

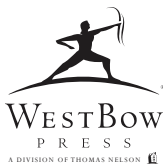
REALITIES
OF A TRUE
CHRISTIAN



JEREMY B. STRANG

REALITIES OF A TRUE CHRISTIAN

J E R E M Y B . S T R A N G



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To my children, never accept any form of religion that is dead to God, not true to Christ, and blasphemies the Holy Spirit. Live with a burning passion for the glory of God, a truly humble walk with Christ, and these under the conviction and power of the Holy Spirit. The style of your life must have *reality* marks for Jesus upon your body, upon your conscious, and upon your soul. Stay clear of those who merely make a verbal profession to the faith and yet deny the weightier matters such as, obedience, sacrifice, and piety.

All proceeds and royalties from the sale of this book benefits:
Gospel for Asia



“Pretending the poor and lost do not exist may be an alternative. But averting our eyes from the truth will not eliminate our guilt.”¹

1 KP Yohannan, *Revolution in World Missions*, pg 193, Gospel for Asia

“*Realities of a True Christian*, is a book in the line of many others that have come out recently, that give a clarion call to the professing church with the message of true salvation. Many a church member will do well to test their life according to some of these things written. May our Christian lives excel in the area of piety by the careful reading of this needful book.”

—GREG GORDON, FOUNDER OF SERMONINDEX.NET

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REALITIES
OF A TRUE
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REALITY:

1. Actual being or existence of any thing; truth; fact; in distinction from mere appearance.
2. Something intrinsically important, not merely matter of show.
3. In the schools, that may exist of itself, or which has a full and absolute being of itself, and is not considered as a part of any thing else.
4. In law, immobility, or the fixed, permanent nature of property; as chattels which savor of the reality.²

² Noah Webster's 1828 Dictionary

INTRODUCTION

It is with much sorrow and increasing distress that this book has come about.³ Godlessness abounds in our nation and has nearly overtaken most of our churches. Pastors today are more concerned about cultural relevance and the Sunday football game than they are about feeding the Bride of Christ and reaching the lost souls that are destined for eternal hell. Nonetheless, the battle-cry for truth marches nearer and nearer. Oh that the Lamb of God would receive the worship and glory that is due His holy name.

The *realities* of a *true* Christian are no longer preached in our powerless church services. If anyone dares to preach such things the carnally damned cry out. One camp screams *legalistic*; another screams *love*; several scream *tolerance*; more yet scream *new, different, and emergent*.

3 This process has also been burdensome because God has shown me how much I fall short of His glory, how much I fail to obey His Word, and am undeserving of His grace. Oh that He would have mercy upon this wretched servant who is the very least in the kingdom. What great joy there is in seeing how valuable Christ is and how much He has paid for my sins.

Meanwhile, the *true* bride of Christ huddles in the corner.⁴ She starves; she goes without; she is quieted by the carnal majority. All she desires is her bridegroom—King Jesus. She does not need entertainment, fashion, relevant stories, and the latest music. She longs to be sanctified and removed from the hellish culture, yet because of Christ's indwelling love, she spends her nights praying, pleading, and weeping for the souls of the false prophets in the pulpit, for the carnal hell-bound, and for the unreached. Because of the carnal majority, and the providence of her Lord, she remains in her corner—steadfast in faith and love by her God. But oh how those who have abused her anger her Lord.

But one day soon she will be with her bridegroom on the great wedding day. Oh what a glorious day this will be. For her the closest thing to experiencing hell will forever be gone. For the carnal majority and the unreached the closest thing to heaven will be removed out from under their feet forever. What a day it will be—a day of weeping tears of joy and tears of torment. For this day will be a tender and merciful touch for the bride; oh but those who slandered her, oh how these will suffer.

To the unbeliever, please know that there is such joy and peace and assurance in Christ. As long as God has given you a heartbeat, you have an opportunity to know the living God. To the new believer, be encouraged and start your walk with Christ strong; remain on the narrow path. Seek the truths and promises of God found in the Scripture. For everyone making claim to the Christian life, examine the profession of your faith and the style of your public and private life. Do you, as a style of life, live in such a way that brings honor and glory to the risen Savior? Does your life speak loudly of piety in motion? Does the power of God reside upon you in such a way that sin cannot make a claim upon your soul? Does your life, your words, your actions

4 Thought owed to Paul Washer

build up the bride of Christ, or do these things tear her down through a hypocritical testimony? Are the *realities* of God truly upon you?

Please note that in this book I do not refer to, nor claim, sinless perfection or to be all knowledgeable in regards to Christianity. All thoughts and quotes have been identified and rightly credited to the best of my knowledge. Regardless of my writing failures and my human shortcomings, you must reckon with the truth of God's Word for yourself. You must examine the *reality* of God's claim upon your life. Your claim means very little; Christ's claim upon you is everything. A *reality* of biblical Christianity must be evident in and upon your life.

No matter who you are that reads this book, I beg of you, dive into the Scriptures for yourself and seek the presence and sanctification of God. My writing may be plain and quite simple, but do not let my human frailties prevent you from discovering a deeper passion for Jesus Christ.

It is to the end of God's name being glorified among the nations and the glorification of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for the edification of the Church, the true bride of Christ, and for the true conversion of people everywhere that this book has been written. All praise belongs unto God and God alone for anything received through these feeble human words.

“For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?”

1 PETER 4:7

*“Is not My word like fire?” declares the Lord, ‘and
like a hammer which shatters a rock?’”*

JEREMIAH 23:9

CHAPTER ONE

Conversion or Cessation

*“Lazarus, come forth.”*⁵ Jesus, having just wept with Mary and Martha, spoke with a loud voice calling the dead man to awaken to life. With authority and power the Son of God commanded new life to be wrought about in the dead man’s body. Soon followed these words, *“Unbind him, and let him go.”*⁶ Today, in an even more wicked and unbelieving world, Jesus still calls the dead to new life and commands the grave clothes to come off. Oh I wish that all mankind would willingly fall down and worship the King and truly believe and truly confess that Jesus is Lord in this last hour—especially those who profess to know something of Christianity.

Unfortunately in the prosperity driven societies, and especially that of North America, we have millions of professing Christians and thousands of so called ‘*churches*’ that are wrapped in grave clothes of death. They say, *“relevance matters; sin is only an issue; godliness is obsolete; we know a new and better way; tolerance; love wins.”* They are comfortable in their rot and hell-bound garments. Do not be fooled,

5 John 11:43

6 John 11:44

God has not changed. He does not have a bunch of undisciplined children running around.⁷ Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament⁸ and He is still the only *Way*, the only *Truth* and the only *Life*.⁹

There must be a *reality* of the power of God upon the life of the believer. Life must be *breathed* into the dead heart whereby stone turns to flesh, a new Spirit is given¹⁰ and God's laws are stamped on the new heart and placed deep within the new life.¹¹ There must be a *reality* of bearing one's own cross;¹² a sacrificial laying down of selfish desires; an attaching with the Holy Spirit in soul convicting discipline of sin; a sacrificial love for Christ and the brethren; a continual killing of worldliness; a growing in holiness¹³ and sanctification;¹⁴ a turning from sin and the things which God hates. How can we give testimony to the power of the Spirit if the Spirit has not given testimony to us first?¹⁵ How can we give an account for the hope that is in us if the hope (that being the living presence of Christ and the Spirit of God) has not taken residence within us?¹⁶

How can a person walk around thinking they, in their own strength, can convince others of being alive while they are dressed in the worldly poison soaked garments of death? Who do they think they are kidding? They may be convincing themselves and

7 Hebrews 12:4-13

8 John 5:39

9 John 14:6

10 Ezekiel 36:26

11 Jeremiah 31:33

12 Luke 9:23

13 "*Sacredness; the state of any thing hallowed, or consecrated to God or to his worship. That which is separated to the service of God.*"—1828 Noah Webster's Dictionary

14 "*The act of making holy. In an evangelical sense, the act of God's grace by which the affections of men are purified or alienated from sin and the world, and exalted to a supreme love of God. The act of consecrating or of setting apart for a sacred purpose.*"—1828 Noah Webster's Dictionary

15 Romans 8:16

16 1 Peter 3:15; 2 Corinthians 13:5

their friends that they are believers but let me assure you they will not fool God as they stand naked and fully exposed before the Lord of Glory at the Great White Throne Judgment. On that dreaded day mercy will flee, heaven and earth will run but find no home¹⁷ and those who have not been truly converted will cease from eternal life. They will be thrown into the lake of fire¹⁸ whereby God will fully deliver their due penalties for denying Christ. He will sustain His wrath that was previously pronounced upon them for all eternity.¹⁹

Those of you in Church leadership, those of you who teach and preach in the pulpit, those of you in Church authority, take heed here—for you “*will incur stricter judgment.*”²⁰ As those who have taken the holy name of Christ upon themselves and who are not true as they claim, will suffer God’s wrath, but how much more will those who teach and those who oversee be guilty before Christ?²¹ Are you causing anyone to stumble?²² Take heed and thoroughly inspect your claim, your confession, and your lifestyle, unless of course you are afraid to find that Christ is indeed not in you.²³

*“‘Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!’ declares the Lord. Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: ‘You have scattered my flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds,’ declares the Lord.”*²⁴

17 Revelation 20:11

18 Revelation 20:14-15

19 John 3:36

20 James 3:1

21 Romans 8:33-34

22 See Matthew 18:1-7; Luke 17:2

23 2 Corinthians 13:5

24 Jeremiah 23:1-2

How dare a man stand in a pulpit raise his hand and utter his beliefs and his demands before a holy God when He does not know the very God to whom he blasphemies? Don't you know professing Christian that sin must be purged from among you? "*Depart, depart, go out from there, touch nothing unclean; go out of the midst of her, purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of the Lord.*"²⁵ Don't you know that light has nothing to do with darkness?²⁶ Don't you know that apart from receiving the supernatural acts of grace, divine mercy and sacrificial propitiation²⁷ of Christ that you are only temporarily lingering just over hells grips?²⁸ Don't you realize that to cause one of God's created children to sin and live a life of waywardness is an inexcusable and punishable atrocity before Almighty God?²⁹ Here is what happens: Millions are led astray because of some supposed preacher's half-truth gospel message that proclaims a God they really don't know and all while void of the power of God in converting the soul; as a result, this leaves the hearers "*deceived*"³⁰ by their own "*wicked*" hearts and condemned because of a man standing on a stage pronouncing a salvation that the Spirit of God never spoke.

Let me ask you, did the conversion of Saul look anything like the so-called conversions and transparent salvations of the great majority today? Saul fell to the ground in reverence and fear; we spill coffee on

25 Isaiah 52:11

26 2 Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:5; 1 John 1:5

27 "*The act of appeasing wrath and conciliation the favor of an offended person; the act of making propitious. In theology, the atonement or atoning sacrifice offered to God to assuage his wrath and render him propitious to sinners.*"—1828 Noah Webster's Dictionary. A Law term whereby relating to Christ taking on the full weight of sin, taking on the guilt that was ours and leaving us innocent before the justice demanded by God and being declared innocent of our guilt (author's).

28 Thought owed to Jonathan Edwards—*Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*

29 Matthew 18:6; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2

30 Jeremiah 17:9

the floor out of undisciplined laziness and simply raise our hands to some preacher's half-hearted prayer. The power of Christ's conviction spoke to Saul's soul; today entertainment driven music blasphemies the Holy Spirit and temporarily stirs our emotions. Saul was blinded and given a vision; we are blinded by our sin, given three steps to salvation and left ignorant and desolate to the power of the Gospel. Saul's very nature was changed; we are given excuses why our nature must be nurtured.

“That reformation, which is brought about by a coercive power, will be only outward and superficial; but that which is done by the force of God's Word, will be inward and lasting.”³¹

Paul went away and relearned the Scriptures regarding Christ through and renewed his mind;³² we read relevant Bible versions,³³ so called ‘*Christian*’ magazines, worldly newspapers, superficial books, watch godless television, and listen to supposed ‘*Christian*’ radio. Paul preached the truth in power because of the constraining love of Christ; we preach with intellectual emotionalism and use ‘*love*’ as an excuse to justify our carnality. Paul suffered because he obediently followed the will of his Master; we live selfish self-centered lives in complete disobedience. Paul intimately knew his Lord and Savior; we spend most of our lives wondering if we have ever really heard His voice, let alone know Him. Paul said, “*I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself...*”³⁴; we live in such a way that screams, “*It's all about me.*” Paul finished victoriously; we finish backslidden under a mask of outward morality. Paul was truly converted; we are led foolishly through a circus of dead religiosity called ‘*modern christianity.*’ Paul

31 George Whitefield—*George Whitefield's Journals*, pg. 241, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1998 reprint

32 Romans 12:2

33 I highly recommend reading and studying only from the most accurate Bible versions—NASB, ESV, NKJ, are among the most accurate in regards to the translation from the ancient manuscripts (although there are others). The Bible version you read from really does make a difference.

34 Acts 20:24

died and now lives with Christ; we die and are cast out by Christ. Paul left a legacy leading to salvation; we leave a legacy of generational sin³⁵ and traditional hypocrisy. Does anyone see the difference?³⁶

I know that it is God who saves. He still saves and He saves people in all different ways. Some are transformed rapidly and from seemingly much, while yet others are transformed over more time and from seemingly little. Every work of salvation is amazing and leads to a new creation in Christ.

Who am I really speaking towards? Is it not the great majority of people who profess God? Is it not those who blaspheme His holy name through falsely justifying their ongoing sin? Is it not those who say, “*Sin is no longer sin*”? It does not matter by what camp these people have attached themselves; whether it is called *Relevant, Emergent, Seeker-sensitive, Liturgical, Reformed, Evangelical, Charismatic, Catholic*, or even *Jehovah Witness, Mormon*, etc. Those who are truly converted are a new creation and will be led to repentance, confession of sin and continued sanctification as an ongoing lifestyle.³⁷ This is because Christ’s work upon Calvary actually saved such a soul. Those who make up the great majority of professing Christians in North America are not resting upon Christ’s work as complete but rather as complimentary to their lifestyle.

We must realize that we were not saved on our own merit or simply because of a wooden cross, but rather there was something much for valuable given—the very blood of the spotless, sinless, Lamb of God was poured out because He willfully drank of the *cup*³⁸ of His Father’s wrath—the wrath that was due to us. The nails, the whips, the scourging, the crown of thorns were

35 Exodus 34:7

36 Please understand that when I talk about ‘*we*’, I mean the collective whole of what is called *modern Christianity* in prosperity driven North America. I do not label the true church, Christ’s bride, in such a way.

37 More on, *a style of life*, in Chapter 7

38 Luke 22:42

indeed physically painful, greatly disfiguring, and should never be overlooked nor diminished, but this was not the pinnacle of what washed you and I clean. No. A greater price was paid upon Calvary. How was it that Christ became the *worm* and fulfillment of Psalm 22, paved the way through the *valley of death* in Psalm 23 and was able to say to the ancient doors, “*be lifted up*”, in Psalm 24? It was because Christ was crushed by His own Father for taking our sins upon Himself. And we must realize, not only was He crushed for our sins, but He became our propitiation and satisfied the justice of God. His ransom became our freedom; freedom from not only continuing in our participation of sin, but He destroys our desires and affections for sin itself; He gives us a new heart and writes His laws upon our new heart. For the true believer, He died because of the inherent depravity of the soul; thus your old nature was put to death.

*“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”*³⁹

If you have been regenerated, then know that Christ was “*despised and forsaken*”; was “*a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*”; He was “*smitten*” of God; “*He was crushed for our iniquities*”; “*He was chastened for our well being*”; “*by His scourging we are healed*”; our “*iniquity*” has fallen on Him; “*it pleased the Lord to crush Him*”; to put “*Him to grief*” and offer Him “*as a guilt offering*.”⁴⁰ Almighty God crushed His own Son because of the rotten stench of our sinfulness. Jesus Himself said, “*The cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?*”⁴¹ Jesus Christ was the *fullness of Deity*⁴² unto us.

39 1 Peter 2:24

40 Isaiah 53

41 John 18:11

42 Colossians 2:9, also see Colossians 1:19

“As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities.”⁴³

Even with Christ suffering in such tremendous and unfathomable ways, God still has to ask us this day, *“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And I am a master, where is My respect?”⁴⁴* Regarding our Savior, ponder these things: He was prophesied about like no other; He was born like no other; He displayed a passion for God like no other; He displayed sacrificial love like no other; He was just in His anger like no other; He suffered like no other; He died like no other; He rose from the grave like no other; He was holy like no other.

If you are newer in the faith, know that following Christ will not cost you much—only your entire life. Suffering, persecution, anguish in prayer, and the denying of self is what is promised to you in the *true* Christian life, but oh what joy and peace there is in Christ. There is no greater reward in this life and in the life to come than walking in the narrow path with the God of all glory. Oh how Christ is to be the treasure of a true believer.

“When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”⁴⁵

If you have been a Christian for some time, seek all of your days to be pleasing to the Lord. Let nothing separate you from the love of Christ; let not superficiality, nor longevity, nor pleasures of this world, pull you from Christ as your love, your treasure and your rock. Let it

43 Isaiah 53:11

44 Malachi 1:6

45 Colossians 2:13-14

not be said of you, “*But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.*”⁴⁶

You see, we cannot have a slice of Christianity and a slice of the world too. Luke warm is the worst option, just read what is said the church of Laodicea in book of Revelation. It’s either true conversion having been born again of the living God or cessation of eternal life and an eternity of endless torment. Let not the latter have its grasp on you. Seek the Living God, the Father of Jesus Christ, earnestly and you will find Him.⁴⁷

46 Revelation 2:4; also see 2 Corinthians 11:3

47 Matthew 7:8; Luke 11:10; Act 17:27

The Father's Bargain—John Flavel

“Here you may suppose the Father to say, when driving his bargain with Christ for you.

“**Father**—‘My son, here is a company of poor miserable souls, that have utterly undone themselves, and now lie open to my justice! Justice demands satisfaction for them, or will satisfy itself in the eternal ruin of them: What shall be done for these souls?’ And thus Christ returns.

“**Son**—‘O my Father, such is my love to, and pity for them, that rather than they shall perish eternally, I will be responsible for them as their Surety; bring in all thy bills, that I may see what they owe thee; Lord, bring them all in, that there may be no after-reckonings with them; at my hand shalt thou require it. I will rather choose to suffer thy wrath than they should suffer it: upon me, my Father, upon me be all their debt.’

“**Father**—‘But, my Son, if thou undertake for them, thou must reckon to pay the last mite, expect no abatements; if I spare them, I will not spare thee.’

“**Son**—‘Content, Father, let it be so; charge it all upon me, I am able to discharge it: and though it prove a kind of undoing to me, though it impoverish all my riches, empty all my treasures, (for so indeed it did, 2 Cor. 8: 9. “*Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor*”) yet I am content to undertake it.’

“Blush, ungrateful believers, O let shame cover your faces; judge in yourselves now, has Christ deserved that you should stand with him for trifles, that you should shrink at a few petty difficulties, and complain, this is hard, and that is harsh? O if you knew the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in this his wonderful condescension for you, you could not do it.”⁴⁸

48 *Opens the Covenant of Redemption betwixt the Father and the Redeemer—*
Volume 1, Sermon 3—John Flavel

“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

JOHN 17:3

CHAPTER TWO

Inspired & Sufficient

Paul writes to young Timothy, *“I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.”*⁴⁹ Paul latter writes Timothy saying, *“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God maybe adequate, equipped for every good work.”*⁵⁰ Very clearly we see the inspiration and sufficiency of Scripture; although in the verse above we find much of our current problems. Today we really don't believe God inspired the Bible and we most certainly do not want anything to do with reproof, correction, and righteousness. If we did, America, and the world for that matter, would not be in its current state.

*“But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”*⁵¹

49 1 Timothy 3:15

50 2 Timothy 3:16-17

51 2 Peter 1:20-21

Here we have another problem. Our problem is that these were men moved by the Holy Spirit. Notice it does not say they were moved by emotionalism, relevance, education or morality. These men heard from God Himself. They were men consumed with God and the things of God. *“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction.”*⁵²

Today millions of people run to and fro declaring they are Christian having simply been led by their emotions, their education, their intellect, their decision and/or their morality. These things apart from the moving and breathing of the Holy Spirit of God, does not produce a godly righteousness leading to further sanctification but feeds a works based mentality and a self-made salvation. The most dangerous of the aforementioned may very well be morality.

Morality apart from the conviction of the Holy Spirit is sure death. A morality that has been established by a man, for the life of that man, and is highly esteemed by that man, is a blinding and damning mask to the truth of the Gospel. Humanistic morality hardens the heart to the Spirit of God and thus creates a false sense of security, or in other words, a false right standing with God (false assurance). False security keeps the soul from ever reaching a desire to grow in authentic godliness, holiness, and sanctification in Christ Jesus. For without having truly been born again in Christ and an initial conviction of the Holy Spirit against sin, it is impossible to have such an authentic desire for the things of God. Humanistic morality is of the flesh; the flesh cannot please God.⁵³

*“For the mind set on the flesh is death...; the mind set on the flesh is hostile towards God...; ...those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”*⁵⁴

52 Romans 15:4

53 Romans 8:8

54 Romans 8:6-8

Holiness, godliness, and sanctification in Jesus Christ are standards, if I can say such a thing, much higher than that of anything morality has to declare. They are results of a truly converted soul. As a matter of fact, without sanctification “*no one will see the Lord.*”⁵⁵ Morality cannot justify an ongoing lifestyle of sin when biblical authority dictates otherwise. How can you see your sin and understand that you are a sinner without the conviction of the Holy Spirit? Morality does not bring about the necessary conviction needed to awaken a person to their sin.

A person constrained by the damning chains of morality must seek to intimately know God or thus be left strangled by a false ideology of a right standing with God. All that will be left for such a person is a harsh and sudden awakening to the truth while being sentenced to an eternity in hell on judgment day by the One that was thought to accept such philosophical humanism. Once again, the need for us to thoroughly examine ourselves in comparison to Scripture and to make sure that Christ has been formed in us should be extremely urgent upon our soul.⁵⁶

Morality, if not led forth by God, is built upon self-confidence, pride, emotions, intellect, and a generous mix of cultural relevance. It is not built upon Christ, the Word of God nor the convictions of the Holy Spirit; essentially any type of morality that is not birthed through a genuine conversion of the soul unto new life in Christ Jesus, is not accepted by God as a right standing ticket to heaven. This is what makes morality so dangerous; it says that the Word of God is deceptive, irrelevant and completely useless in regards to truth. It says that man can achieved some sort of self-fulfillment and goodness. It speaks through a deceiving heart⁵⁷ whispering, “*Oh soul, you have been doing good and right things, and living in good and right ways, relax, God has to accept your good works.*”

55 Hebrews 12:14

56 2 Corinthians 13:5; *formed*—Galatians 4:19

57 Jeremiah 17:9

“Thus says the Lord, ‘Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the Lord.’”⁵⁸

On the other hand, godliness, holiness, and sanctification are found in the Scriptures and in the person of Christ. The Bible says of itself that it is born *inspired* and *sufficient*. If it were inspired would it not be sufficient? If it is sufficient need we look anywhere else for truth? So why do we look to the world? Simple, we no longer truly believe what the Bible says in regards to sufficiency, inspiration or infallibility.

Now if the Bible is neither sufficient nor inspired, then using the Bible for some form of morality is completely ignorant; ignorant because the Bible speaks of itself in regards to its infinite value. The Bible describes God the Father, Christ the Son, the Holy Spirit and clearly outlines what constitutes sin and illuminates our human depravity. Taking this into consideration, the thought that the Bible is merely moral is completely blasphemous and blindly ignorant, not only to the truth, but to *reality* itself. The Bible cannot be both inspired and deceptive nor can it be sufficient and worthless.

“For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”⁵⁹

The problem for the unregenerate yet moral person and the nominal Christian (if there can really be such a thing) is that the Word of God is *living, active, sharp, piercing, judging*, and nothing can *hide* from the Author’s sight. There is deep pain associated with the Scriptures; there is deep pain associated with Jesus Christ as He

58 Jeremiah 17:5

59 Hebrews 4:12-13

exposes our sin. This type of pain wars against our flesh and our sin nature producing a sort of *auto-self-defense* mechanism whereby we justify our carnality and continued practice of sin. Morality, pride and selfishness all call this defense mechanism into action whenever godly soul pain is presented.

This godly soul pain is a result of the sword of Spirit *piercing* into the darkened heart and creating war in the innermost place of a human life. Jesus Christ, the very Word made manifest,⁶⁰ empowers such soul pain. The Word is *active* and *alive*. It cuts down into the sinful essence of a person in order to give opportunity for a sinner to be saved. Our response is either repentance or a *bucking-up* against the Spirit while raising our fist and attempting to justify our sinful lifestyle before God. We must either embrace the Bible or reject it, but we cannot do both. It is all or it is nothing.

As Joshua said, “*Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve.*”⁶¹ I tell you, choose what you will do with the Word of God; it is either, inspired and sufficient for every one of your needs, or it is deceptive and worthless—the living Word or a dead world—the truth or a lie. Know that your choosing today may be your undoing tomorrow.⁶²

“Here is a report of a survey of 10,000 Protestant *ministers* conducted by Sociologist Jeffrey Hadden; 7,441 responded to the questions. Here are the horrifying statistics. Read them, then wonder why God is grieved with our spiritual life. (I am indebted to *Christ for the Nations*, May 1982, for this information.)”⁶³

Bible—inspired Word of God?

82% of Methodists said “No”

81% of Presbyterians said “No”

60 John 1:14, 1-18 for context

61 Joshua 24:14-15

62 Thought owed to Keith Daniel

63 *Revival God's Way*, pg 145, Leonard Ravenhill, Bethany House Publishers, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 1983, used by permission

89% of Episcopalians said “No”

57% of American Lutherans said “No”

Jesus the Son of God?

82% of Methodists said “No”

81% of Presbyterians said “No”

89% of Episcopalians said “No”

75% of American Lutherans said “No”

Physical resurrection of Jesus?

51% of Methodists said “No”

35% of Presbyterians said “No”

30% of Episcopalians said “No”

33% of Baptists said “No”

13% of American Lutherans said “No”

“You’re in error if you don’t know the Word of God. But you’re equally in error without the power of the Spirit. And if you have the Scriptures without the power you end up being a fundamentalist. If you have the power without the Scriptures, you end up being a fanaticist. If you have the Scriptures and the power you’re an evangelist.”⁶⁴

64 *Malachi’s Resurgence*—David Ravenhill, “*Fear of God*” Sermon Index Conference 2011

CHAPTER THREE

Holiness or Humanism

God does not change.⁶⁵ He does not lie like man nor does He need to repent.⁶⁶ There is not the slightest variation in His character, even His shadow is fixed.⁶⁷ He remains absolutely the same and His years are of no end.⁶⁸ In the past, the present, and the future to come, He does not change.⁶⁹

“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will lay hold of me, If I say, ‘Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, and the light around me will be night,’ even the darkness is not dark to You, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You.”⁷⁰

65 Malachi 3:6

66 Numbers 23:19

67 James 1:17

68 Psalm 102:27

69 Hebrews 13:8

70 Psalm 139:7-12

Now if God be such, then is not His inspired and sufficient Word immovable as well? Absolutely. Oh how great a judgment will befall all who say that God and His Word has changed meaning. Oh how great the torment and suffering will be for those who live their lives based on the myths of mankind, especially myths in regards to Almighty God. There is a *highway of holiness* that we are call to travel, but we cannot be left *unclean* to travel on it.⁷¹

*“My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.”*⁷²

Are you a professing Christian whose style of life is one of continual patterns of sin? Are you in *bondage* to sexual sin? (this includes *anything* outside of marriage of one man and one woman) Do you enjoy your *bar life*, your drinking, your fornication, your adultery, your homosexuality, and/or your angry and bitter imprisonment? How many of you men are daily in a state of mental sexual fantasy and habitual masturbation? I am not only talking to the average lay-Christian, but you Church leaders as well. If any of these things describes you, then you had better stop your sinning and truly repent or stop calling yourself a Christian. The God of the Bible calls us out of our sin. He does not call us to Himself so that we can bathe in the iniquity and rot of our sinful comfort.

*“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”*⁷³

71 Isaiah 35:8-10

72 Hosea 4:6

73 1 Peter 1:14-16—Italics mine

According to the Word of God, we are either born again⁷⁴ or we are left dead in our sin. We either live in the true light of Christ or we live in the darkness of demonic pleasures. A middle path cannot be created by mankind for the justification of sinful pursuits. There is nothing new under heaven—no new sin and no new way.⁷⁵ The path has remained as narrow as it has always been.

For the Christian profession of faith to be a reality, there must be a beginning and continuing work of sanctification leading unto holiness. The problem with regards to holiness, at least within popular modern “*Christianity*” today, seems to point towards two main issues—unconverted souls and spiritual ignorance. These two live hand in hand and cannot be separated by mere terminology alone.

Without true conversion, true spiritual understanding of the Christian life is impossible; although, rote head knowledge, this apart from true salvation, can be attained. Unfortunately, most people are ignorant of what *holy* actually means. The word *holy* means: to be cut out from; set apart; other than; that of a perfect kind. God is holy. He is not like man only better; He is not like man or any created thing at all. His ways are not our ways; His thoughts are not our thoughts. He is altogether set apart from creation itself. He is separate.

Holy: 1. Properly, whole, entire or perfect, in a moral sense. Hence, pure in heart, temper or dispositions; free from sin and sinful affections. Applied to the Supreme Being, *holy* signifies perfectly pure, immaculate and complete in moral character. 2. Hallowed; consecrated or set apart to a sacred use, or to the service or worship of God; a sense frequent in Scripture.⁷⁶

74 John 3

75 Ecclesiastes 1:9

76 1828 Noah Webster’s Dictionary

Although God is separate from man, He still creates man in His image. In His holiness He still gives us room to choose who we will serve. Not only are we given a choice of who we will serve, but also how we will live. And yet without Him, we cannot choose Him, serve Him, or worship Him—*“For God first loved us.”*⁷⁷ There is a balance that no man has yet to fully understand and remains a mystery.⁷⁸

One thing is for certain, a person that has not been and refuses to be separated (this as it relates to sanctification) from the humanistic lifestyle, has no part in the bride of Christ (the true Church) and the bridegroom (Jesus Christ). *“For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire will consume the adversaries. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant, by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of Grace?”*⁷⁹ Continuation of willful sin will be judged. A terrifying vengeance is the Lord’s⁸⁰ and one rightly carried by Him alone.

The ongoing sins mentioned earlier, the morality described in chapter two, and the false religion of many professing believers all points directly towards humanism. They are all humanistic because the end goal is to please self. In some way these things are used to give pleasure or fulfill the desires of the flesh. Yes, even morality, if apart from the true workings of God, is humanistic. Humanism says that the chief end or chief good is about mans’ happiness and wellbeing.⁸¹ Humanism is heavily based upon the emotions and the unbiblical beliefs of an individual.

77 1 John 4:10, 19

78 1 Timothy 3:16—*godliness is a mystery*

79 Hebrews 10:26-27, 29

80 Hebrews 10:30-31

81 Thought owed to Paris Reidhead—*Ten Shekels and a Shirt*

On the other hand, holiness is the direct opposite. Holiness is a call by God to deny self,⁸² to kill sin,⁸³ to live righteously, to be holy as He is holy. God calls us out from our sin and into a lifestyle given to holiness and godliness through the continual process of sanctification. We are called to separate from our sinful lifestyle, our past thinking patterns, and our self-pleasing ways. God does not save us *in* our sin but *from* our sin.⁸⁴ We are called to walk in piety⁸⁵ and singleness of eye, of ear, and of a life dedicated to the risen Savior. Holiness cannot be conceived of the human will, for God Himself calls for the denial and destruction of the flesh.⁸⁶ Holiness, and this to varying degrees and a growing in sanctification, must be a *reality* in the life of a professing believer.

“Beloved, while I was making every effort to write to you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were living beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness⁸⁷ and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”⁸⁸

Paul said anyone who preaches a gospel different from the one He preached is to be accursed—*anathema*.⁸⁹ Mark these words, anyone

82 Luke 9:23

83 Romans 8—more on this in chapter 6

84 Thought owed to David Ravenhill—*Malachi’s Resurgence*

85 *Piety in principle, is a compound of veneration or reverence of the Supreme Being and love of his character, or veneration accompanied with love; and piety in practice, is the exercise of these affections in obedience to his will and devotion to his service.*—1828 Noah Webster’s Dictionary

86 Not pertaining to the physical being itself, but the destruction of worldly, sinful living and inherent manifestations of sin.

87 *Using license; indulging freedom to excess; unrestrained by law or morality; loose; dissolute. Exceeding the limits of law or propriety; wanton; unrestrained; as licentious desires.*—1828 Noah Webster’s Dictionary

88 Jude 3-4

89 Galatians 1:6-9

who calls what God labels sin, “*a gift of God*,” is grossly misled and ignorant of true salvation. Anyone who preaches such a thing, and/or refuses to preach the whole of Scripture, is a *false prophet* and a *heretic*.⁹⁰ How can the sanctifying work of the Spirit and the holy Word of the living God be in such a person? Holiness is essential and its fruit must be evident.

Holiness must be a *reality* that transforms us past ourselves thereby setting us upon an authentic journey of following Christ for who He is; for He is infinitely worthy. Those living a humanistic style of life (we all fall to some form of this from time to time) are deceived by its cunningness. People who remain in this continual state of self-indulgence have a mental salvation of merely escaping hell for their own eternal benefit and not for God’s glory and Christ’s Lordship. Unless such persons begin to cry out for God to reveal the truth of His Word and the *reality* of holiness found in Christ, they will remain humanistic, deceived, and under heavy restraints. Works, sin, unforgiveness, anger, guilt, and so on, are the elements of the *ball and chain* that will remain at the door of these people. What’s at your door? What is *making* you a slave and *chaining* you to this wretched world? Are you *holding on to a form of godliness* but denying *its power*?⁹¹ You and I must receive the works of His sufferings—the works of His grace. His Spirit must abide upon us and in us.

*“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to **deny ungodliness and worldly desires** and to **live sensibly, righteously and godly** in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to*

90 *A person under any religion, but particularly the Christian, who holds and teaches opinions repugnant to the established faith, or that which is made the standard of orthodoxy. In strictness, among Christians, a person who holds and avows religious opinions contrary to the doctrines of Scripture, the only rule of faith and practice.*—1828 Noah Webster’s Dictionary

91 2 Timothy 3:5

redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.”⁹²

What sort of people are we to be in regards to *holy conduct and godliness*?⁹³ Holiness says, “*Kill the sin and make war with your worldly desires;*” humanism says, “*Sin is not sin so why not let yourself enjoy.*” Holiness cries out for purity of heart and devotion unto God; humanism cries out for more of the world and defiance to God. Holiness believes and obeys the truth of God’s Word; humanism only uses the Word of God if it can be twisted into comfort for self and justification for ongoing sin. Holiness embraces Christ, heeds the Holy Spirit, and sets the captives free; humanism denies Christ, blasphemes the Holy Spirit, and entombs the slave. Holiness says, “*It’s all about God through the person of Jesus Christ;*” humanism says, “*It’s all about me and my desires.*”

It’s either holiness or humanism—God’s glory or man’s wickedness—true conversion or false assurance—Jesus Christ or Satan. There are no other streets to cruise—no other paths to walk—no other way to salvation.

If you have a desire to walk in holiness with God, then praise the Lord. You must understand that this desire is not yours, but God’s. David Wilkerson said it like this, “The deep cry in your soul for a holier walk didn’t come from any holy thing in you. The Lord put that hunger in you. His Spirit awakened you and stirred your heart. And He did it for this purpose: ‘For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ’ (Ephesians 4:12). God’s Spirit sets us aflame to spark others! Our passion is meant to ignite those around us. True passion for the Lord begins with one thing: obedience. John sums up the matter very plainly: ‘This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments’ (1 John

92 Titus 2:11-14 (bold mine)

93 2 Peter 3:11

5:3). It is impossible to have passion for Jesus without a corresponding obedience to his commands. We can generate all kinds of emotions in trying to live out a fiery love for Christ. But we can't truly have passion for him if we don't obey his revealed Word."⁹⁴

“Be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”⁹⁵

*“For this is the **will of God, your sanctification**; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. For God **has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. So he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.**”⁹⁶*

94 David Wilkerson—*World Challenge Pulpit Series*, November 14, 2011, pg 2

95 2 Peter 3:14-15, 17-18

96 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 (bold mine)

“The August 1982 issue of *Pulpit Helps* contains this statement: ‘In a recent survey of one of the large, well-known theological colleges of the United States, 93% of the students studying for the ministry stated: “*I have no devotional life.*”’ What a crop of future preachers! How can a man speak for God if he does not walk with God?”⁹⁷

97 Leonard Ravenhill - *Revival God's Way*, pg. 148, Bethany House Publishers, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 1983, used by permission

“As I read the Bible, I see passion for Jesus as an ever-increasing obedience to his Word. Most of us think of obedience as personal, individual compliance to God’s commands. Yet obedience to His Word has implications far beyond this. It isn’t merely a personal pursuit but a fervent desire for the sake of the Lord’s body.”⁹⁸

98 David Wilkerson—*World Challenge Pulpit Series, November 14, 2011, pg 1*

CHAPTER FOUR

Conviction of Sin

HEEDING REPROOF

*“He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.”*⁹⁹ Are you a wise child accepting the Father’s discipline?¹⁰⁰ Do you love God’s knowledge? Or do you hate reproof proving yourself *stupid*?¹⁰¹ Just as any person without the Holy Spirit is dead to God,¹⁰² so also is the person who is not disciplined by God in regards to their sin.¹⁰³

*“There is a kind who is pure in his own eyes, yet is not washed from his filthiness.”*¹⁰⁴

At the beginning of my Christian pilgrimage I had not learned much of the true Christian life. When the Lord pulled me from my pool of sin, I was *awakened* to the *reality* that the things I was doing

99 Hebrews 12:10

100 Proverbs 13:1

101 Proverbs 12:1

102 John 3:5-8

103 Hebrews 12:4-17 for context

104 Proverbs 30:12

were sin in the eyes of God. Although I had little knowledge of godly things, the Lord so convicted me that repentance became a response of my soul. His conviction was not just head knowledge but a true working conviction of sin that affected my whole life. As I grew in the things of Christ, more of my worldly ways of living had to cease. But were my actions (or manifestations of sin) and objects of idolatry the real sin that I was saved from and battled against? Or was there more?

My outward manifestations of sin (sin in action) stem from a heart problem. For even from the mouth the heart speaks.¹⁰⁵ I soon learned from the Word of God that my affections towards sin were because of my defiled and depraved¹⁰⁶ heart. A life unrighteous unto God is the result of a heart (soul) unrighteous unto God. If our hearts are left unconverted, then all we are is a sack of *dry bones*.

Having been confronted with spiritual truth, I had only two choices: Reject it all and live my life hell-bound or accept the *reality* of what the Bible says, and this by true faith; a faith that reacts “*to the conviction of things not seen*”¹⁰⁷ (I was so convicted of my sin that I could only repent—glory to the Lamb of God). But what was really changing in me during those early days? Was it simple conformity and decision making or was it something far more?

Much deeper than my committed acts of sin, was my darkened heart, my darkened mind and my darkened style of life. I had to first come to a real sense that before the throne of the living God I was a sinner deserving of eternal punishment—an eternal hell in the lake of fire without so much as even a drink of water.¹⁰⁸ Not only did I deserve God’s wrath and was destined for hell, but I had been enjoying my sin. The driving force behind my love for sin was my wickedly deceiving heart.

105 Proverbs 15:28; Matthew 12:34, 15:18; Luke 6:45

106 *Corrupt; wicked; destitute of holiness or good principles.*—1828 Noah Webster’s Dictionary

107 Hebrews 11:1

108 Luke 16:24—context 16:19-31

“*The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?*”¹⁰⁹

Here is the big *show stopper* for many professing Christians and the culture at large. They cannot believe, nor accept, the fact that before a holy God they are wicked and in themselves under the weighty judgment of God’s wrath and justice. People believe themselves to be good, moral, decent and honest. And even *if* these things could ever be found true, they are still a far cry off from God’s righteous standards, commandments and laws; a far cry from godliness, holiness and a *singleness of eye* unto the living Christ.

The fact is, if we are left to ourselves, we are all wicked and separated from the grace of God and the person of Jesus Christ. We are depraved souls deserving of hell’s eternal darkness and God’s holy torment. It’s not that we are good; it’s that we have *never* been good at all.

Let’s look for a moment at what the Bible has to say in regards to our depravity.

- » In the garden we fell to depravity (Genesis 3:5-7).
- » Prior to the flood we continued in depravity (Genesis 6:5).
- » After the flood we remained depraved (Genesis 8:21).
- » Today we are still depraved. There are none of us who are righteous, none who understand, none who seeks for God, none who does good (Romans 3:10-12). We are all *brought forth in iniquity, and in sin* conceived (Psalm 51:5).

If left to ourselves, this is our *reality* and our lot. Praise the Lord that His *hand is not so short that He cannot save*.¹¹⁰ As a matter of fact, it is God who *draws* sinners to Christ in the first place.¹¹¹ “*For this*

109 Jeremiah 17:9

110 Isaiah 59:1

111 John 6:14

*reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.”*¹¹² If you are saved, then praise the Lord forevermore. Continue in sanctification. Seek more and more of His glory, His excellence and His presence. If you are not saved, then seek Him with a *full out reckless* abandon of yourself. Do so until He saves you—do not stop.

*“You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with **all your heart**. Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. Seek the Lord while He may be found.”*¹¹³

I praise the Lord that He has begun to awaken me to my depravity and sinfulness. I say *begun* because if He were to reveal all my sin at once, I believe, my heart would cease to beat, my lungs would cease to breathe; the shock would literally kill me.

Who knows the true depth of their sin against God? I am thankful to God that I can earnestly say, *“I stand in a heap of sin so insurmountable that if it were not for the grace of Jesus Christ and His propitiation I would forever be undone by my atrocities against the Lord my God.”* It is for this very reason that I am so thankful that Christ *“died to sin once for all”* and that I can consider myself *“dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”*¹¹⁴

“Sinned as we have as a nation, yet to our sin
we have added pride in our sinning.”¹¹⁵

To remain numb to sin and call it relevant, cultural, acceptable, and God forbid, blessed, is blaspheme against the Holy Spirit. You

112 John 6:65; also see Ezekiel 34:16)

113 Jeremiah 29:13; Matthew 7:7; Isaiah 55:6 (bold mine)

114 Romans 6:10-11

115 Leonard Ravenhill—*Revival Praying*, pg. 22, Bethany House Publishers, A division of Bethany Fellowship, 1962

mean to tell me that someone can call themselves a Christian while remaining in habitual and willful sin and yet be born again of the Holy Spirit? I think not.¹¹⁶ One of the chief workings of the Holy Spirit is the conviction of sin. Yes He is our helper and teacher,¹¹⁷ yes He is our guide,¹¹⁸ but He comes glorifying Christ,¹¹⁹ comes in power¹²⁰ and comes convicting “*the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.*”¹²¹ Don’t tell me that someone can be a Christian and yet live in such a way that is contrary to the Spirit of God. This wickedness will be severely punished and utterly destroyed by the One whom it has waged war against.

*“Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations beginning from Jerusalem.”*¹²²

I dare say, the great majority of professing Christians dance and intermingle with sin, while doing so willingly, and with passion, all under the name of grace. “*Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be!*”¹²³ Holiness and sanctification are of no value to such people and will be tossed out. They are unaware that their so-called good works are but *filth rags* unto God.¹²⁴ They have found their comfort in the things of this world. Their blindness leads

116 I am not talking about sinless perfection. There are people who are convicted of sin and fight with their sin for some time. I am talking about the people who are not convicted at all and yet claim to be a true believer.

117 John 14:26

118 John 16:13

119 John 16:14

120 1 Thessalonians 1:5; 2 Timothy 1:7

121 John 16:8—context 8-11

122 Luke 24:46-47

123 Romans 6:1-2

124 Isaiah 64:6

them to their destruction. What is the biblical assurance that this is not our position in life?

Perverted and blind are the ways of a person who does not consider their own *comfort as poison* and their *willful steps as a syringe*. These are they that take the title of Christian, deny the Scriptures, crucify the Christ over and over¹²⁵ and joyfully dance their way into eternal hell. They have not denied themselves nor earnestly sought the Lord of glory. Their lives do not show evidence of regeneration. Their lifestyles prove that they do not know the true love of God nor have experienced His true joy. They willfully chase down appetites that God hates. They profess Christ and live as though they were never given a law to follow.¹²⁶ They profess freedom but their *reality* is that they run in the ways of Belial.¹²⁷ Reader beware—could this be you? What defense do you have that this is not you? Again, examine yourself in comparison to Christ and His Word.¹²⁸ Have you had your sinfulness brought before you in such a way that you now loathe the sin you once loved? Have you been awakened to the *reality* of your sin? Do you heed God’s reproof of your sin?

125 Hebrews 10:26-31

126 Thought owed to Paul Washer

127 unprofitableness, wickedness—see 2 Corinthians 13:15 & 1 Corinthians 10:21

128 2 Corinthians 13:5

“You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility (enmity) toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

JAMES 4:4 (ENMITY—ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION [ESV])

“There have been some horrendous cases, of late, of preachers falling into open sin. Glaring cases of preachers dropping their wives for another woman in which they continue their adultery and remain *popular* preachers. Others are homosexuals, some are known drunkards. *These sins are not the causes of backsliding, they are the results of it.*”¹²⁹

129 Leonard Ravenhill—*Revival God’s Way*, pg. 135, Bethany House Publishers, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 1983, used by permission

CHAPTER FIVE

Brokenness Over Sin

KNOWLEDGE TO REPENTANCE

Let me start this chapter by saying: There are so many people who are “*always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*”¹³⁰ This absolutely burdens my soul and brings tears to my eyes. I am burdened and at the same time overjoyed because I remember who I used to be and how the mercy and grace of God saved my wretched life. I am burdened to think about how my sin has damaged many people and set itself against God. I am burdened for those who have not and will not ever hear of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I am also burdened over those who continue to learn but *never arrive at the truth* of Christ. They have a *form of godliness* but *deny its power.*¹³¹ They are *rejected in regard to the faith.*¹³² They are of a *depraved mind* and do *not make any further progress.*¹³³

130 2 Timothy 3:7—for context 3:1-9

131 2 Timothy 3:5

132 2 Timothy 3:8

133 2 Timothy 3:8-9

A few years ago, while leading a small Bible study, we were discussing the *reality* of weeping over our sin. After a time of discussion, a pastor, a man with a Masters Degree no less, asked me this question, “*How do you get there?*” I found myself a bit surprised but definitely not short for an answer. This man was a pastor, a shepherd of the flock, a teacher and yet he was asking me, a simple believer who had no formal Christian education. I surely would not want to sit under such a man (unless of course he truly seeks a deeper life with Christ and a truly sanctified life).

We must first have our sin brought before our eyes if we are ever going to be moved to brokenness over our sin. Our sin has to be shown to us for what it is—a *rotten stench* before God. If God does not show us the *reality* of who we are, then we need to seek Him as never before knowing that hell awaits us. From time to time and in varying degrees we must be broken over our sin otherwise what proof do we have that we were ever truly converted? No brokenness over sin when God transforms a man’s heart? No brokenness over sin when Christ was crushed? No brokenness over sin when the Spirit of God is given? I think not. Brokenness is a *reality* and a proper response to sin in the life of a *true* Christian.¹³⁴

*“Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?”*¹³⁵

One thing Paul knew was that his flesh was wretch (that is his life apart from Christ) in the sight of God. He understood that to continue on sinning because of God’s grace¹³⁶ was blaspheme. He knew that He could not, nor could the true Church, just continue to hang out with those who professed to be Christians but did not live as though truly converted.¹³⁷ As a matter of fact he told us to “*deliver such a one*

134 Thought owed to Voddie Baucham

135 Romans 7:24

136 Romans 6:1-2

137 1 Corinthians 5:11—context verses 1-13

to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved."¹³⁸

Paul's sin had really been brought before his eyes in such a real way that he understood the *reality* of who he was. As a result, he walked towards a growing holiness in Christ refusing the things of the world. He had been forgiven much and therefore he loved much. He had the *realities* of true conversion, true conviction, true repentance and true piety upon his life. Can such a thing be said of you?

*"For if we go on sinning **willfully** after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries."*¹³⁹

I have heard it said that your best friend tells you the most truth. I completely agree. For the true believer there is no closer friend than Christ. God's Word says that if we continue *sinning willfully* grace no longer remains. This should be a terrifying statement to every professing Christian. It is because of love that a best friend would tell you the truth, even truth that is hard to digest. Well, let me tell you, if you are not broken over your sin (again, from time to time) then you are either unregenerate or are still lacking a true fear of God, true humility and are rebelling in disobedience.

*"The secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him, and He will make known His covenant."*¹⁴⁰

There is no room to wiggle and refute that we are called to have a holy fear of God. This fear sometimes is true *phobos*¹⁴¹ and *tromos*¹⁴² but always is a *reverential* love and deep respect for God. Several years

138 1 Corinthians 5:5

139 Hebrews 10:26-27 (bold mine)

140 Psalm 25:14

141 Deep fear—Gk.

142 A literal trembling—Gk.; also see Philippians 2:12—context 1-18; this is not a working to obtain salvation, but a working reality of those who are truly converted—a true warring with the flesh

ago we attended a very superficial church for a period of time. Once, during a small group study, I stated that we are to have a holy fear of God. Immediately an older gentleman jumped up in anger. He was insistent that we only need to respect God and He would never call us to fear Him in such ways. This very same church preached from its pulpit, to about six-thousand people one weekend, that every person in the room had their sins removed *as far as the east is from the west*.¹⁴³ Well, this is true for those who have been converted, but for those who have not, this is false assurance and such preaching is heresy.¹⁴⁴ They never mentioned, nor ever preached for that matter, that it is for those who truly fear the Lord.¹⁴⁵ Fearing the Lord was never talked about; then again, neither was God's justice, holiness, anger and wrath.

If the love and forgiveness of God has truly been shed abroad in our soul, then brokenness over our sin will be evident. Because God cares for us, He disciplines and instructs us. The love of God will led us unto further *realities* of the fear of God. Without brokenness how can we understand our offenses against God? Without an initial awareness of our sin and a holy fear of the Lord why would we ever stop our sinning, repent of our pride and reject our fleshly cravings?

*“Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For **rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry.** For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”*¹⁴⁶

143 Psalm 103:12

144 *“A fundamental error in religion, or an error of opinion respecting some fundamental doctrine of religion. But in countries where there is an established church, an opinion is deemed heresy, when it differs from that of the church. Heresy, in law, is an offense against Christianity, consisting in a denial of some of its essential doctrines, publicly avowed and obstinately maintained.”* 1828 Noah Webster's Dictionary

145 Psalm 103:11, 13, 17

146 1 Samuel 15:22-23; Hosea 6:6 (bold mine)

King David had a holy fear of God. In Psalm 27 we see that David also had a very balanced fear of God. He said, “*The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? Whom shall I dread?*”¹⁴⁷ You see a true fear of the Lord sets us free from the fear of everything else. Without an eye awakening, soul changing, life altering awareness of our true selves and our willful disregard of God’s Son, we will fall prey to all kinds of fear. But when we have seen God for who He really is and how we can fully trust in such a saving God, we will then no longer remain hostage to the worries and fears of this world. God is love and His love casts out all *worldly* fear. A *holy* fear of God keeps us from the desire to sin against Him; godly fear actually is a *loving* and *saving* factor in the course of our salvation and sanctification.

David not only had a fear of God, but he was broken over his sin. Look at Psalm 51. Over a year after his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah, David says, “*My sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight.*”¹⁴⁸ He begs for God to be gracious, to blot out his transgression, to wash him from his sin, to purify and clean him, to hear joy and gladness.¹⁴⁹ Still don’t think David was broken then listen to this. “*Let the bones which You have broken rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness.*”¹⁵⁰ And you mean to tell me that brokenness is not a *reality* of *true* repentance, of *true* conviction and of *true* conversion? Oh it most certainly is.

Notice, only after being broken and washed clean is David able to rightly *teach transgressors* His ways and *joyfully sing* of His

147 Psalm 27:1

148 Psalm 51:3-4

149 Psalm 51:1-8

150 Psalm 51:8-12, 14

righteousness and *declare* His praises? Right here is why there is no power in the pulpit today and no power in most professing believer's lives—no brokenness. Oh we try to teach and preach to transgressors, we try to sing and we try to declare His praises but there is so little power. When are we going to start hating our sin?¹⁵¹ When are we going to carryout action against our flesh? When are we going to loath the television, the newspapers, the magazines, the long hours on the internet? When are we going to repent and act in true piety? When will we allow God to break our bones and bring a spirit of brokenness upon us? If we don't allow God full control of all areas of our life, then we may not be what we think we are.

Our churches today are sorely lacking the fear of God, humility and brokenness over sin. At best there is a small showing of mental ascent and learned knowledge, but there is little repentance and less yet of true piety amongst the people. So many continue to learn but never arrive at the truth. *“For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.”*¹⁵²

Let me ask you, if the Lord should tarry,¹⁵³ what are you leaving for future generations? What are you passing onto your children? Are you passing on a legacy of generational sin and false assurance?¹⁵⁴ Remember, brokenness over your personal sin is an appropriate response to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. God never leaves us broken, but He breaks us in order to remake us and build us up in the image of His own Son.¹⁵⁵

151 More on this in next chapter

152 Psalm 51:16-17

153 *tarry*—to stay in place or be delayed

154 Exodus 34:7

155 Thought owed to Voddie Baucham

“What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source of your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

JAMES 4:1-4

CHAPTER SIX

Killing Sin

In the book of Genesis there is a typology of the unregenerated man and the regenerated man. Cain and Abel are a prototype for us of how true believers will be treated by those who are not converted.¹⁵⁶ Herein I want to focus on a key warning God delivered to Cain just before he killed Abel. God said to Cain, “*And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.*”¹⁵⁷ Just one chapter earlier sin entered into mankind because Adam did not heed God’s warning. Now in Genesis chapter four the first murder is committed. We are no less the same today.

Today we swallow down ‘*good things*’¹⁵⁸ like water only to have it manifest itself as iniquity and enmity against God. Unfortunately we cannot stand upon our ignorance as an excuse for the justification of our actions. If our actions are sinful then we will be judged, not only for the actions themselves, but more so for the motives behind those

156 More on this in chapter 9

157 Genesis 4:7

158 Those things we deem good in our flesh but in *reality* are very much at odds with godliness.

actions. Sin is lethal so be careful what you do and where your mind is allowed to wander.

God's warning to Cain seems to carry with it a sense of urgency. Unlike the warning to Adam, "...for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die,"¹⁵⁹ Cain's warning was because sin was already upon him. His countenance¹⁶⁰ had already changed.¹⁶¹ Cain had an immediate decision to make. He could either "do well" or "not do well."¹⁶² Urgency was upon Cain and the Lord knew it.

*"Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And **everyone** who has this hope fixed on Him **purifies Himself**, just as He is pure."*¹⁶³

Urgency is also upon us. We too have sin crouching at the door and we must take action against our sin and master it. We are to *hate the evil*¹⁶⁴ that God hates, "even the garment polluted by the flesh."¹⁶⁵ We are to have a true fear of the Lord that causes us to hate¹⁶⁶ all that *we* do that is enmity against God. If we truly hate that which God hates, then we will be sure to *go after*, or in other words, *kill off* the sin that roots deep within us.

We must have a *reality* of a warring and killing of sin, otherwise our Christian claim is nothing but hot air. God knows the truth of who we are. He who does wickedness "*hates the light*."¹⁶⁷

159 Genesis 2:17

160 "Literally, the contents of a body; the outline and extent which constitutes the whole figure or external appearance." Noah Webster's 1828 Dictionary

161 Genesis 4:6

162 Genesis 4:7

163 1 John 3:2-3 (bold mine)

164 Psalm 97:10

165 Jude 23

166 Proverbs 8:13

167 John 3:20

*“Now therefore, O sons, listen to me, for blessed are they who keep my ways. Heed instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at my doorposts. For he who finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord. But he who sins against me injures himself; all those who hate me love death.”*¹⁶⁸

Jesus Christ *“bore our sins in His body on the cross so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.”*¹⁶⁹ If this is true, then the fruits of the Spirit are to be manifest and continue to increase in the life of the truly converted believer. I find it interesting that just after Paul describes the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians five we read this: *“Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have **crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**”*¹⁷⁰ If this is to be the *standard* of a true believer, then today we have very few (in comparison to the whole of professing Christians) true Christians in America.

The standard today is that you say a prayer, attend church, have a mental ascent (and this to varying degrees) and continue living a selfish and absolutely worldly, carnal and comfort seeking life as possible. No conviction; no brokenness; no killing sin; no *reality*—just ease in Zion.¹⁷¹ Much of the time when people are confronted in regards to these things, there becomes the cry, *“You’re judging me.”* But rather should there not be deep introspection and cross examination to see if indeed these things are true? Oh let us never allow our flesh to defend itself.

“Let not our life be after the wills and motions of the flesh. We are not debtors to the flesh, neither by relation, gratitude, nor any other bond or obligation. We owe no suit nor service to our carnal desires; we are indeed bound

168 Proverbs 8:32-36

169 1 Peter 2:24

170 Galatians 5:24 (bold mine)

171 I recommend that you read Amos 6:1-8 and Ezekiel 16:48-50 for starters on the statement, *“...ease in Zion.”*

to clothe, and feed, and take care of the body, as a servant to the soul in the service of God, but no further. We are not debtors to it; the flesh never did us so much kindness as to oblige us to serve it. It is the pleasing, and serving, and gratifying, of the flesh, that are the ruin of souls; that is, the second death. So, that in a word we are put upon this dilemma, either to displease the body or destroy the soul.”¹⁷²

Lent is again soon approaching. The idea that this is a fast unto God is an abomination. *“Is it a fast like this which I choose, a day for a man to humble himself? Is it for bowing one’s head like a reed and for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed? (we don’t even do this) Will you call this a fast? Is this not the fast which I choose, to **loosen the bonds of the yoke**, and to let the **oppressed go free** and **break every yoke**? Is it not to **divide your bread with the hungry** and bring the **homeless poor into the house**; when you see the **naked**, to cover him; and not to **hide yourself from your own flesh**?”*¹⁷³ God desires that you kill your sin, deny your worldly thinking, actually live piously and set all your sights upon Him.

*“To the one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.”*¹⁷⁴ What good am I referring to in this chapter? Is it not the killing of worldly passions and desires? *“For if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit **you are putting to death the deeds of the body**, you will live. For all who are being led of the Spirit of God, **these are sons of God**.”*¹⁷⁵ Reality of true conversion is that a war is being waged in every area of one’s own life—again to varying degrees and in varying seasons.

“The corruption that dwelleth in us is the body of sin, consisting of many parts and members, as a body. This is

172 *Matthew Henry’s Commentary*, pg. 337, Vol. 6

173 Isaiah 25:5-7 (bold mine)

174 James 4:17

175 Romans 8:13-14 (bold mine)

the root to which the axe must be laid. We must not only cease from the acts of sin (this may be done through the influences of outward restraints, or other inducements), but we must get the vicious habits and inclinations weakened and destroyed; not only cast away the idols of iniquity out of the heart. The actual transgression is certainly in a great measure prevented by the crucifying and killing of the original corruption. It is the body of sin that sways the sceptre, wields the iron rod; destroy this, and the yoke is broken. We must be dead indeed unto sin.”¹⁷⁶

Have you set out on this work? Does a *reality* of piety reside upon your life? Can you say, “*I have died to sin?*”¹⁷⁷ What does your daily expenditures look like? What does your vacations look like? Are these things pleasing to the Lord? Do the things that you do edify the body, edify the soul and point you (and others) to Christ? Do you hate the sin you once loved? *Reality* is not always easy to grasp.

176 *Matthew Henry's Commentary*, pg. 324, Vol. 6

177 Romans 6:11

*“No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not **practice righteousness** is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.”*

1 JOHN 3:9-10 (BOLD MINE)

“Do you mortify; do you make it your daily work; be always at it while you live; cease not a day from this work; be killing sin or it will be killing you.”

JOHN OWEN

FOR THE TRUE BELIEVER, TAKE THIS TO HEART —

“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not ours only, but also for those of the world.”¹⁷⁸

178 1 John 2:1-2

CHAPTER SEVEN

A Style of Life

The days just after September 11th, 2001, almost every church in America was flooded with people. This influx of people continued for a few months and then, like the oceans tide, recessed until all but a few were gone. Why did this flood occur? Why did it not last? What impact during the few short months did all the church attendance have on the individuals?

In short, the *flood* was a result of human fear. People ran to the only thing they thought could ease their fears. Instead of finding God (although few did find salvation) they found extensions of humanism and powerless self-expressions of religion. There was found no power to change the heart, no true power of the Spirit, nor the true preaching of the Gospel of Christ, just more of cultural humanism wrapped in a package labeled *Christian*. Why would this last? Why would people be changed?

“I would redeem them, but they speak lies against Me. And they do not cry to Me from their heart when they wail on their beds; for the sake of grain and new wine they assemble themselves, they turn

*away from Me. Although I trained and strengthened their arms, yet they devise evil against Me.*¹⁷⁹

Just as the problem with those who flooded the churches just after 9-11, the great majority of professing Christians today have no fear of God, no obedience to God and no spiritual discipline in regards to sin and heart wrenching prayer. Their lifestyles show the *reality* of their fruits. Just like that of Israel, God says, “*I will go away and return to My place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face.*”¹⁸⁰ Admitting our guilt and seeking God is not just a superficial one-time occurrence; it is a style of life. But just what is a *style of life*?

A *style of life* is the totality of outward motions pouring out from the inward heart in the demonstration of how one lives their life. The outward motions stem directly from inward reflections of the heart and subsequent convictions. I have heard it said that it is much like watching a DVD of one’s life in comparison to a still photo from a moment in time.¹⁸¹ You see single still photos do not tell the whole story. Photos only give a point in time snapshot of a certain deed or event. It takes the whole of time and actions surrounding the event to rightly understand the picture in the photo.

The overall context of our life, and this testified by the Holy Spirit,¹⁸² gives us the information to rightly know our true position with God. Our own hearts can think back to deeds we have done and then fool us into thinking we are somehow right with God when in *reality* we are living wayward. It is easy to judge someone of sin when all you see is a split-second, time-in-space clip, but would we want to judge ourselves based on this standard? Context certainly applies to the Scriptures as well. It is easier to twist a passage in the Bible to meet

179 Hosea 7:13-15

180 Hosea 5:15

181 Thought owed to Paul Washer

182 Romans 8:16

your own views rather than take the whole of Scripture into sight and repent of your sins.

“We must take care how we live, for this is the only lifetime we shall have in which to settle the life that lasts forever.”¹⁸³

God forgives the sins of those who truly receive His Son, who rely upon Him in true faith, who truly repent, who truly desire sanctification and who truly do not presume upon His grace, mercy and love as an excuse to remain in habitual sin. This *does not* mean some type of sinless perfection, but it *does* mean a lifestyle of continually washing off the mire, confessing sin, walking in godliness, seeking God through deep prayer, obedience to the Word and personal discipline in regards to denying the pleasures of the world. This means *all* areas (including daily expenditures, food, clothing, music, TV, time involvement, conversations, etc.) of our daily living feeds into the DVD of our *style of life*. What would be the reaction of your friends, your church, your coworkers, your boss if just 24 hours of your private life was displayed for all to see? Remember, God has a memory like no other. He records and sees much more and much deeper the *realities* of your life than even you know. On judgment day you will give an account of the smallest idle word you ever spoke.¹⁸⁴ How much more will we be judged for our careless lifestyles and our sinful motives?

“Godliness is a process that God brings about in our life as we choose His will over our own.”¹⁸⁵

Today we have countless millions who profess to love God, and even profess to love Jesus Christ, but where is the obedience? Truly loving Jesus Christ means that an obedient action, or rather reaction,

183 C.H. Spurgeon

184 Matthew 12:36

185 K.P. Yohannan—Gospel for Asia

is a *reality* that causes a growing, and ongoing, desire to please God. “If you love Me, you will *keep My commandments*.”¹⁸⁶ God delights in “loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the *knowledge*” of Himself “rather than burnt offerings.”¹⁸⁷ “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”¹⁸⁸ We should therefore “press on to *know*” Him, walk in Him and *boast only* in Him.¹⁸⁹ We ought to have a holy fear of Him and Him alone. Fear of God removes the fear of man and drives us towards stability in His love and grace and mercy. “By this we *know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.*”¹⁹⁰

“The fear of God is lost when a people no longer believes what God says.”¹⁹¹

Today, could it not be said of North America, Europe and many other peoples, “*God gave them over; God gave them over; God gave them over.*”¹⁹² If God did give us over, then what did He give us over to and why would He ever do such a thing?

First let me ask you, why was Sodom really destroyed? Was it just because of outward manifestations of sin alone? No, it was more. “*Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters*

186 John 12:15

187 Hosea 6:6

188 Luke 6:46

189 Jeremiah 9:23-24

190 1 John 2:3-6, all of 1 John is a wonderful testimony to the true believer and a test of *reality* for the unbeliever

191 Carter Conlon—*Jesus Love People Through Me*, 2011 Sermon Index, *Fear of God Conference*

192 Romans 1:24,26,28

had arrogance, abundant food and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy. Thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them when I saw it."¹⁹³ Are we not arrogant? Do we not have abundant food? Do we not strive for careless ease? Do we not commit abominations? Oh yes! We certainly are not a humble and godly people; we are gluttons who hoard food while two-thirds of the world's population starves; we certainly love entertainment, pleasure and rest; we certainly commit all kinds of horrendous sins.¹⁹⁴

"Entertainment is the Devil's substitute for joy."¹⁹⁵

"Money spent on luxuries, little or big, which, in the face of the crying need of the world and the extreme difficulty experienced by missionary societies in finding funds, is criminal!"¹⁹⁶

When Paul wrote to the Romans, what did he declare in the first three chapters? Is it not the depravity of all mankind and the guilt of the world before a Holy God? Specifically in Romans chapter one, we get our answers to why we have been turned over (again, if indeed it is true that we have been turned over). So why would God do such a thing?

We (especially Americans) have been turned over "*because that which is known about God is evident.*"¹⁹⁷ You see God has made "*His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature,*" clearly known

193 Ezekiel 16:49-50

194 A 2009 study showed that less than 3% of all American Church giving ever left the U.S. Only .3% ever made it to the most unreached, poverty stricken and persecuted in the world, the 10/40 window. For more information on the 10/40 window, visit: www.time2stand.com/persecution.html

195 Leonard Ravenhill

196 Howard Guinness, *Sacrifice*, 1936, 1975 6th Edition, InterVarsity Press, pg. 17

197 Romans 1:18-19

through His creation.¹⁹⁸ We “*are left without excuse*” thereby God has judged us. The real crime leading to our judgment is because we “*knew God*” but we have not “*honored Him as God*” nor have we given true “*thanks*.”¹⁹⁹ We are “*futile*” in our thinking and our hearts are “*darkened*.” We pretend “*to be wise*” but we are “*fools*.”²⁰⁰ We have exchanged “*the glory of the incorruptible God for*” images of “*corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures*,” and especially those of us in the Western World, for fame, the love of money, possessions and selfish gain and pleasure. And we wonder why there is no power in the pulpit? There is no reason to wonder. The answer is all too clear. This is not just a picture of our nation(s) but the truth of many of our pastors, priests and congregations as well.

*“But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be lead astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.”*²⁰¹

Before looking at what we have been turned over to, I am reminded of what was going on in Ezekiel’s time. Inside the temple abominations were being committed.²⁰² The direct worship of false Gods, the defilement of God’s holy things, clouds of incense, to name a few, was occurring and this by the hands of the priests no less. I dare say that today worse is being committed. Pastors are living lifestyles of pagan traditions. A general spirit of pride has taken over the great majority of preachers in the West. Even worse, pastors and priests are committing horrendous sexual sins of all kinds. Drugs and domestic abuse are certainly in the mix. And again I ask, how can we even wonder why the pulpit is powerless and the culture so ignorant to the true Gospel? Truly *Ichabod*²⁰³ has been written across the doors

198 Romans 1:20

199 Romans 1:21

200 Romans 1:22

201 2 Corinthians 11:3

202 Ezekiel 8

203 *Ichabod*: the glory of the Lord has departed—see 1 Samuel 4:21-22

of most Western churches and seminaries and across the foreheads of many pastors.

So what does the American lifestyle and that of a great many professing Christians look like? Let me quote this direct. (Notice that God gave them over three times and each time He turns them over to greater and greater abominations.)

1. Romans 1:24-25—*“Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”*
 - a. Over to the lusts of their hearts
 - b. To impurity
 - c. So they would be dishonored
2. Romans 1:26-27—*“For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.”*
 - a. Over to degrading passions
 - i. Women desired women
 - ii. Men desired men
3. Committed indecent acts
4. Receiving penalty of their error
5. Romans 1:28-32—*“And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being*

*filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, **they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.***”

- a. Over to a depraved mind
- b. To do things not proper
- c. Filled with:
 - i. Unrighteousness
 - ii. Wickedness
 - iii. Greed
 - iv. Evil
- d. Full of:
 - i. Envy
 - ii. Murder
 - iii. Strife
 - iv. Deceit
 - v. Malice
- e. They are:
 - i. Gossips
 - ii. Slanderers
 - iii. Haters of God
 - iv. Insolent
 - v. Arrogant

- vi. Boastful
- vii. Inventor of evil
- viii. Disobedient to parents
- ix. Without understanding
- x. Untrustworthy
- xi. Unloving
- xii. Unmerciful
- f. Knew God's ordinances
- g. Did the same things
- h. Gave approval to those who practice these things

Who can deny that this *is* the American culture? And you pastors and elders, we Christian book writers, you Christian song writers, all of us professing and so-called Christians are at fault. Let me ask you, and in context too, *“But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?”*²⁰⁴ Oh how do we answer to the Holy God? Do we look to justify our sin and twist the Scriptures in order to feel better? Or do we repent? A great majority of us are at fault because we have failed to hold strong to the truth of Scripture, live piously and keep Christ upon the throne of our lives. We are even more at fault when we refuse to call sin by its right name and call people (especially in the supposed church) to repentance.

“Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ... Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the

204 Romans 2:3-4

interests of others. Have this attitude 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, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”²⁰⁵

If He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world,²⁰⁶ then why have we not changed our habits, conquered sin, changed the nation and impacted the world? Could the answer be that most believers really don't have Christ in them? Could it be that true conversion has never occurred in a great majority? *“For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline?”²⁰⁷*

Where is true godly power in our nation today? Where is true godly love (*agape*) today? Where is personal-godly discipline today? Could it be that Christ has not been formed and the Spirit not been born in most of what we call Christianity today? Unfortunately the answer is all too obvious.

“And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”²⁰⁸

We are not called to be at ease in Zion. We are called for the purposes of God. We are called for sanctification, discipline and suffering for the name of Christ. We are called to glorify God and this through true obedience and worship of Jesus Christ.

Who is going to *stand in the gap* today?²⁰⁹ Will He find you willing and competent to be such a person? Let it not be said of you nor of

205 Philippians 1:27; 2:3-8

206 1 John 4:4

207 2 Timothy 1:7

208 Romans 2:2, 5

209 Ezekiel 22:30

your lifestyle, *“For My people are foolish, they know Me not; they are stupid children and have no understanding. They are shrewd to do evil, but to do good they do not know.”*²¹⁰ For the *“harvest has past, summer is ended, and we are not saved.”*²¹¹

What is the *reality* of how you are living your life? By whose strength shall you climb out of the pits of hell? By what faith apart from Christ can save you from the justice of Almighty God? By what personal human deed can remedy the sickness of a depraved heart?

*“Do not love the world nor 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 flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.”*²¹²

Don't tell me that you think that you need to repent and then do nothing about it. You can think repentance all you want but without an actual turning from wickedness and a turning unto godliness, it's just dead head knowledge. By the way, you who think that you don't need some degree of repentance in regards to the things contained herein, you are exactly who need it the most. Every single one of us needs to change our lifestyle in some way or another and that in comparison to the Holy, Righteous, Just and Almighty Christ who suffered upon the cross.

*“Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”*²¹³

210 Jeremiah 4:22

211 Jeremiah 8:20

212 1 John 2:15-17

213 Jude 14-15

“A man may study because his brain is hungry for knowledge, even Bible knowledge. But he prays because his soul is hungry for God.”

LEONARD RAVENHILL

“‘Woe to the rebellious children,’ declares the Lord, ‘Who execute a plan, but not Mine, and make an alliance, but not of My Spirit, in order to add sin to sin. Who proceed down to Egypt without consulting Me, to take refuge in the safety of Pharaoh and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!’”

ISAIAH 30:1-2

CHAPTER EIGHT

Praying, Weeping & Loving

Now we come to the chapter where the men of God stand out. We come to the place where the real work in Christ must take place in the individual life. The place of war, the place of fellowship, the place of brokenness, the place of contrition, the place of being built up, the place where God delights to dwell with His children.

“It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of the disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples.’”²¹⁴

I find it interesting that the disciples never asked for more ministry. They never asked how to reach the lost, how to cast out demons, how to speak in tongues, how to grow their followers, how to strategically do missions. No, they asked, “*Lord, teach us to pray.*”

Where are the men today who, like the disciples, asked *how to pray*? Where are the men today who, like Nehemiah when hearing that the walls of Jerusalem (or in our case America) were broken down and the gates burned, “*sat down and wept and mourned for days*”

214 Luke 11:1

and fasted and prayed before the “*God of heaven*”?²¹⁵ Where are the men today who, like the prophet Jeremiah, say, “*Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!*”²¹⁶ Where are the men today who, like the Apostle Paul, say, “*For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren?*”²¹⁷ Well, let me tell you, there are men such as these, I know men such as these, but they are few and far between.

Listen to how Howard Guinness worded it from his wonderful little book entitled, *Sacrifice*.

“Where are the young men and women of this generation who will hold their lives cheap, and be faithful even unto death, who will lose their lives for Christ’s sake—flinging them away for love of him? Where are those who will live dangerously, and be reckless in this service? Where are his lovers—those who love him and the souls of men more than their own reputations or comfort, or very life? Where are the men of prayer? Where are the men who count God’s Word of more importance to them than their daily food? Where are the men who, like Moses of old, commune with God face to face as a man speaks with his friend, and unmistakably bear with them the fragrance of the meeting through the day? Where are God’s men in this day of God’s power?”²¹⁸

I have heard it said by others that the common thread that is woven through all the different men that God has used mightily in the past is their devoted and relentless prayer life. The more I read about men such as these, I find this to be true. Although they were very much different, even

215 Nehemiah 1:3-11

216 Jeremiah 9:1

217 Romans 9:3

218 Howard Guinness, *Sacrifice*, 1936, 1975 6th Edition, InterVarsity Press, pgs.83-84; I highly recommend John Piper’s 2-part message on Romans 8:13 entitled, *How to Kill Sin*.

in theological views, they had something in common, they all knew the Living God and they toiled in prayer—they had a deep communion with God Himself.

Prayer, that being truly devoted and at times toilsome, is a must for every believer who desires to know God in a true and more powerful way. It is a *reality* of every believer who desires to break free from the deep roots of secular humanism. It's not just to "*say prayers*" but to commune with God and battle the flesh "*outside the camp*."²¹⁹ It is a type of prayer that loses track of time because of the overwhelming goodness and surpassing beauty of God. It is to fellowship with God, to hear from God and to be exposed by God. It is to literally not need man to teach about knowing Him, but God Himself with and upon a man in such *reality* that everything else is seen as rubbish in comparison to His glory. This type of prayer wars against the flesh, wars against Satan and leaves one completely without doubt as to the kindness, loveliness and amazing power of Almighty God. This type of prayer is in the early hours of the morning when the body is often the most weak and the eyelids fail to remain open. If Pagans can worship Satan between midnight and three AM, can we not also wake up for dedicated worship to the one true and Almighty God?²²⁰

To merely write of such prayer and to read of such prayer is nothing but dead rotten words and mental stimulation unless put into tangible action. You see, you and I must have a *reality* of this type of prayer as our hidden strength and joyous fellowship. Is it difficult? Yes, especially at first. Your mind will drift wayward, your body will chase after rest, your eyes will close, and your desire will not be strong. But if you ask God for the desire, He will put a desire for Him into you; but know this, He will not do the work for you. It is a war that you must engage for yourself. For without this conflict, without deep fellowship

219 Hebrews 13:12-13

220 Time of day really is not as important as the sacrificial devotion in prayer with God.

and prayer with God, you will never truly have deep burdens and tears for the lost people of this world, and especially the suffering saints that boldly and tearfully stand for the name of Christ.

“Does it matter to you today, does it matter to you at all that God’s spiritual Jerusalem, the church, is now married to the world—that there is such a coldness sweeping the land? Closer than that, does it matter about the Jerusalem that is in our own hearts? The sign of ruin that is slowly draining spiritual power and passion, blind to lukewarmness, blind to the mixture that is creeping in. That’s all the Devil wants to do is get the fight out of you and kill it. So you won’t labor in prayer anymore. You won’t weep before God anymore. You can sit and watch television and your family go to hell.”²²¹

It seems that in these days if one speaks of personal sacrifice in the Christian life they are immediately labeled as radicals, legalists or extremists. A great majority of this labeling comes from professing Christians themselves. But the men of old knew better; they knew God. Look at the Apostle Paul, he sacrificed greatly. Look at the early Church, the Anabaptists, the Scottish Covenanters, the Puritan Christians, the Underground and suffering Christian Church around the world today. They knew (know) about sacrifice for the Holy name of Christ. Look at what King David said in 2 Samuel 24:24 and let us follow his example. “*No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price, for I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God which cost me nothing.*”²²²

Let me ask you, how much of your life do you offer God that actually costs you something? Whether it is physical or financial? Whether little or great? What about how you honor God in what and how much you eat? Or what about how much time you sleep? If you don’t eat much or eat nutritious foods, is it for God’s glory or your waist line? If you don’t sleep much, is it because you can’t or for the

221 David Wilkerson, *A Call to Anguish*

222 Bold mine—context all of chapter 24

purposes of prayer? How do we ever expect to be in the prayer closet if we never enter? How can we expect to ever truly love and care for people if we do not want the sacrifice and discomfort of taking God's own heart upon us? How can we love without a burden? How can we see with God's eyes, hear with God's ears and feel as God feels if we don't really desire Him and desire Him in such a way that it costs us?

*“Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but **she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.** You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to **kiss My feet.** You did not anoint My head with oil, but **she anointed My feet with perfume.** For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; **but he who is forgiven little, loves little.**”²²³*

If Jesus Christ, the Author and Founder of our faith, prayed often, and much of His time was in the early hours of the morning, should we not do the same?²²⁴ Or what about the Apostles, did they not give themselves to prayer? Prayer is mentioned in almost every chapter of Acts. *“But we will **devote** ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”*²²⁵

Where are the pastors today who fight back hell at three, four or five O'clock in the morning? Where are the pastors who weep between the *porch and the altar*?²²⁶ Where are the preachers who pray and fast so as to *drive out* the demons of this world?²²⁷

Today, are we at all like the widow in Luke 18? *“Now He was telling them a parable **to show that at all times they ought to pray and not***

223 Luke 7:44-47, context 7:36-50 (bold mind)

224 Luke 6:12, 5:18, 9:18,28, 22:39-46; Matthew 14:23, 26:36-46; Mark 1:35; John 17—In regards to Jesus' praying—for starters

225 Acts 6:4 (bold mine)

226 Joel 2:17

227 Mark 9:29; Matthew 17:21

to lose heart, saying, 'In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, "Give me legal protection from my opponent." For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, "Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.'" And the Lord said, 'Hear what the unrighteous judge said; now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, **when the Son of Man Comes, will He find faith on the earth?**'" Will the 'Son of Man' find faith in us? Does He see it from the throne now? If so, by what biblical evidence does He see it?

There seems to be the beginning movement of men going back to the foundation of Christian leadership in the home. But most of the talk seems to revolve around spiritual leadership, discipleship, homeschooling and Christ-centered devotions. Hear me clearly here, I absolutely agree that these things are good and are essential to the Christian home, but where is the message that men *need* to be men of prayer? Where is the message stating they are to put away *childish things*²²⁸ and *stand in the Gap*?²²⁹ Men are to get past the milk of infants and digest solid food. Fortunately there are a few preachers out there who are still preaching these things.

*"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not **accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant.** But solid food is for the mature, who **because of practice** have their senses trained to discern good and evil."*²³⁰

228 1 Corinthians 13:11

229 Ezekiel 22:30

230 Hebrews 5:12-13

How can men today be *teachers* when they are too busy playing video games and acting like mere kids? How can men today *practice* when they will not wake up and seek God? Even today God says to us: “*‘Yet even now,’ declares the Lord, ‘Return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping and mourning; and rend your heart and not your garments.’ Now return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and relenting of evil. Let the priests, the Lord’s ministers, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, ‘Spare Your people, O Lord, and do not make Your inheritance a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they among the peoples say, Where is their God?’*”²³¹ We need authentic men who are truly born again and who strive to *practice* the realities of the Christian life. We need men who will pray, weep and love.

*“First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissention.”*²³²

231 Joel 2:12-13, 17

232 1 Timothy 2:1-2, 8

“God is looking for ‘*a man*’ to stand in the gap. This position cannot be entrusted to the immature, the spiritually under-developed, but to men. Many of us have many things to cast off before the Lord will put on us anything like a real prayer burden.”²³³

233 Leonard Ravenhill, *Revival Praying*, pg. 73

“Don’t think that your mouth can do more than prayer. Prayer always does more than your mouth. Always. And if you have not learned to pray, you have not learned much. Although you might have a doctorate degree, if you have not learned to pray, you don’t know much.”²³⁴

234 Llewellyn Van der Merwe—*Standing in the Gap*, www.loudvoice.org or www.llewellynroline.com

CHAPTER NINE

Suffering & Advancing

“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”²³⁵

“The Message I bring from the Underground Church is: ‘Don’t abandon us!’ ‘Don’t forget us!’ ‘Don’t write us off!’ ‘Give us the tools we need! We will pay the price for using them!’ This message I have been charged to deliver to the Free Church.”²³⁶

Today there are literally millions upon millions of people suffering some form of Christian persecution around the world.²³⁷ They are denied the basic human necessities; they are beaten, raped and mutilated; they are tortured and killed. Yet, they will not deny Christ.

235 John 15:13

236 Richard Wurmbrand, *Tortured for Christ*, 1998, pg 144-145. I highly recommend that *EVERY* believer reads this book. **You can get your copy for free at:** www.torturedforchrist.com

237 Estimates currently range from around 400-600 million people suffering for Christ.

I have spoken with so many professing believers, pastors and entire churches who know little to nothing about the persecuted and suffering church. Why don't pastors preach and teach on persecution and its *reality* today? Why don't they teach about persecution in the life of a true believer? Would it be that they, and we as a whole, would have to repent of their (our) views on end times and repent of their (our) selfish expenditures and lifestyles and repent of what the professing 'church' in America has become?

Sacrifice and suffering was well known to the Apostles. Stephen was stoned to death, all the disciples but John died a martyr and even he was left for dead on an island. What about Paul? He suffered as a martyr and was heavily persecuted for his faith. What about the thousands upon thousands of Anabaptists, Scottish Covenanters, Puritans, and etc, that went to their bloody death for the name of Christ. Yet today, especially in America, we think that we ought to not suffer in anything—no sacrifice, no godly discipline, no conviction of sin, no repentance, no laboring in prayer—again, just *easy in Zion*.

As a whole, the free-church in the West is guilty of not remembering the starving, suffering, forgotten body of Christ throughout the world. And the fault lies heavily upon church leaders and pastors. Read the two verses below and then ask yourself how these apply to you. If you don't know, ask God to reveal these to you. After you have done this, read the excerpt from Pastor Richard Wurmbbrand founder of Voice of the Martyrs. He was tortured and imprisoned for 14 years in a Communist prison.

*“Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”*²³⁸

*“Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body.”*²³⁹

238 2 Timothy 3:12

239 Hebrews 13:3

“I will tell you just one case of suffering of a family that I know personally. A brother entered prison on account of his work in the Underground Church. He left behind a wife with six children. His older daughters of seventeen and nineteen could not get a job. The only one that gives jobs in a Communist country is the state, and it does not give jobs to children of *criminal* Christians. Please don’t judge this story according to moral standards; just receive the facts. The two daughters of a Christian martyr—Christians themselves—became prostitutes to support their younger brothers and sick mother. Their younger brother of fourteen became insane when he saw it and had to be put in an asylum. When years later the imprisoned father returned, his only prayer was, ‘*God, take me to prison again. I cannot bear to see this.*’ His prayer was answered and he was jailed again for the crime of having witnessed for Christ to children. His daughters were no longer prostitutes, as they received jobs by complying with the demands of the secret police—they became informers. As daughters of a Christian martyr, they are received with honor in every house. They listen and then they report everything they hear to the secret police. Don’t just say that this is ugly and immoral—of course it is—but ask yourself if it is not also your sin that such tragedies occur, that such Christian families are left alone, and are not helped by you who are free.”²⁴⁰

This is just one story—one story of a family who suffered many different aspects of Christian persecution—physical, mental, social, economic and moral suffering—nowhere to turn and nowhere to go. Yet today these types of things, and even worse, are happening right now. And at the same time, most of us are sitting comfortably in our heated homes, plush chairs, wearing trendy clothing and eating enough food to feed six or seven people. Many of us think that we

240 Richard Wurmbrand, *Tortured for Christ*, pg. 47

could never sacrifice in such ways as described above. Well we are somewhat correct. As long as we have our creature comforts, we could never sacrifice in such ways because our love for Christ is more humanistic than we know. Situations like the story above become nothing more than a mental fantasy whereby after hearing of such things we can easily escape back to a world of comfort and ease. The story above is not fantasy. No. These are real people with real struggles with real feelings with real sufferings. They are part of the true bride of Christ who does not deny their bridegroom.

Don't get me wrong, if we are living in an environment where there is freedom, we should praise God with a heart of gratitude and thankfulness. For it is the mercy, grace and providence of God that allows such freedom. But never let us waste such a gift. Let us live our lives for the glory of God, seeking the presence of Christ; let us run with boldness into the throne room of grace while casting off every entangling sin; let us seek to obey the Spirit of Almighty God; let us keep our focus on Jesus Christ; let our joy be made full through the fullness of God. Unfortunately, because so many people have gone wayward and false teaching is rampant among the nations, we need to be diligent to ask ourselves:

“And if you were in prison, would we visit you? What would be the song we'd sing to you when they're in need? Would it be an empty hallelujah to the King?”²⁴¹

We who are free have done very little to help the persecuted and we will answer to God, especially when we knew better. True Christians are persecuted and we think we will be raptured away from all suffering. Many Christians are poor and starving, many without a Bible at all and we spend \$40, \$60, \$80, even upwards of \$250, for a leather Bible and then throw a few dollars into an offering plate to ease our guilt, and with 97% of that remaining in the states

241 Shane and Shane, *Turn Down the Music*, from the album, *Everything is Different*.

to build bigger buildings and the pastor's pocket book. Brothers and sisters go without food and yet we can stroll down to the nearest store and buy enough for 6 months. Christians lack clothing and we think we are being radical by wearing a t-shirt that has a supposed Christian logo on the back.²⁴² I have heard persecuted and poor believers say this, "*We are praying for America.*" Again, "*Pray that we remain strong and focused on Christ. Please do not pray for our persecution to stop, otherwise, we will be just like the church in America, dead.*" These are our family members in Christ, a part of Christ's body, the Church. Maybe we really are not a part of Christ's body? Maybe we really are not a part of the true Church?

"When Christians in free countries win a soul for Christ, the new believer may become a member of a quietly living Church. But when those in captive nations win someone, we know that he may have to go to prison and that his children may become orphans."²⁴³

Listen closely, Christ never promises a new car, a big home, lots of clothes, money, property, possessions or prosperity—no. He promises persecution, pain and suffering.²⁴⁴ Although He can give temporal things, and He knows that we need some of these things to live, He promises, to the true believer, something much more—everlasting joy in Christ Jesus.

Believer, are you presuming upon the name of Christ and yet denying Him through consistent worldly living? If you have not or are not experiencing some degree of true Christian persecution (I say *true Christian persecution* because suffering is a result of Christ and not hypocrisy [1 Peter 4:15]), and this from time to time, then I assure you that godliness is not your desire. For all who "*desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*" True *godliness* is a result of a regenerated

242 Thought owed to Paul Washer, "*Powerful Youth Message*"

243 Richard Wurmbbrand, *Tortured for Christ*, pg. 22-23, Used with permission.

244 Matthew 10:22-25, 13:21, 24:9; Luke 6:22, 21:12-19; John 15:18-23

life. It is a life that longs for God and His work of sanctification. True godliness not only receives Jesus as *Savior* but lives for Him and under Him as *Lord*. The very nature of Jesus Christ the Son is that of Savior, Lord and God. He is not divided. You cannot separate His attributes for your humanistic desires. As new believers we are to *confess*, this with the mouth, that *Christ is Lord*. As mature believers we are to continue the verbal confession that *Christ is Lord*, and we are to *confess Christ as Lord* with the style of our lives. This confession of faith results from true regeneration and ongoing sanctification; for Christ is Lord and our life ought to reflect the *realities* of such.

*“For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”*²⁴⁵

In a recent radio interview, I heard it said that there are certain sects (groups) of the Underground Church in China that do not allow for the association with American Christians.²⁴⁶ They fear that they will be corrupted by false doctrine and dirty lifestyles. When I heard this I again wept for the condition of the American professing church and for the conditions of these persecuted brothers and sisters. They fight the good fight of faith; we sit in comfort and argue doctrine while drinking a five-dollar cup of coffee.

I am reminded of a time that I was asked to speak about the persecuted (something I feel that I am not worthy to present) at a newer church. They wanted to get into missions and learn about the persecuted. While speaking I asked them, *“How much money is spent on coffee every Saturday and Sunday in churches throughout America? That is a statistic I would like to know, especially in regards to the support of our brothers and sisters who are starving to death and without Bibles all around the world.”* How much is spent at your church? How much do you spend?

245 Philippians 1:29

246 Paul Washer, heard on the Tom Roten Morning Show on News Talk 800 WVHU, December 2011

Persecution does not end in failure nor prove one to be weak. On the contrary, Christian suffering leads to the glory of God in Christ, incites further spreading of the Gospel and sheds light on the strength of a living faith. Persecution moves a person to advance the true Gospel of Jesus Christ and sanctifies as a *refiner's fire*. The *dross* and the *chaff* are burned out thereby purifying the true believer. Christian suffering absolutely destroys all that the flesh desires.

Having so briefly mentioned the said above, why is it that I have never heard the promises of 2 Timothy 3:12 exalted by American believers? I believe the answer lies deeper than simply avoiding pain and suffering. I believe it is partly due to false conversion and partly due to a lack of biblical knowledge and partly due to a lack of sanctification. Two verses come to mind.

*“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”*²⁴⁷

*“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purposes.”*²⁴⁸

Godliness leads to persecution; persecution leads to purification; purification leads to increasing joy in Christ; increasing joy in Christ brings glory to God; God's glory increases the spreading of the true Gospel. *“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial;”*²⁴⁹ *“blessed are the pure in heart;”*²⁵⁰ *“blessed are those who have been persecuted;”*²⁵¹ *“blessed are you when people insult you and persecuted you.”*²⁵² *“Rejoice*

247 James 1:2-4

248 Romans 8:28

249 James 1:12

250 Matthew 5:8

251 Matthew 5:10

252 Matthew 5:11

and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."²⁵³ If anyone does not understand how to count it "*all joy*," then "*ask of God*,"²⁵⁴ but there must be no doubting. When we understand these things, we will understand and live out a *reality* of Christ-centeredness and sacrificial living for God.

Much of our lack of godly wisdom, again, stems back to our lack of true prayer. Our lack of prayer is a result of so few men who are truly devoted to the things of God and the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Too many men have been softened by temporal comforts, lukewarm preachers and cushy pews.

E.M. Bounds, notably a man of prayer, said this:

"The men of olden times who wrought well in prayer, who brought the largest things to pass, who moved God to do great things, were those who were entirely given over to God in their praying. God wants, and must have, all that there is in man, in answering his prayers. He must have whole-hearted men through whom to work out his purposes and plans concerning men. God must have men in their entirety. No double-minded man need apply. NO vacillating man can be used. No man with a divided allegiance to God, and the world and self, can do the praying that is needed."²⁵⁵

Maybe our lack of prayer is due to our lack of persecution.

"We will either labor in prayer or pray in labor camps."²⁵⁶

253 Matthew 5:12

254 James 1:5-7; this goes for all trials and all areas of Christian living

255 E.M. Bounds, *E.M. Bounds on Prayer*, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2006

256 Leonard Ravenhill

“We over here in this county (America), we’re dreaming, we’re dreaming. When we wake up from our dream the reality will be worse than any nightmare.”²⁵⁷

Without true repentance, without the true power of the Holy Spirit in preaching and without true prayer, we leave people damned and unprepared for the severe persecution that is lurking just behind the walls of iniquity²⁵⁸ and anti-biblical customs of our present day culture. Know this, Christian suffering is a *reality* and severe persecution will be unleashed on the most affluent nations in the world. It is just a matter of time. Are you prepared?

Now, one must ask, if persecution is a *reality* of a true believer, then what is the present persecution of believers in North America? I believe that the most oppressive, and at times overwhelming, persecution in America, and this against the true believer, is the continuous bombardment of prosperity, secularity and sexuality. Having so much constant godlessness confronting the true believer causes deep pain in the life and soul of such a believer. It affects the emotions, wars in the soul and desires to strangle out the Christian life. Along with this constant pressure, the true believer can see a wicked world enjoying the godless pleasures of sin and dying in their filth. This causes great grief and anguish of the heart and weighs heavily on the mind. The true believer is deeply pained by the continuous warring with the flesh and the continuous sin of the culture. These persecutions send the true believer into a life of intercessory prayer, a life dedicated to the Gospel and a life of supporting other brothers and sisters in Christ.

“Many Christians in the West have no love for those in captive nations. Proof of it is that they do nothing for their salvation. But it is not enough that they do not love those

257 Paul Washer, heard on the *Tom Roten Morning Show* on News Talk 800 WVHU, December 2011

258 Injustice; unrighteousness—Noah Webster’s 1928 Dictionary

in captive nations and do nothing to win them for Christ. By their complacency, by their neglect, and sometimes by acting as actual accomplices, some Western church leaders strengthen the infidels in their infidelity.”²⁵⁹

The denial of God’s Word by the culturally relevant and affluent Christians today only points out their shame. Their refusal to accept the *reality* of persecution only points towards their humanistic cravings and godless desires. Their false fire and unregenerate hearts are quite apparent. Oh where are you O’ men of God?

For “*through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.*”²⁶⁰ The call to go through persecution(s) is a definite promise if our *desire* for *godliness* is authentic. But how are we to act towards those who persecute us? Remember, Jesus says that we are blessed when we are persecuted.²⁶¹ We are then told that we are to love and pray for our enemies.²⁶² We are to be innocent as doves.²⁶³ But without the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and the power of God on our lives, we will not react as we are commanded. Our fallen natures are incapable of pleasing God.²⁶⁴

*“For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.”*²⁶⁵

Persecution should not be our goal nor should the Gospel be preached for the reason of offending people so that you can say you have been persecuted. Rather we should keep the joy of Christ always before us in such a way that when persecution arises, we are able

259 Richard Wurmbbrand, *Tortured for Christ*, pg. 64, Used with permission.

260 Acts 14:22

261 Matthew 5:10-12

262 Matthew 5:44

263 Matthew 10:16-23

264 Romans 8:8

265 1 Peter 2:20

to “*count it all joy*” for the “*steadfastness*” we are enduring is for our eternal good; it is all for the glory of God and our conformity to the very image of Jesus Christ. The true preaching of the Gospel is an offence of its own.

Persecution is a blessing as it renders us helpless to our own rescue, it trains us to rely fully on God and it purifies our soul. Through persecution and a desire to live godly, we come to know that *God causes all things to work together for your good*. Ask yourself this question, “*Do I really desire godliness and the Lord Jesus Christ as my all in all?*” Are my affections set upon Him and His desires for my life? If not, ask Him to change your desires, give you right motives and a passion for His glory.

As we come to the close of this chapter let me ask, do we really love as we think we do? If “*no greater love*” is to lay down one’s life, then are we demonstrating this in our North American churches today? I know that this love is being carried out, but not by many. Why is this type of love not being carried out in every church? I don’t mean to just give a few dollars to some organization, but to truly remember those who are mistreated and persecuted. Truly remembering the persecuted begins in prayer and brokenness of heart for those who are suffering in such difficult ways. This type of remembrance, deeply moved and devoted in prayer, causes a person to react to God’s will in caring for the Church body at large as well as locally. Merely giving without any real passion or anguish of heart temporarily eases our guilt and superstitiously gives us a sense of justification and duty performed. Why are the persecuted so unknown? Why is persecution so far from us (at least for a short while longer)? Could it be we really are not as blessed as we may think? Could it be that we do not love because we have not the true love of God?

“If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.”²⁶⁶

266 1 Peter 4:14

Understand this, persecution leads to further advancement in sanctification, deep personal fellowship with Christ, furthers the advancement of the Gospel, kills the sinful old nature, advances the fellowship, and comes to the aide of Christians around the world. If these things are true, then what are you doing to *lay down your life* for the believers around the world? Are you willing to let God stamp eternity on your eyes and let your affections be that of God's?

If you are such a person, then don't be surprised by the *fiery trial* that comes upon you.²⁶⁷ If it is the will of God that you suffer greatly for Christ's sake, then remain strong and steadfast in Christ. For your reward will be great. "*Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*"²⁶⁸ I would be much more afraid, much more terrified, and much more uncertain of my faith if persecution, suffering, pain, discipline, grace and mercy were removed far from me. For what certainty would I have? What love of the Father would there be? What witness would I have? What desire for godliness would I have?

"When I was beaten on the bottom of the feet, my tongue cried. Why did my tongue cry? It was not beaten. It cried because the tongue and feet are both part of the same body. And you free Christians are part of the same Body of Christ that is now beaten in prisons in restricted nations, that even now gives martyrs for Christ. Can you not feel our pain?"

"The Early Church in all of its beauty, sacrifice, and dedication has come alive again in these countries.

While our Lord Jesus Christ agonized in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter, James, and John were a mere stone's throw away from the greatest drama of history—but they were deep in sleep. How much of your own Christian concern and giving is directed toward

267 1 Peter 4:12-14

268 Revelation 2:10—context 2:8-11

the relief of the martyr church? Ask your pastors and church leaders what is being done in your name to help your brothers and sisters in restricted nations around the world.

“In these countries, the drama, bravery, and martyrdom of the Early Church are happening all over again—now—and the free Church sleeps.

“Our brethren there, alone and without help, are waging the greatest, most courageous battle of the twentieth century, equal to the heroism, courage, and dedication of the Early Church. And the free Church sleeps on, oblivious of their struggle and their Savior’s agony.

“Will you sleep while your brethren in Christ suffer and fight for the Gospel?

“Will you hear our message: ‘*Remember us, help us?*’ ‘*Don’t abandon us!*’”²⁶⁹

269 Richard Wurmbrand, *Tortured for Christ*, pg. 150, Used with permission.

“The time is now. Count the cost. You will be persecuted, tested, and tried. You will be misunderstood, hated by the world, and sometimes hated even by the members of your own household. There will be tears, heartache, tribulation, suffering and pain. But, you will be living for the One who is worthy of all, and whose eternal kingdom cannot be shaken nor ever fade away. You will have the privilege of serving the King of kings and the Lord of all lords. Moreover, you will one day have the awesome indescribable experience of seeing His glorious face and hearing Him call you by name as His own.”

BRIAN LONG, BARNSDALL CORNERSTONE CHURCH²⁷⁰

270 Taken from the forward of, *Principles for the Gathering of Believers Under the Headship of Jesus Christ.*”

CHAPTER TEN

Resolution & Devotion

“Let your heart therefore be wholly devoted to the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments, as at this day.”²⁷¹

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”²⁷²

From the foundation of America up until about 100 years ago, a man's word meant something. If a man gave his word pertaining to some sort of duty, promise or contract, you could count on that man to fulfill his word. There was a sense of honor and devotion behind the spoken word. A man was resolved in what he said; he was devoted to do that which he spoke.

Today resolution and devotion are sorely lacking. We can see the evidence of this in our soaring divorce rates, in the lack of justice in our court system, the rise in prison inmate rates, the decrease of morality and ethics in our government and etc. It's not just rampant

271 1 Kings 8:61

272 Hebrews 10:23

in society at large, but within the professing church as well. It has been proven over and over again that the divorce rates inside the ‘church’ are the same as the surrounding godless culture. This is not to mention the rise in all other sorts of sin within the ‘church.’ Take this simple and seemingly insignificant example for instance. Have you ever talked with someone who professes to be a Christian and they say that they will contact you, but they never do? Seems small, but lying is a sin. Lying is no longer, at least in the last few generations, seen as a sin but as everyday life. We no longer believe what people say and we cannot trust that what they say will come to fruition. If we are not faithful in small things, how can we be faithful with much?²⁷³

The Bible says that King Solomon was the wisest man (apart from Christ) that ever lived²⁷⁴ and today we need to learn something from him. Besides studying all of the wisdom that God bestowed upon Solomon, we need to learn from one of his worst failures ever recorded. In addition to wisdom, God gave him discernment, riches and honor beyond that of all the kings of his day. Out of all of Solomon’s wisdom, discernment, riches and honor he still did not have the devotion and heart for God as his father David had. Here is where we may learn from Solomon’s grievous mistake.

“I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after wind. I said to myself, ‘Behold, I have magnified and increased wisdom more than all who were over Jerusalem before me; and my mind has observed a wealth of wisdom and knowledge.’ And I set my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly; I realized that this also is striving after wind. Because in much wisdom there is much grief, and increasing knowledge results in increasing pain.”²⁷⁵

273 Matthew 25:14-30

274 1 Kings 3:10-12

275 Ecclesiastes 1:14, 16-18

Towards the end of Solomon's life God warned him saying, "*As for you, if you will walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you and will keep My statutes and My ordinances, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I promised to your father David, saying, 'You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.' But if you or your sons indeed turn away from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and the house which I have consecrated for My name, I will cast out of My sight.*"²⁷⁶ As you can see, it was made very clear to Solomon that he was to remain holy and pure unto God alone. So what did Solomon do that was so bad?

In 1 Kings, chapter 11, we can see where Solomon's heart was truly devoted. Solomon had many wives and concubines.²⁷⁷ God had once again paid Solomon a visit leaving him with a stern warning that he should walk in His statutes and uprightness of heart or else suffer the consequences (sound familiar).²⁷⁸ His devotion and loyalty was towards his wives.²⁷⁹ "*Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father had done.*"²⁸⁰

Where was Solomon's resolve to live out what he said in Ecclesiastes 5:1-7? Where was his devotion to God through the wisdom given him in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14? We never read that Solomon repented and according to the Word that God previously spoke he was to be put to death.²⁸¹ Having said this, we must not let Solomon's end be our focus,

276 1 Kings 9:4-7

277 1 Kings 11:3

278 Solomon was not just warned here, but as all Israel, was warned several times prior—see Deuteronomy 7:1-5; Exodus 20:2-6, 23:31-33, 34:11-17.

279 1 Kings 11:1-6

280 1 Kings 11:6

281 Deuteronomy 17:2-7

but rather let us make sure that we are marked by a life of Christian *devotion* and *resolution* unto God.

Let us pause here for a moment to ask ourselves, are we devoted to God as we claim? Are we resolved to kill the sin in our life? Is the *reality* of God's hand upon our life in such a way we hate the sin that He hates? Need I remind you that Jesus did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets?²⁸² You see, our sights must fully and completely remain on Jesus Christ and His finished work of grace.

We need to be men and women today who like "*Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank.*"²⁸³ We need to be like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who were devoted and resolved to say, "*If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.*"²⁸⁴ We need to be like the Apostles who were devoted to "*prayer and to the ministry of the word.*"²⁸⁵

Have you ever wondered why Jesus did not entrust Himself to the many who believed in His name in John 2:23-25? It's because He knew their hearts and He knew they were not truly devoted. God knew Solomon was not devoted, that's why He came to him and warned him to follow David's footsteps. Unfortunately, Solomon willfully entered into sin. Through his direct disobedience he actually made null and void any resolve and any devotion that he may have had. As a result, the kingdom which his father David had previously ruled over was split apart—one man sins and generations and millions of people are affected. (Not much different from Adam and the original sin.)

282 Matthew 5:17-18; Luke 16:17

283 Daniel 1:8

284 Daniel 3:17-18

285 Acts 6:4

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other.”²⁸⁶

We need to learn from Solomon that if we are devoted to anything other than the God of the Bible, we will be devoted to a distraction. And when we are devoted to distraction(s) we begin a dangerous pattern of willful and ongoing sin. If this becomes us and we refuse godly repentance and we never truly return to the Lord, then know that we are to die—spiritually and eternally. If a person has truly been converted, then a *reality* of resolution and devotion to God will be evident. Although there maybe times of failure, the truly converted soul will overcome and put to death willful sin. True Christians are not to continually live in a condition that defies God’s declaration of sin and unrighteousness. Without true repentance we will be swallowed by deceptive, destructive and damning false heresies, false salvations and false justifications that are in direct enmity against God. Without our eyes fixed firmly upon the Savior, our eyes will shift to the ways of man.

Let me ask you, do you think that willful sin, that which you engage in with knowledge and a willing mind, is really a dangerous and vile thing against the Lord of Glory? Do you really believe and are you really convicted that your sin actually declares war against Almighty God? Do you really believe that your sin seeks to de-thrown Christ from the right hand of the Father and even seeks to become a *god* itself? Do you really believe that your sin, especially your willful disregard of God’s call to holiness, blasphemies the Holy Spirit? Let’s look for just a moment at what God has to say about willful sin.

In Psalm 19 David says this to the Lord, *“Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults. Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; Let them not rule over me; then I will be blameless, and I shall be acquitted of great transgression.”²⁸⁷* Here we see that David

286 Matthew 6:24; also see Luke 16:13

287 Psalm 19:12-13

is concerned about two types of sin: a sin of ignorance (hidden faults) and a sin of willful disregard and wanton arrogance (presumptuous sins) against God (vs. 12). Only after the *presumptuous* sins are no longer *ruler* does he say that he is *blameless* before God (vs. 13). This begs two questions: First, what does God say about willful sin? Second, what does God say about the person who uses grace as an excuse to continue on in willful sin? Read the Scriptures below and ask the Lord to reveal His truth to you.

First, what does God say about willful sin?

*“But the person who does anything defiantly, whether he is native or an alien, that one is blaspheming the LORD; and that person shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has despised the word of the LORD and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt will be on him.”*²⁸⁸

Second, what does God say about the person who uses grace as an excuse to continue on in willful sin?

*“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”*²⁸⁹

“For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, ‘Vengeance is Mine,

288 Numbers 15:30-31 (context all of chapter 15)

289 Romans 6:1-2

I will repay.’ And again, ‘The Lord will judge His people.’ It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.’²⁹⁰

If you profess to be a Christian and continue on in willful sin, taking pleasure in sin, you not only *blasphemy* the Lord, but you: Number one—*trample under foot the Son of God*; Number two—*regard as unclean the blood of the covenant*; Number three—*insult* (or outrage[ESV]) *the Spirit of grace*. Do not be deceived. Your justifications, your twisting of Scripture and your personal beliefs will not save you. If you remain living a life un-devoted, unresolved and wayward in the dirty garments of willful sin, then there no longer remains a sacrifice for your sins—eternal torment is in your future. No drop of water to cool your thirst. No smoke-break to relax. No end in sight. The only answer you will receive is, *‘never shall you see an end.’²⁹¹* Oh why would you remain in your arrogance, your pride, your denial of Christ, your mental delusion? Oh turn unto the God of glory. Seek Him. Run to Him. Never stop your pursuit of holiness. Put your fleshly-entertainment driven desires to death. Let your laughter be turned to mourning.²⁹² What is the *reality* that rules your life?

290 Hebrews 10:26-31(underline mine)

291 Thought owed to K.P. Yohannan—Gospel for Asia

292 James 4:8-10

“We have got to lay our lives down for the purposes of God. This is not a Sunday school picnic the Church of Jesus Christ. This is not an invitation to have continuous good times. This is a war for the souls of man. Come out from among them. Run for your life. Because, this is about your life. It’s not just about an opposing theology or conflicting view point on Jesus, this is about your life.

“We’re living in a generation when truth is falling into the streets. I want to be among those that are not running away from the conflict but running into the conflict, and say, ‘*Run for your life!*’

“Run from Gospels that focus only on success and prosperity. Run! Run from those that use the name of Christ only for their personal gain. Run from those that are picking your pocket in the name of Jesus. Run! Run from gospels that only focus on self-improvement. Run! Run from churches where men and not Christ are glorified. Run! Run! Body of Christ, run! Get out! Don’t touch the unclean things!

“Run from churches in American and Canada where there is no Bible, there’s no cost in its theology, there’s no souls searching word, there’s no repentance from sin, there’s no mention of the blood of Jesus. Run! Run from churches where you’re comfortable in your sins. If you come into the house of God, and you got sin in your life and you’re not convicted of it, you’re at a table of devils. Run from pulpits that are filled with political men who are using the pulpit of God for their personal political agenda. Run! Run from ungodly, spasmodic movements and empty, endless prophesying. Beloved Church, run for your life.”²⁹³

“Are the things you are living for worth Christ dying for?”

LEONARD RAVENHILL

293 Carter Conlon, message, “*Run for Your Life*,” www.sermonindex.net

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Realities of True Grace

Have you ever had the urge to run to God, not for the escaping of your personal discomfort of some sort, but for the reasons of His beauty, His worth, His infinite value, His loving kindness—because He is God? While true grace encompasses the giving of God’s unmerited favor and love, the washing clean of sin and the giving of deep joy, it also carries with it a *reality* of repentance, discipline, holiness, obedience and a growing desire to love God for who He is and not just for His gifts.

In this pampered day and age, grace has been cheapened into justification for godless lifestyles. When this *cheapened* grace has been mixed with worldly love, it is then used, and this ultimately against Christ Himself, to justify carnality and create a false sense of security over those who wish to remain living in their sin. I dare say, those practicing immorality and its ongoing vices, receive a false assurance and a false justification in a great number of ‘*churches*’

today. *Cheap grace*²⁹⁴ has and will condemn a great many preachers, church leaders and church members to hell when faced with the true workings of Christ on judgment day. Oh how great a danger it is to twist and even willfully deny any part of God’s Word—whether it is because of self-preservation, the accumulation of wealth, strategic growth plans or just a complete denial of Scripture—it will not matter on the day that the Judge of all the earth asks, “*What have you done with what I have given you?*” The *cheap* grace that exists today makes acceptance of Christ tolerable to carnal people because all sense of suffering, discipline and true repentance has been virtually removed.

“*Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I say?*”²⁹⁵

For the said reason above, let us briefly look at one of the most skipped over passages in relation to the true grace of Jesus Christ. Read below what Paul wrote to Titus and then ask yourself if this is being preached/taught at your church.

*“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.”*²⁹⁶

Here we must take heed. We must not too quickly pass over these verses. Let us take time to ask a few questions and rightly answer them as well.

294 A term first brought to light by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*. My usage here relates to a broader context, not just the removal of Christ and the cross in salvation by grace alone, but includes the justification of willful and ongoing sin by using grace as the means to continue in such sin.

295 Luke 6:46

296 Titus 2:11-14 (underline mine)

First, why has true grace appeared?

- a. To bring salvation to all men
- b. For instruction
 - a. To deny ungodliness
 - b. To deny worldly desires
 - c. To live sensibly, righteously and godly

Second, where does true grace cause us to look?

- a. For the blessed hope
- b. The appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior

Third, from where does true grace come and how did it come?

- a. From Christ Jesus
- b. From the giving up of Himself—propitiation upon the cross

Forth, what are the *realities* of true grace in the life of a believer?

- a. Redemption from lawless deeds
- b. Purification (holiness, sanctification) for Himself (Jesus Christ)
- c. A people (the true Church, the Bride) for His own possession—(a people devoted to Christ, His Word, His lordship)
- d. A zeal for doing the work of God—deeds that are honoring and glorifying to the Father.

True grace is about God pouring out His Son as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, thus guiding and instructing the true believer to joyfully live in such a way that defies culture and human design. True grace is about God and His glory. True grace is given, not by works or human earnings, but through perfect love and sovereignty. True grace came at a high price. True grace really redeems and perfectly

purifies a person unto God's own possession. True grace creates a zeal for the workings of God. The true grace of God destroys the arguing of Scripture and the self-justification to twist God's Word for the sake of sin and godless lifestyles. True grace results in a repentant heart whereby the process of sanctification begins and is continued lifelong. In light of God's grace, how then shall we live who died to sin?²⁹⁷ What sort of people ought we to be in holy conduct and godliness?²⁹⁸

“Beloved, while I was making every effort to write to you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”²⁹⁹

What shall we say then? Has not the free gift of God's grace come at a high cost? Most certainly! Jesus Christ became our propitiation at a time we most deserved everlasting torment. Although God's grace is indeed freely given and cannot be earned on any human merit, it is not without its just demands of those whom receive it. The true grace of God demanded that the Son suffer the just wrath as a penalty of our sin. The true grace of God results in the new creation of a sinner who receives His grace; thus through the complete changing of the mind in regards to how the new mind sees Jesus Christ as Lord, Savior and all encompassing truth. The true grace of God results, yet further, in the willing obedience of the newly converted life to lie down one's fleshly desires and to willingly, and joyfully, take the great name of Jesus Christ upon one's self even if persecution and suffering are the *realities* and promises that come with His great name.

297 Romans 6:2

298 2 Peter 3:11

299 Jude 3-4 (underline mine)

What shall we say now? If there is the true grace of God there also must be a *false* grace, a *cheap* grace, a grace that is not grace but an *imitation* grace. Indeed there is an *imitation* grace and it is being preached and being taught by a great many of professing Christians, especially in North America, but do not be fooled, it is not the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. This false *imposter* grace never calls a sinner to a full and true repentance; it does not cleanse a person of their filth; it does not make a person right with God; it leaves the sinner comfortable in sin; it blinds the eyes to God's call of holiness; it deceives and destroys and hardens the heart; it denies that humans are spiritually and eternally depraved. Those who preach *cheap* grace usually do so in such a way that obscures the totality of grace's attributes. Scriptures describing sacrifice, persecution, waking in holiness are never mentioned. These false prophets end up being much like *Balak* in his desired council and *Balaam* in his intended prophesy.³⁰⁰ For the sake of gain those preaching *cheap* grace leave a person deceived. People are left to wander in the *lusts*³⁰¹ of the flesh, especially into the urges of sexual immorality and the drive for prosperity; such people are left shielded under a false sense of humanistic morality. These false prophets and false teachers deny and inwardly hate the God of the Bible. Their view of Scripture and their denial to hold it in high view stands as a testimony to their shame. What a *cheapened-false* grace that these workers of *Balaam* bring upon the people. Let me assure you, their deception will not go unnoticed by the King of glory.

*“Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.”*³⁰²

300 Read Numbers 22-25:9, 31:8, 16; Deuteronomy 23:4-5; Joshua 13:22, 24:9-10; Nehemiah 13:2; Micah 6:5; 2 Peter 2:15; Jude 11; and Revelation 2:14 for full context about Balak and Balaam

301 *Lusts*—any sin that the flesh desires to have or carry out

302 1 Peter 2:11

*“The one who desires life, to love and see good days, must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. He must turn away from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and his ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”*³⁰³

Briefly speaking about true and false grace, we all, especially teachers and preachers, must take warning to strive against sin, against pride and against arrogance. You see grace is given to the humble.³⁰⁴ This is no small task and no small call. Pride encourages and even protects the workings of sin. Therefore, let us take heed to ask of ourselves, *“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”*³⁰⁵

Let us not exult our pride and justify our sinful desires any longer. Let us give all of our being—body, soul, mind, spirit, energy, and desires—unto God and His calling upon our life. If we refuse to live in such a way we are much like the rich man who did not want to give up his riches,³⁰⁶ like *Naaman*³⁰⁷ who did not want to give up everything and like *Ananias* and *Sapphira*³⁰⁸ who held back and lied to the apostles and the Holy Spirit. Their wickedness of heart was seen through their refusal to deny self, receive God’s true grace and submit all to the Lord of glory. A true reception of God’s free grace affects the one whom receives it; it results in the submission of all things to Christ’s lordship.

In John chapter two we have an interesting passage of Scripture that demands our attention. At the end of the chapter John says, *“Now when He (Jesus) was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He*

303 1 Peter 3:10-12

304 James 4:6

305 Romans 6:1-2

306 Matthew 19:16-30(22)

307 2 Kings 5:18

308 Acts 5:1-11

knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man."³⁰⁹ Have you ever stopped to ask yourself, "How is it that 'many believed in His name' and yet Jesus did not entrust Himself to them?" This question leads to another question, "How do I know that I am not one whom He has not entrusted Himself?" Take into account the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:21-23 and you have some verses that demand our strict attention and serious questioning.

If we have truly received God's grace through the person of Jesus Christ, then we must come to realize that to claim Christ on our own accord means absolutely nothing. We must continue further to ask, "Has Christ claimed me as His own or am I like the crowd in John? Like the rich man in Matthew? Like Naaman in 2 Kings? Like Ananias and Sapphira in Acts?"

*"Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance... Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries."*³¹⁰

Let us all take heed to the warnings of Scripture and especially those of us who teach. Take time to pray and ponder the verses below.

*"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves."*³¹¹

309 John 2:23-25

310 1 Peter 1:13-14 and 4:1-3

311 Matthew 23:15

*“Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that **repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name** to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.’”³¹²*

*“By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, **is a liar, and the truth is not in him.**”³¹³*

“Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God.”³¹⁴

Let us examine our claim and usage of grace. Let us not simply glance over Scripture so we can say that we have read the Bible in a year. What does this accomplishment really matter if we are left unchanged? As a good friend and brother in Christ has said, “Who cares if we go through the Bible in a year, but rather let the Word of God go through us.”³¹⁵ Let the inspired words of God through the prophet Jeremiah become a deep down *reality* to every single one of us. *“Thus says the Lord, ‘Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,’ declares the Lord.”³¹⁶*

312 Luke 24:45-47 (bold mine)

313 1 John 2:3-4 (bold mine)

314 1 Corinthians 3:18-19

315 Brother Brian Long, pastor Barnsdall Cornerstone Church

316 Jeremiah 9:23-24

“How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yield its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.”³¹⁷

CHAPTER TWELVE

Humility

“But to this one I will look, to him who is humble, and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.”³¹⁸

I am a man like all other men. I am sinful, self-seeking, self-preserving and fear what men think far too much—by the grace of God these things are a dying cause. I am deserving of eternal death. If I get really honest with myself I find that I intellectually understand the need for humility, yet I hardly understand just how badly I need increasing doses of humility on a daily basis. After all, in God’s economy, humility of heart is a major *reality* in the life of a true Christian—a day by day and minute by minute truth that must be truly evident.

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.”³¹⁹

To choose humility without the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit is fleshly, blinding, pride-feeding, damning and opposite of godly Christian humility. Humility that is conceived by mere decision

318 Isaiah 66:2b

319 Psalm 51:17

alone stems from humanism and is not the godly humility that the Bible describes. We need to engage our will in the path to becoming humble, although when convicted and subsequently affected by the Holy Spirit, it will be a full and lasting humility of heart. Godly humility is initiated through true conversion, grows in sanctification and is a maturing *reality* in the life of a true believer. Without Christ as the central point of humility, humanism will thrive to a prideful claim of a dead moral type of false humility.

*“I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.”*³²⁰

We need to turn, and this whole heartedly, towards God and plead for Him to break our sinful hearts, break our sinful desires and break our deep rooted works based mentality. We must cry out for God to pour His grace-filled and loving discipline into the darkest areas of our life. We need His revealing light and His empowerment of the Holy Spirit in order to live in true humility and true joy.

Not only does God look upon those who are contrite of heart and broken in spirit, He also says that we must humble ourselves.³²¹ Humility is continual process as a result of growing mature in Christ. We must strive to kill off our old nature and obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit. He knows the soul who truly desires such things. Brokenness, repentance, humility, joy—there is no smell sweeter in the growth of a believer.

Humility is not just a spiritual discipline, more so it is the necessary engraving of the Holy Spirit in the soul of the individual. Humility does not come naturally or easily to fallen man. Humility, true godly humility, only comes from the Father; although we must not forget our responsibility to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.³²² Just

320 Isaiah 57:15

321 James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:5-6

322 Philippians 2:12

as with a killing of the flesh, we must become active and responsible through the power of the Holy Spirit and a right walk with Christ in developing humility. We must strive to kill off the fleshly desires and become humbled by God's enduring grace. We most certainly are responsible for our obedience to the Holy Spirit—responsible in our thoughts, responsible in our willful spoken words and responsible for our disobedient behaviors. Brokenness, repentance and humility should always be at the root of an individual before engaging into serious ministry. Reaching out to others while living indulgent, pride-filled lives will do nothing but damn a lost soul to hell (although, in spite of our lifestyles and miss-guided evangelism, God still saves).

We must stop storing up treasures on this earth.³²³ We need to recognize and cast off our wants and rely upon God, in faith, for our needs. As Paul Washer has said, "*It would be better if some of us just left and got alone with God somewhere that no man could save us from His presence.*"³²⁴ This is so very true, especially of myself. Let me ask you, are you willing to actually do this? If you answer *yes*, then I ask you, when? If you never take action, then has not your heart deceived you? Don't you really mean *no*? If you think that you are a good person, a good Christian, or that humility is overrated and not *culturally relevant*, then you do not know God honoring humility. Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought.³²⁵ As I had mentioned, we must engage our will. You and I must come to a point in which we are resolved to carry out the action(s) (or even stillness as it is for some of us) where the Spirit has convicted us. Let me give you an example.

While writing the last few paragraphs herein, the Holy Spirit has reminded me and convicted me of my need for repentance and humility. Just last night I justified myself using tiredness as an excuse to embrace a shouting match with my closest sister in Christ—my wife. I now have to engage my will and humbly carry out the repentance

323 Matthew 6:19

324 *Taking the Message to the World*—True Church Conference 2009

325 Romans 12:3; 1 Corinthians 3:18, 10:12

process, in this case seeking forgiveness. Apologizing and seeking my wife's forgiveness is contrary to my flesh and strikes a blow to my pride. I must choose to die to myself and let the old nature be crucified.

The Spirit convicts me, yet I can still choose to disobey. The Spirit continues to convict me again and again and yet I can still disobey. If the Spirit really wants me to seek her forgiveness and empower me to be humble, then He can lay such a burden upon me that I must obey or be left with the feeling as if it were better to have not been born at all. I must engage my will in fulfilling the physical motions necessary to carrying out humility and obedience to the Spirit. On the other hand, the Spirit of God may honor my disobedience and leave me in my sin. This is a very dangerous place to be, and if left unchanged, may very well prove me unregenerate.

Now, I say the Spirit convicts me and desires for me to seek forgiveness, because if it were not for the Spirit's discipline of my sin, I would not know I had sinned. In this there is great joy and great assurance. God's discipline is ultimately to lead me to repentance and into a right relationship with Him and to seek His glory. He disciplines those whom He loves. I think that brother K.P.Yohannan says it very well when he says, "*The ultimate proof of my humility, your humility in life, is our willingness to experience death to ourselves. It never comes in 24 hours. It is a process.*"

Are you willing to engage into this process by God's grace? If so, then understand it starts this very day. It starts in the place of receiving the grace of God and humbly coming to the cross of Jesus Christ. Oh that you and I would walk in the *reality* of God's humble calling. Enter the narrow gate; stay the narrow path; joyously embrace His sanctification; remain focused; live steadfast; be humbled.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”

JOHN 12:24

*“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified
the flesh with its passions and desires.”*

GALATIANS 5:24

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Dark Days

“Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. For false christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance.”³²⁶

If the rampant sinning and persecutions of today are not bad enough, then hold on, because it will indeed get worse in the near future. Outward manifestations of sin and Christian hatred will soon be insurmountable such as the world has never seen. This will be accompanied by a great falling away. Much of this will occur, not from atheist and radical Muslims, but from those who believe they are Christians and attend so-called Christian churches; evidences of this unfolding are already a *reality* today.

There are so many Scriptural warnings concerning the great darkness of the days to come. Two areas pertaining to these days demand our attention. The first area revolves around understanding

326 Matthew 24:22,24-25

the seriousness and *reality* of hell. The second *reality* regards future unfolding and the out-pouring of false prophets upon the land (already a great outbreak has occurred). The *reality* for the truly converted believer should not be that of fearing the dark days to come, rather the practice of discernment, awareness of godly obedience and a love for the things of God ought to be in the forefront of those seeking to please their Lord. Remember, even though there is a great falling away, God will still save a multitude of people. Let us first consider Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus as it pertains to the *reality* of hell.

*“Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man’s table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.’ And he said, ‘Then I beg of you, father, that you send him to my father’s house—for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’ But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ But he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ But he said to him, **‘If they do not listen to Moses***

and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.³²⁷

The *reality* of a “*great chasm*,” a “*place of torment*,” is very much portrayed in Jesus’ parable here in Luke. Notice that this place is irreversible—those who cross over the chasm never come back. This is the second death—the final death and eternal torment for those who have rebelled against God.

How many of us are like the rich man? Compared to having nothing, rich is having anything more than you need. In our society today, we have almost everything we want—this goes far beyond the basic human needs—food, water, clothing and shelter. There are suffering, starving, persecuted and physically destitute people all across the world, and yet so few people even care to give and even fewer are in true prayer for the forgotten humans living in squalor.

K.P. Yohannan, founder of Gospel for Asia, sums up the *reality* of hell in his classic message, “*Christ’s Call*.” He says, “Hell is forever. And after ten billion, trillion years, those in hell will scream, saying, ‘*I want to die, I want to die*.’ That’s all—not even for a drop of water. They just want to die. And the answer will come again and again and again, ‘*You shall never die. You will never die*.’ That is the fate of multiplied billions on planet earth.”³²⁸ A strong statement but nonetheless one that is true. Hell is very much a *reality* and the days to come will grow considerable darker as the judgment hour approaches. May we take heed and act in such a way that we lay down all of our fleshly concerns and pick up a genuine love for all people.

As we read the Scriptures that relate to the dark days ahead, we must take careful notice as to what a false prophet looks like and how they act. We must be wise and careful to examine the messages that are being taught and preached in our day. We must be courageous and bold to recognize and even stand against false Christian teaching. We

327 Luke 9:19-31 (bold mine)

328 KP Yohannan—message: *Christ’s Call*

must be wise in the Scriptures. We must begin by making sure that we ourselves are truly what we claim and that the new birth of Jesus Christ has been granted to us.

I feel that I must let the Scriptures concerning false prophets and the dark days to come be presented to you without comment. I highly suggest that you dig into these verses for yourself, especially in regards to the overall context. Although I do not present the entire realm of Scriptures as to this topic, I believe it will be sufficient for you to begin a study on your own. Following these passages, I will follow up with a few considerations that will challenge you to apply what you have read to your life. I pray that the Spirit of the living God will speak His Word to you.

“But evil men and imposters will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.”³²⁹

“But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.”³³⁰

“But realize 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; Avoid such men as these. For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved

329 2 Timothy 3:13

330 1 Timothy 4:1-3

mind, rejected in regard to the faith. But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Janne's and Jambres's folly was also."³³¹

*"But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep."*³³²

"Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord. But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you, having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, for a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet. These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse

331 2 Timothy 3:1-9

332 2 Peter 2:1-3

*than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, 'A dog returns to its own vomit,' and, 'A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.'"*³³³

*"Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. For the mystery of the lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring an end by the appearance of His coming; 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 deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness."*³³⁴

"Therefore behold, I am against the prophets," declares the Lord, 'who use their tongues and declare "The Lord declares." Behold, I am against those who have prophesied false dreams,' declares the Lord, 'and related them and led My people astray by their falsehoods and reckless boasting; yet I did not send them or command them,

333 2 Peter 2:10b-22

334 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

nor do they furnish this people the slightest benefit,' declares the Lord."³³⁵

*"Alas, you who are longing for the day of the Lord, for what purpose will the day of the Lord be for you? It will be darkness and not light; as when a man flees from a lion and a bear meets him, or goes home, leans his hand against the wall and a snake bites him. Will not the day of the Lord be darkness instead of light, even gloom with no brightness in it? I hate, I reject your festivals, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; and I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fattings. Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."*³³⁶

*"Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing."*³³⁷

335 Jeremiah 23:30-32

336 Amos 5:18-24

337 1 Thessalonians 5:1-22

*“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.”*³³⁸

*“The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.”*³³⁹

*“Knowing this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.’ For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, **what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!**”*³⁴⁰

In light of these verses how should we then act?

338 1 John 4:1

339 1 Peter 4:7-8

340 2 Peter 3:3-12—bold mine

“But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason it says, ‘Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’ Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.”³⁴¹

CONSIDERATIONS

- » Do not justify your sinfulness and avoid the Word of God.
- » Do not give justification for a false prophet because he or she ‘looks’ like a good person outwardly in the flesh.

341 Ephesians 5:3-21

- » When sin is not preached against, it is secretly and wickedly favored deep within the heart.
- » You will not see nor admit the truth about your sin when you treasure your sin greater than the Word of God.
- » You will not do what God wants you to do without a view of eternity at the forefront of your thought life.
- » Do not forsake true fellowship. But realize that going to a building one day a week and sitting in a chair while listening to someone speak does not constitute true fellowship.
- » Get alone with God. Are you really seeking for God and wanting to know your place in His economy?

Hindus practice their religion in the fear of their gods. Muslims train to die for their Koran and to forward their cause. Wiccans and Satan worshipers send false sheep among Christian churches to destroy God's bride. And yet the professing church, especially the church in North America, sleeps. As a friend of mine has said on numerous occasions, "*When are we professing Christians going to become more radical for Christ than all of Hell's army is for their wickedness? He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world.*"³⁴² If we are not living for Christ and reaching out to the lost, sick, starving, hurting, persecuted people of the world, then it would be better for us that we never took the name of Christ upon ourselves. For on judgment day it would have been better if we had not been born. We must break the cycle of living in self-sustenance and calling it a pure religion.

As we come to the close of this book, I want to turn our attention to one of the worst areas of depravity and sin, at least in my eyes, in existence and growing at an unbelievable rate around the entire world, even here in America. It is called, human trafficking.

342 Thought owed to Frank Duran, Carlsbad, NM

“Human trafficking is one of the fastest-growing criminal enterprises in the world today, soon to surpass the drug trade.

- » 2.5 million people around the world are in forced labor at any given time as a result of trafficking.
- » More than half of trafficking victims are from Asia and the Pacific.
- » Every year, an estimated 1.2 million children become victims of trafficking.
- » Nepali women and girls, some as young as 9 years old, are sold into India’s red-light district—10,000 to 15,000 per year.
- » Sri Lanka is touted as a pedophile’s paradise, with up to 40,000 child prostitutes—mostly boys—trafficked to serve tourists.
- » 300,000 children worldwide are currently trafficked as child soldiers.”³⁴³
- » Prevalence of trafficking victims in the world: 1.8 per 1,000 inhabitants.
- » Prevalence of trafficking victims in Asia and the Pacific: 3 per 1,000 inhabitants.³⁴⁴

How can we not see the *realities* of this? How can we not speak out against this? How can we not help even the one person? Would your views change if it were your child being sold into sex slavery?

Indeed the sins of the world are great. We must all reach out to help at least one. Whether it is someone local, someone far away, someone homeless, someone addicted, someone persecuted overseas, we are all called by God to reach at least one person. We must deal

343 *No Longer a Slumdog*, K.P. Yohannan, Gospel for Asia, 2011, pg. 156

344 <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/142979.pdf>

with the sin in our own hearts, be dedicated and resolved in prayer and respond in love. Without coming to grips with our own sin and realizing that Satan is just around the corner desiring to claim lost souls, then what drive will we have to see the lost saved, the false prophets exposed and the suffering aided? Has the love of Christ truly been shed abroad in our hearts as we may claim? Following Christ is not a life of promised prosperity and fame, rather a life of surrender, suffering, anguish, and persecution for living godly, and yet, full of love, peace, contentment and true joy.

“Oh bless me Lord, bless me Lord”

You know it’s all I ever hear

No one aches, no one hurts

No one even sheds one tear³⁴⁵

345 Asleep in the Light—Keith Green

CLOSING THOUGHTS

As we come to a close, there is one overwhelming *reality* we must remember—“*God is love!*”³⁴⁶ He is not just loving, no *He is love!* For the *true* believer, nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.³⁴⁷ God is holy and all His incredible attributes come flowing out of His holiness. Oh how we should take heart and be joyously thankful (and this all of our days) for His longsuffering, His mercies and His incredible patience. Believer, remember this, God breaks a person down for their eternal good and purification. He does not leave a true believer broken. He always knows how to wield the sword of the Spirit and how to be the healing Physician. He knows how to weed the garden and leave the fruit. He knows the difference between the dried up chaff needing burned and what is ripe for harvest. There is a true and everlasting joy found in Jesus Christ, the Lord and Savior of the world—Immanuel—*God with us.*

“But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying

346 1 John 4:16

347 Romans 8:39

to you, 'In the last time there will be mockers, following after their won ungodly lusts.' These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh."³⁴⁸

The love of God is the central theme of the cross, the backing drive of grace and why the Christ was given up for us. If it were not for God's incredible love, we would not have forgiveness and life everlasting. May we learn to love as Christ loves—sacrificially dying to our desires and lay down our lives for the purposes of God and the benefit of our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God."³⁴⁹

348 Jude 17-23

349 Acts 20:24

“You can give without loving, but you
cannot love without giving.”³⁵⁰

350 Amy Carmichael—“*No Longer a Slumdog*”—Gospel for Asia, K.P. Yohannan,
2011

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father,
May only Your name be hallowed and exalted on high!
Oh that your Son would be glorified by all mankind.
May Your Spirit be praised and obeyed in this dark hour.

Oh Lord,
I ask that all who read this book will be edified
and built up in the name of Your Son.
Those who have not been broken, break them.
Those who have been broken, restore them.
Raise Your bride up in holiness and dress her for the wedding day.

In regards to the Bride of Christ and the house of God...
To hell with eloquence of speech.
To hell with *relevance* and looks.
To hell with *seeker sensitive* and *culture driven tolerance*.
To hell with *entertainment*.
To hell with dead religiosity.

To hell with *man's* theological genius.
To hell with humanistic morality.

Oh Lord,
Bring back preachers led by the Holy Spirit in
power and demonstration of the Spirit.
Bring back the power of God in the
conviction of sin from the pulpit.
Bring back a holy reverence and fear of God.
Bring back a Scriptural stance backed by the power of the
Spirit that actually leads people into lifestyles of piety.
Bring back a revival of souls by the millions
who are holy devoted unto death.
Bring back a mourning and anguish for lost souls in the church.
Bring back Christ as our All in all, our King of kings, our
Lord of lords and our Rock of offense.

*“Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.”³⁵¹ Oh Lord, that this may be a true *reality* of myself; and thus, all the days of my life.*

AMEN.

351 1 Corinthians 9:25-27

*“Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning,
let him know them, but transgressors will stumble in them.”*

~ HOSEA 14:9 ~

“I love those that thunder out the Word. The Christian world is in a deep sleep. Nothing but a loud voice can awaken them out of it. Had we a thousand hands and tongues, there is employment enough for them all: people everywhere ready to perish for lack of knowledge. As the Lord has been pleased to reveal His dear Son in us, oh let us stir up that gift of God, and with all boldness preach Him to others.”

~ GEORGE WHITEFIELD ~

YESTERDAY

Once upon a time, only 12 years ago, was as if it were only yesterday. I remember how I used to feel. Anger and pride filled my heart—but I was well liked. Justification for my lifestyle and my bad decisions were available in bucket loads—and I was well liked. Alcohol was a friend to the loneliness, bitterness, selfishness and quiet depression—and I had plenty of friends—for I was well liked. My speech was crude and my bigotry was obvious—but I was still well liked. Religion was merely a thing believed and something acted out—yet then I was still well liked. In all my previous times of going to church, if and when I ever did, I was nothing more than a hypocrite at best—yet, again, I was well liked. Sex was an emotional high and a physical pleasure—yet still, I was well liked. Smoking gave me an excuse to take a break—and I was still well liked. Lack of discipline in my life was seen as a going with the times and living with the culture—and I was surely well liked. Even though I knew that there was more to life—I was well liked.

But then...

One day, while not looking for it, the living truth flooded my life. My mind was changed in an instant. What was once foggy now became clear. My anger and pride began to diminish—then everyone thought I had a problem. My lifestyle and my decisions were now weighed against what would honor God—and everyone thought that I was now boring and out of my mind. Alcohol became my enemy and my loneliness, bitterness, selfishness and quiet depression turned into comfort, gladness of heart, love for others and deep inexpressible joy—my friends disappeared into thin air and I was viewed as being *too good* for others. My speech became full of passion for God, my cursing went wayside and I saw all people as people God had created—yet it was said that I was a judgmental bigot. My time with church members now was spent in true fellowship and concern for the lost—yet everyone labeled me a hypocrite because I was not perfect (even though they themselves are not perfect). Sex was put on hold until marriage—yet I was called a liar. Smoking indeed died to me—yet I was told that I was legalistic. Christian discipline was now cherished and that for the sake of my Lord and Savior—but now I was no longer liked and told that it does not matter. I began to truly experience new life, a life that was worth living for and a Lord worth dying for—yet I was no longer liked by those who liked me before.

What happened?

Simple.

I was born again to the living hope, granted new life, through the precious blood and propitiation of Jesus Christ. I was crucified in my sins and given a new heart, a changed heart, a heart that now felt, a heart that now was free from sin's stronghold and bondage. I was given a deep down joy that could never have been received nor found in my selfish ways and human way of thinking. My hope was now built upon the Rock of offense instead of my untrusting and untruthful beliefs. The God of old, the God of hope, the God of all

truth extended forth His grace and unmasked my eyes to experience His precious worth and to see my wretched state. Praise God that yesterday is gone. For I live today and I have a great assurance of tomorrow for I know that my blessed hope lives and has defeated the grave. More than anything, I was adopted as a true child of God and given the privileged promise of being persecuted by the carnal.

I ask...

If Christ is not the truth, then why are people so angered by the mere mentioning of His name? If He is not real, then why establish all the evidence against Him? If He does not exist, then why become set against disproving nothing? If He is real, then what is there to lose?

Professing Christian, have you truly been given a living hope? Given deep inexpressible joy? A new heart whereby your mind has been changed to see sin for what it is and see the holy radiance of God? If not, then know that His promise still stands today. But do not delay—for His longsuffering (patience) will not last forever. Why be troubled any longer?

For maybe this is the day that becomes your yesterday as Jesus Christ sets you on the path to life and life abundant.

Never let the world break in,
Fix a mighty gulf between;
Keep me humble and unknown,
Prized and loved by God alone

~ E.M. BOUNDS ~

“Borrow as much time as you can for communication with God, and communing with your own hearts in secret. If such as you can find no time, or spare but little for this work, who then may? Labour to get a greater mastery of your estate and love of the world, that you may be able to command if for God; ever counting a large heart a mercy greater than a large purse.”³⁵²

~ WILLIAM GURNALL ~

352 William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour*, pg 6, second printing 2010, original 1865

“Realities of a True Christian is a book in the line of many others that have come out recently, that give a clarion call to the professing church with the message of true salvation. Many a church member will do well to test their lives according to some of these things written. May our Christian lives excel in the area of piety by the careful reading of this needful book.”

— Greg Gordon, founder of SermonIndex.net

Realities of a True Christian encourages professing Christians of all ages to walk in godliness, humility of heart, holiness, and piety in life. Many people will come professing Jesus Christ at the final hour, but many will be cast off forever. With such pressing truths upon the professing believer, author Jeremy Strang calls for personal examination and continual sanctification deep within one's soul. Jeremy's clarion call brings to light realities of Christian conversion and the resulting affects of Christ's work of grace in the true believer.

Whether you desire to grow in your walk with Christ or to simply learn more about the realities of biblical Christianity, this book is for you. No grey areas. No fiction. No superficiality. All proceeds benefit Gospel for Asia.

Who knows the true depth of their sin against God? I am thankful to God that I can earnestly say, “I stand in a heap of sin so insurmountable that if it were not for the grace of Jesus Christ and His propitiation, I would forever be undone by my atrocities against the Lord my God.”

Jeremy Strang is Christian, husband, and father. In his new book, *Realities of a True Christian*, he brings to light Christian truths of decades past. Jeremy is married with five children; assists his wife with homeschooling; serves with Gospel for Asia; is active with his home church in Barnsdall/Bartlesville, Oklahoma; continues to develop www.Time2Stand.com; and works full-time in the medical imaging field.