. This is because we have substituted intimacy with our God for all of these things. The truth of the matter is He is not so much concerned with what we do for Him as He is with knowing us and us knowing Him. This can only be the knowing through intimate relationship with the God of relationship.

Paul's great cry for intimacy should be echoed by the church today:

"Whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Phil.3:7-10).

The call to intimacy is the call to power. It is not as some proponents of these deceptive teachings have said. It is not in signs and wonders that we are known by God and know Him. It is not in the large conferences, nor is it in the

church meetings. God can and does speak to us in these times, but it is always in the intimacy of the closet that what He has shown in public is worked out in secret. This is the place of knowing. Paul places further light on the subject by saying: "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known", (or to the degree that I have been fully known), (1 Cor.13:12). He longs for his readers to come to "know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge" (Eph.3:19).

What is clear is that love for God and man is fostered in the intimacy of knowing Him. This is born out in 1 John. In concluding his teaching on the love of God, John says:

"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. For whoever is born of God overcomes the world, and this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith" (1 John 5:1-4).

To be an overcomer is to live in intimate relationship, in a knowing relationship, with the Overcomer. This knowing is not merely knowing about, it is the deepest knowing that also implies that I am known. The ingredient that links all of this together is faith. As we have said earlier, faith is obedience. We do not overcome the world by confessing and possessing our rights, nor do we overcome by binding demons and spiritual powers, or by any of the many popularised formulas presented by the teachers of such things. We overcome because we are in vital union with Him who has

overcome. We know Him intimately and He knows us, we hear His voice and we follow. We are His friends and so we are obedient to the things that He commands. We are in love with the lover of our souls, the One who so loved us that He gave His only Son to take our punishment and so remove the barrier that separated us from our loving Father.

The power of biblical Christianity is in being, not doing. Does this mean that we don't do the doing? On the contrary, we are those who are the greatest doers of the Word. We are saved from doing our own thing, we are saved from the boastful pride of life because He is committed to chastening, reproof and disciplining us. We desperately need this loving action of our Father, and we will have it from the intimacy of knowing Him in the closet. The words of the writer to the Hebrews are words that we need to hear again:

“You have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, ‘My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov’d by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.’ It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share

His holiness" (Heb.12:5-10).

Unfortunately, this is not the experience of many. People love the glamour and the excitement of the big events. They love to be entertained. They flock to see the miracles and hopefully to receive one. As Jack Hayford says:

"Sad to say, the practice of many charismatics is to 'hitch their wagon to a star' rather than to anchor themselves to a solid base of long-term growth in a trustworthy fellowship. Many pursue itinerant prophetic and healing ministries while neglecting steadfast, accountable commitment to the disciplines of continuity in a local, faithfully pastored congregation. The pastor may not be as exciting a personality as the more visible, eloquent or miracle-graced travelling preacher. But after the more mobile minister has left town, that pastor is the one to be counted on when believers must face the tough realities of daily living.

Countless scat-about, undisciplined believers 'come for the show but refuse to grow.' Everywhere we see shallowness, unaccountability and a neglect of balancing wisdom. So where can we find the wisdom we need?

I believe that the charismatic movement must chart a fresh course to the central point of Christian truth: the cross of Jesus. The remedy for any imbalance is precisely there, where those two crossbars remind us of the need to balance heaven's requirements (vertical) with human need (horizontal)... The cross must command centre stage in our lives, ever and always; and as participants in this revival, let us be certain it

does in the charismatic movement as well. The cross is the fountainhead of all God's wisdom, as well as the source of all His power (1 Cor.1:18-25; 2:1-40).

Let's start singing again, 'Jesus keep me near the cross.' Humility is assured there, which will keep arrogance and pride from gaining ascendancy. Holiness is assured there, which will keep presumption and ungodliness at bay. Love abounds there, which will help us to hear each other and to keep the teachable heart of a child. Finally, the power is there - for the fountainhead of all Christ's glory-workings toward all mankind was opened there. We must keep that fountainhead as our fountainhead - resting all our revelations and blessings on the footings Calvary provides".⁷³

There is no doubt that the further the boundaries are stretched, the further men lead the Church away from biblical foundations, the more insecure the people of God become. In order to keep the crowds, the arm of flesh is displayed. One fundamental of the Word of God is that He will not share His glory with another. Saints of God, if you are fellowshiping in any place where men are drawing others to themselves, claiming great anointings, and great miracles at their hands, flee from this.

Jesus said he would build His Church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it, but Jesus cannot build where man is building. We either let Him build and behold His glory, or we continue to build with the stench of flesh, which will result in death.

Revival comes when our hearts are turned back to Him.

Chapter
10

REVIVAL

There is no doubt that in many quarters the church has moved the boundaries of God's Word, moved into areas of deception and turned from the truth to another gospel. The over emphasis on particular teachings such as the hyper-faith gospel, prosperity through positive confession, inner healing and healing of the memories as well as deliverance and spiritual warfare have, along with others not mentioned, infiltrated much of the church bringing great devastation. The only solution to this malaise is a genuine heartfelt repentance and a return to the centrality of the Cross and to the power of Biblical Christianity.

In genuine revival, God always deals with the sin in the church. I was greatly encouraged when I was in Brazil some years back. God was moving in awesome revival in that land. I was preaching in a Church in Belo Horizonte. The Church was a simple adobe style building. It had none of the plush trimmings that we are used to in the West. But

God was there in a way that I have yet to see over here. Half way through the sermon, a commotion began in the congregation about two thirds of the way back. A man jumped to his feet crying, "Glory to the Lord, Glory to the Lord, Glory, Glory, Glory to the Lord..." I turned to my interpreter who advised me that the man, in his mid thirties, was born blind, and in that instant God had opened his eyes and he could see. What a glorious situation this was. I saw many such events, of God sovereignly moving upon people. They never had prayer lines for healing, nor did they make a show of these things. It was God, and it was awesome.

After the commotion settled down, I went on preaching. Towards the conclusion of my message, people from all over the church started throwing themselves on the floor, weeping and wailing. Many young children flocked to the front and fell upon their faces weeping. This took me by surprise. These people were crying out to the Lord for mercy, for forgiveness, for cleansing. This was not an orchestrated happening. This was not the usual Sunday morning. This was God. As the conviction of the Spirit fell upon the people, they remained prostrate with much weeping and wailing. It was not hysteria, it was holy ground. Many stayed for a long time in this condition. Nobody interfered. This was the work of the Holy Spirit. They knew better. They knew that He has come to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgement.

As I watched on with awe, I could not help but think that had this happened in other places, people moving in the flesh would have stepped in. They would have rushed to the side of those so convicted and tried to comfort them. They would have tried to minister by insisting that the person so convicted rise up and confess the Word, confess that he is more than a conqueror, and that he can

do all things in Christ. Others would have seen this as a great opportunity to minister to the subconscious hurts and wounds. They would have tried to minister inner healing and healing of the memories, while still others would have tried to cast demons out. Some would have gone into spiritual warfare and tried to bind the demonic forces over that place. All would have been amiss for it was God who was at work both to do and to will of His good pleasure.

At different intervals people found release and great liberty in the Lord. Not everyone in the meeting was so affected. But everyone was deeply moved by the awesome presence of the Almighty. People worshipped God, and there was great rejoicing as they shared the glories of heaven.

I was asked by a Brazilian brother what was different between Brazil and Australia, between Brazil and America. Apart from the obvious poverty, I was aware that something was different, but I was not able to put my finger on it. After leaving Brazil I spent some time in the United States and then returned home. That question continued to haunt me. Finally it became clear. In Brazil the people have no security. Many of them lived in abject poverty. They had no work, unemployment or sickness benefits or medical insurance. They had nothing of personal value to insure, even if they could have afforded it. They had no superannuation funds or pensions. They had no doctors to heal their sicknesses, no dentists to care for their teeth and no lawyers to fight for them in their depressed living conditions. In short, they needed God. In the west, we have made ourselves so secure that we do not need God.

The revival in Brazil was of such great magnitude that it was estimated that the born-again growth rate outstripped the population growth.

Many today long for such revival to break forth in our land. Such revival will never break forth while we continue to be a self assured and self sufficient church. On the one hand we cry out to God while on the other hand we continue in our man made teachings and practices.

The words of the Lord to the Church at Laodicea needs to be heeded today:

“The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,’ and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eyesalve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches’”

(Rev.3:14-22 emphasis added).

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About the Author

Gary Althorp was converted to Christ at the age of nineteen. At that time he knew he was called to be a preacher. In preparation, he spent several years in theological studies and has ministered on five continents preaching and teaching the Word of the Lord over a twenty five year period.

Through these years the Lord has given him experiences in ministry from the streets of Hollywood to the privilege of seeing churches birthed, men raised up, trained and ordained. This has given him a keen insight into the church of our day. He has a heart for revival, a hunger for more of Jesus, and a deep longing for the truth of God's Word, to call the church to repentance, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

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Gary Althorp
PO Box 2158, Dangar NSW 2309, Australia