

Jesus only

THE LAMB
WHO WAS SLAIN
HAS BEGUN
HIS REIGN



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A PRAYER

My omnipotent Lord, enable me to do what, apart from Thy enabling, is impossible. Yet since it is Thy will I can ask in the utmost confidence. I would be detached from everything that would hinder me, and therefore hinder Thee, in the accomplishment of Thy purpose. Let me be willing that Self should be completely dethroned in my life. When I have sometimes thought the victory was won, I have found to my humiliation that I was still in bondage to my old enemy. He is too strong and subtle for me. Do Thou, therefore, cleanse the temple of my being as Thou didst in the days of Thy flesh. Drive out all the buyers and sellers, and make my heart a house of prayer. Teach me the life of absolute dependence upon Thee. I am so prone to creaturely activity and creaturely self-assertion. I have so often failed to realize that apart from Thee I can do nothing. My Master, lead me to Thy door. Pierce this now willing ear once more. Thy bonds are freedom, let me stay With thee, to toil, endure, obey.

May I show my devotion to Thee by my love of Thy Word, and by my glad and quick obedience to Thy sayings. May I never pick and choose among Thy commands, but regard every Word of Thine as binding upon me. To this end help me patiently and diligently to study Thy precepts; to be as glad to come to Thee for law as for life; and to remember that Thy commandments are not grievous.

Let me never through carelessness or self-indulgence be disapproved; but, submitting to the discipline of the Holy Spirit, may I lay aside every weight; run the heavenly race; and at last finish the course and win the crown. I ask this in the Name of Jesus my Savior and King.

Amen

(author unknown)

CHAPTER 1 - JESUS ONLY

"And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only." (Matthew 17:8)

If Satan cannot discredit Jesus in your eyes and make him appear to you as a madman or a fool, a myth or a legend, he'll do the next best thing: he'll let you have Jesus, but he will try to mix your faith in Jesus with faith in two or three other things as well.

You're still thinking of yourself as a strong disciple and you're impatient with these so-called Christians who aren't serious. But in the temple of your own heart it is no longer Jesus alone on the throne, ruling without rival. It's Jesus side-by-side with your pet doctrine... Jesus side-by-side with your favorite thing about the Holy Spirit.... Jesus side-by-side with your advanced view of the church. It might even be Jesus side-by-side with your wife and kids, or your reputation or your bankbook. And when you have Jesus side-by-side with something else, you don't really have Jesus at all... you have an idol...an image, an idea, a memory of Jesus.... not the real, living, blazing, glorious Son of God. Because Jesus does not stay in the throne room of any heart unless he occupies the throne alone.

This is why so many churchmen who know so much about so many things are so hopelessly ignorant of the one thing that matters: Jesus himself. Jesus is not on the throne within them. They have his picture hanging on a wall... they have his statue standing in a corner. But the living Christ they do not know...they have too many other things on their minds.

"I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other. Nor my praise to graven images."
Isaiah 42:8

When we talk about Jesus we're not talking about a mere prophet. We are not talking about some genius among men. We're talking about God the Son in human flesh, by whom the worlds were made.... the Holy One. You don't put him side-by-side with anyone. He is above all. If the Son of God is going to sit on the throne of your heart and stay there, you don't make him take turns with other things that are precious to you. You don't put two or three idols up there with him. It's Jesus only, or no Jesus at all.

"Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him."
Philippians 3:8

This mixing of other things besides Jesus in our hearts happens so subtly that we don't even realize what we're doing. We keep saying he's Number One. But we're not living that way. Like the man who tells himself that the only reason he spends every waking hour making money is for his family... "It's not for myself. It's for you, my wife, and you, my dear children." And all the while his family is rotting and falling apart. It has no father. The old man is too busy making money. That man doesn't love his family... he loves his money.

In the same way we say, "But Lord, the reason I'm doing these things is for you. It's for your honor and glory, Lord," when all the time we're busy seeking our own glory. Just let someone try to take some of that glory away from us and we fly into a rage.

If there was any lesson the Father was teaching Peter, James and John that day on the mountain, it was that they have to learn to keep their eyes on Jesus only... tune their ears to hear him as their only Lord. These men had been brought up on Moses and the prophets. But now they were walking with the incarnate Son of God, who was infinitely higher than any prophet or priest or lawgiver or angel.

"Look away from all else. Silence your own thoughts and opinions and listen to my Son."

If the reader of this booklet would only do that, what a change would come over their life!

"And he was transfigured before them and his face shone as the sun and his raiment became white as light. And there appeared to them Moses and Elijah talking with him." Matthew 17:2-3

Moses and Elijah were not Jesus' peers they were his servants. Jesus was their Messiah. He was their God! Every mighty work Moses or Elijah ever did was done by his Spirit. They saw his light from afar and worshiped it.

Peter should have known this. A few days back Peter had said, ***"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!" Matthew 16:16*** "You're the Messiah! God the Son!"

But Peter is so thrilled to see Moses and Elijah that he forgets. Now he wants to make three booths,

"One for you, Lord, of course, and one for Moses and one for Elijah!"

Moses and Elijah do not belong up there on the same level with their Lord. Nobody else belongs up there.... Peter's chatter is interrupted by a bright cloud

coming over them.... the Father's glory. Out of the cloud a voice,

"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

Listen to him!"

When the disciples heard this they fell on their faces and were filled with awe. But Jesus came and touched them saying, "Rise, have no fear." And when they lifted up their eyes they saw no one but Jesus only.

Matthew

17:5-6

....Jesus only ... that's how it has to be.

1. Jesus only as the source of our life.

"He that hath the Son hath life. He that hath not the Son hath not life." I

John 5:12

Not the Son plus Moses and Elijah, or Martin Luther and Reinhold Niebur... only the Son.

"I am the vine.... you are the branches." John 15:5

"Go ahead and read books. Go out into that world and feel those winds that lash against you and those flames that lick at your heels. Learn... observe. But remember that your life comes from none of these things. Your life comes from me."

In him is life and that life is the light of men. John 1:14

If you're dead inside, and some of those who will be reading this are dead inside, draw near to him. You've tried everything else and you're still dead. Now leave all that behind. Your vitamin pills, your whiskey bottle, your hormone shots, your health club.... these things do not give life.

"If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink." John 7:37

Call on that blessed name. Open your dried up heart and invite him to ascend the throne as its only Lord, and Jesus will visit you this day with life. It will be like being raised from the dead. It will be like coming out of a dark cave into blazing daylight. And that life will continue within you forever ... as long as it's Jesus only on the throne within.

2. Learn to see Jesus only in the scriptures.

"You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life;

and it is they that bear witness to me." John 5:39

The light that shines in the face of every man and woman of God from Genesis to Revelation is the light of the Christ. It was the light of Jesus that shone in the face of Melchizedek when he met Abraham returning from the battle of the Kings. It was the light of Jesus shining from Moses when he came down from Sinai. Jesus wrote the Psalms with David's pen. Nine hundred years before Calvary, the scene was already described in Psalm 22.

Israel's Messiah walked with Israel every step of the wilderness journey, brought the people into the Promised Land, suffered with them in Babylonian captivity, came to them in flesh and blood, died for them. There is not a page of the Book where you don't find the marks of Jesus... look for him there and you will find him.

3. Learn that Jesus only is the door of prayer.

"I am the way, the, truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me."
John 14:6

What claim do you have on the Father? What right do you have to expect God to do anything for you but through the shed blood of his beloved Son? Can you say, "God, I've lived a good life ... you've got to hear my prayer!" "God, I belong to a good Bible-believing church, you must answer me!" "God, look at these great big tears ... come on, soften.... give me a break!"

A million prayers an hour bounce off heaven and fall to the earth like spent arrows, because they were prayed by smug, proud, self-righteous hearts. "Look at me, God, I deserve your attention." "I thank thee that I am not as other men are." "I'm something special."

The only prayers that go through are the prayers of broken contrite hearts. Prayers of people who know they are not worthy of even a crumb. So the Lamb of God takes those prayers in his scarred hands, hands that have paid the price, and lifts them up to the Father.

"God, be merciful to me a sinner!" Luke 18:13

"Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee." Luke 15:18

... these prayers always find their way up.

The Lamb of God catches them and sends them on through. "Father, don't look at my life, look at the cross of my Lord. Hear and answer."

"O God, in the name of Jesus fill me with the Spirit.".... And it is done.

Not Jesus and your wife.... not Jesus and your child.... not Jesus and your boss....
not Jesus and your money.... Jesus only.

"I am crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."
Galatians 2:20

He is not a Sunday morning Jesus, or a five-minutes-a-day Jesus. He goes with you wherever you go. He cares about every problem you face.

He is Lord of the dinner table, the marriage bed, the shop, office, store, school. He is Lord of the streets and alleys.

So you do your work and you do it well. You love your child.... you love your wife.... you eat your daily bread. But you do it all in His name. He's there making it all into a new thing.

"Whatever you do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." ***Colossians 3:17***

Acknowledge him as Lord of your practical daily living when things go well and when they go badly.... when they are boring and slow and dry. He's there with you. He's instructing you, teaching you, guiding you with his eye.

"And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only."
Matthew 17:8

And from that day they started to train their hearts to see no one but Jesus only, until they began to see the whole world through his eyes, and to love those wandering souls with his love and touch them with his healing.

May God do the same for us. May he cover us with that bright cloud and speak to us even this day and bring us to repentance. And when we lift up our eyes may we see no one but Jesus.... wherever we go, as long as we live, until he comes.... that we, reflecting as mirrors the glory that we see in him, may be changed into his likeness.... forever.

CHAPTER 2 - HIS DIRECTION

"But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life..... "Luke 21:34

In the Body of Christ we make clear to everybody that the door is wide open. You don't have to be respectable or sinless or middle class before you are welcome. Many a man has come into our fellowship drunk. Many a man who has shed blood, many a woman with a bad conscience, many a young person mixed up in filth to his neck comes among us looking for something that might help.

The wider we can open the door to people who are staggering and falling and failing, the warmer the welcome we can give to those whose minds are seared and whose consciences are sick and who are looking for healing, the better it's going to be. The Son of Man did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.... he came to seek and to save that which was lost. The whole purpose of the church's existence is to bring healing to broken lives. Our Christ is not suspended out of reach between heaven and earth. Our Christ is here, and with the power of his own shed blood he heals the sick conscience and the sick mind and the sick life and even the sick body. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon him because he has anointed him to preach good news to the poor... sent him to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind ... to set at liberty those who are oppressed.

Each of us is living evidence of how this Christ can take something which is twisted, filthy, already ruined, and cleanse it. There is not one life too vile or too sick for him to heal it.... if it wants to be healed.

Open the door wide and tell them to come in!

"Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.... If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink!" Matthew 11:28 John 7:37

Nor do we rush anybody or force anybody or twist anyone's arm. A troubled soul may wish to sit and listen for a long time ... to stand on the edge of the crowd and wrestle with himself for months, or even years.

We're prepared to wait for a man to make up his own mind to surrender himself into the hands of the Son of God rather than to tamper with this choice which has to be his alone.

Come and listen.... come and think it over ... don't rush take your time. Make

sure you know what you're doing. But once you come to the place where you commit yourself of your own free will to Jesus Christ, and he reaches out and receives you ... forgives your sins ... heals your life, then those wide open doors through which you came out of the world of filth click shut. And he says to you, "Now my child, that's over... it's forgiven and it's over ... you don't go back that way again.... you go **this** way."

Once you've committed yourself to Jesus Christ and you then go back to the life you lived before, you're in for trouble. If you're too stupid to listen to what your conscience is telling you, you'll be told in other ways. And if you're too vain to listen to these warnings, the life of God in you will quickly begin to dry up until there's nothing left. You'll find yourself wandering around in a wilderness of divine judgment unlike anything you ever knew in those days before you came to faith.

When the man who was cleansed of a demon failed to go on with the God who cleansed him, to fill his life with the Spirit of God and walk in the way of God, that demon came back. And it didn't come alone. It brought seven companions and the last state of that man was worse than the first.

Too many of us have failed to understand that the God, who is so completely merciful with the sinner who comes to him, becomes exacting when that man commits himself to Christ. Now the sins, which he so freely covered with the blood of his Son, become forbidden territory.

"Take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the cares of this life."

"Be sure of this, that no immoral or impure man, or one who is covetous, has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God." Ephesians 5:5

We're not going to become perfect overnight. We're going to stumble and make mistakes. But there are three things the Spirit of God won't put up With in a believer: dissipation, drunkenness and abandonment to the cares of this life.... or as Paul puts it: immorality, impurity and covetousness. There are few of us who are not touched by one or two or all three of these things. This is why we have such a low output, so little fruit ... why we live such shaky, unsteady lives. We let ourselves get weighed down with these things which we should long since have let go of.

I. Dissipation is when you compromise your body, however you do it....

whether you do it sexually or homosexually, or whether you do it by carousing and running it down with all kinds of nonsense. Maybe you lived like that before, and if you did, it's forgiven. But now that you've committed yourself to Jesus

Christ, your body doesn't belong to you any more.... it belongs to God. It is a holy vessel, and if you desecrate that holy vessel you will answer to God.

If you're married under God your body belongs to your husband or to your wife, as the case may be, and to no one else! Don't come around with this "new morality" garbage. The new morality people have no conception of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. They're blind men trying to lead the blind. Once you're a disciple, if you take your body and link it with any other human being under the sun except your spouse, you are driving God out of your life!

There may be people reading this who have committed themselves to Jesus Christ, and now you're compromising your body. You're desecrating that temple of God.... and you're telling yourself it really doesn't matter that much. "God understands my physical needs.... I'm not really hurting anybody," etc. I'm telling you, in the name of the living Christ, that you're destroying yourself. Once you give your body to God and then turn around and compromise it, you're destroying yourself.

2. Drunkenness is when you compromise your mind. The trouble with tossing down one highball after another is not what it does to your stomach, but what it does to your mind. Your mind lifts off the ground, it loses touch with reality. It gets beyond your control and becomes the target for every devilish influence that comes down the pike. And, by the way, it's not just alcohol that makes people drunk. There are a thousand ways to compromise your mind ... not just by hyping yourself up on pills, or floating into happy land with grass. You can quite easily make yourself drunk with your own favorite self-enchanted thoughts about your power, your intelligence, your athletic skill, your sexual prowess, your beauty or your importance.

However you do it, when you turn your back on reality and start compromising your mind, you drive the Spirit of God out of it, and all balance and reason goes. You may have the I.Q. of a genius, but you're thinking like a fool.

When you committed yourself to Christ you gave him your mind. You turned it away from all the earth-bound vanities with which it had once been drunk, and fixed it on him until the cool, refreshing water of his Spirit bathed it clean and free and you could think clearly. You could see for the first time what life is all about. Now you turn around and compromise it. Your mind has become impure and in that impure mind the virus of your old life returns and grows with a vengeance until the very thought of God seems the most impossible thing in the world.

3. The cares of this life.... when the cares of this life start weighing you down, it's a sign that you've **compromised your heart**.

When you became a disciple, Jesus became your Lord. You put your trust in

nothing in this world but him. His light came on and it guided you. He said, "Walk with me and **everything** you need will be provided".... **everything** you need. You believed him and it was so. But then, ever so subtly, you began to compromise your heart. You began worrying about money.... not bringing your need to your Master and asking and trusting. You worried because you set your heart on money like no disciple of Christ has any business setting his heart on money. You began scheming to acquire this and get that, to get this and have that, until your heart was so tangled up in the fever of getting and holding and getting some more that Christ and his kingdom were dwarfed beside your booming schemes and all the cares that came with them.

So, the Spirit of Christ withdrew.... no man can serve two masters. You cannot serve God and mammon. If you want idols, have your idols.... but you can't have God too.

Before you take another trip to the altar to commune with Jesus Christ, make up your mind what you're going to do about this half-baked, compromised, immoral, impure or covetous life you've been living. If you intend to go on living that life, don't make a mockery of the Lord's Supper. Don't eat and drink judgment upon yourself. Commune at his table only if you seriously intend to walk with Jesus Christ. For God who is infinitely gracious to every sinner that comes to him expects that person, after he has turned, to walk a new way. The same God who, in his mercy, shows his love to the penitent sinner, is quite capable of showing his wrath to the phony saint.

There's work to be done.... and it's going to be done. But it will be done only by those whose bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, whose minds are clear, and whose hearts are single ... fixed upon Jesus only.

CHAPTER 3 - HIS WAY

"Lord, I want you to know that I really appreciate what you're doing. I think it's wonderful ... all these people getting healed.... men who were nothing but drunken bums getting born again.... women who were an offense to every decent, respectable citizen now completely transformed."

"Lord, I've listened to quite a few of your sermons, as you know, and I can truthfully say that I have never heard anyone speak like you speak. I tell you it's been a blessing ... the greatest blessing of my life."

"But Lord, I'm afraid you don't quite understand my situation when you tell me to forsake my present life and become one of your disciples. First of all, I'm doing a lot of good right where I am. I hope you won't think I'm bragging when I say that I've been a stabilizing influence in this community. The pastor of my church not only depends upon me for financial support, but he uses me quite often for a sounding board to test his own thinking."

"Besides Lord, I have family responsibilities. I know you haven't told me to give up my job, but do you really think I could hold down that job and be a disciple too?"

"Really Lord, I've thought it all over and I can't see how I could possibly, at this stage in my life, pull up my roots and throw in my lot 100% with you."

"Why can't I just be an associate disciple? a patron.... a supporter. I'll help you out financially when you and the disciples come to town. If you ever have any trouble with the law I'll put in a word for you with the magistrate I have a bit of influence you know which I would surely lose if I sold out and went along with you."

"You and Peter and John can stay in my guest rooms any time you come this way.... just don't bring Levi, we never did get along.... or Bartholomew.... his skin is a little dark and the neighbors might not understand."

"I'm sure Lord, that this way I'll really be able to do a lot more good than if I were to leave my present life and follow you all the way."

"Lord, what's the matter?"

"Lord, come back. Perhaps I haven't made myself clear."

"Lord, dinner's almost ready.... please come back and at least have dinner with me before you go."

"Lord Lord! ... I'll send you a check. It will be waiting for you when you get to Capernaum."

How many houses there are in your town where Jesus once sat at the table, where his hands blessed the little ones, where his Spirit brought healing to the sick. But now he's gone.... leaving behind an emptiness a thousand times emptier than the emptiness that was there before he came. How many of the millions in this land where we live, somewhere in their past, clearly heard the voice of Jesus calling them to discipleship?

They didn't reject him with words ... they didn't spit in his face or blaspheme his name. They loved him and thanked God for what he had done in their lives and gladly listened to the preaching of his word. But they didn't love him enough. When he turned and said to them, "Now come, follow me all the way,"it was too much.

"Lord, I don't want to hurt your feelings, but I'm just not prepared to give up everything.... can't we work a compromise?"

With that Jesus turned and walked on. And these people restored their attention to what they call the "practical" things of life ... mixing in, perhaps, a little bit of church and a little bit of prayer and many an act of kindness. But there's an emptiness in their hearts a thousand times emptier than the emptiness that was there before he came.

As most of us know, the first part is easy. Jesus comes to us with the gospel of the kingdom.

"Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven....

Get up and walk my child. Come out of him you unclean spirit and let the man alone!"

We have peace and joy like we haven't known in all our days. It's a taste of heaven to be touched by the finger of God, to have that nail-pierced hand rest upon our heads with blessing.

How can you forget those days when Jesus first visited your life and opened your eyes and quickened your spirit ... when God first wrapped his arms around you in love and lifted you back from the edge of the pit?

If there is anyone reading this who hasn't tasted this yet, your taste is beginning right now. The Spirit of the blessed Son of God is moving upon you at this instant to heal you, to forgive you, to deliver you from that demon. God wants every one of us to know that he sent his Son into our race only to bless us ... only for our good ... only because he loves us.

"For God sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him." John 3:17

"If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink...." John 7:37

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread he shall live forever." John 6:51

All you have to do is receive him and you're blessed. All you have to do is say, "Yes, "...open the door to him, utter his name ... and you'll be blessed with whatever blessing you need. God wants you to taste heaven through his Son, hoping that you'll find that taste so good you'll want nothing else.

But, after you've had your blessing, Jesus turns to you, looks right into your inmost soul and says, "Come with me." You know what he means.... he means all the way ... absolute surrender. He means forsake the self life of your past and be a disciple.

"A disciple? Me a disciple? But Lord, I never asked to be a disciple. Can't I just be an ordinary Christian?"

"What's an ordinary Christian?" he replies. "The only Christians I know are disciples come with me."

"He who is not with me is against me.

And he who does not gather with me, scatters." Luke 11:23

There is no such thing as being a patron, an associate member, a loyal supporter. Either you're with Jesus all the way or you have no part with him at all. Either you are out there gathering souls with Jesus, seeking the lost with Jesus, calling men to repentance with Jesus, carrying your cross with Jesus, laying down your life with Jesus, **or you're an enemy.**

You may not think of yourself as an enemy. You may think of yourself as a friend. But if you refuse to go with Jesus.... all the way.... eventually the demon he drove out of your life, (and remember he did drive a demon out of your life), will come back, find you a spiritual vacuum, empty of the light of God which you would have if you were walking with your Lord, and decide to re-enter. So the unclean spirit takes over again with the help of seven other spirits and you're far worse off than you were before you met Jesus.

This degeneration doesn't happen in five minutes. For a long time after Jesus has gone up the road without you, you feel good. You still feel the glow of your Lord.... you're still praising God. You still pray from time to time. But ever so slowly that glow begins to cool.... so slowly you yourself don't realize it. But the unclean spirit does as he sits there waiting for you to get cool enough for him to return.

So, the question Jesus asks you today is, "Are you with me?" Not, "Are you living a decent life?... Are you doing your bit to make the world a better place?" But, **"ARE YOU WITH ME?** Are you with me by faith? Is your faith fixed on me alone, not on your money, your husband or your wife, your education, your skill or your status in the world? Are you crucified with me on my cross? Are you dead with me to the world? Are you alive with me in the power of my resurrection? **Am I your life?** Is the life you now live in the flesh lived by faith in the Son of God who loved you and gave himself for you?"

"He who has the Son has life, and he who has not the Son has not life." I John 5:12

"And, if you are with me by faith, are you with me in your mind? Does your mind dwell on me day and night?"

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, (who is Jesus himself), and in his law doth he meditate day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth his fruit in his season." Psalm 1 KJV

"And, if you're with me in your mind, are you with me in your actions? You know where I am. I'm out there giving the good news to the poor, bringing deliverance to the captives, opening the eyes of the blind. I'm out there standing by the forsaken, feeding the hungry, healing the sick. I'm out there calling sinners to repentance and bringing them into my kingdom ... are you with me?"

"One more question: Are you with me in your testimony? Is my name on your tongue? Are you confessing me before men?"

When we talk to men about the vague generalities of religion, they nod their heads in agreement and say we're good people.... "That's what the world needs more of ... love, brotherhood, peace, justice." But when we talk to men about **JESUS**, who is the only source of love or brotherhood or peace or justice this world will ever know, they don't nod in agreement or pat us on the back or call us good people. How can we be with Jesus and be afraid to have his name on our tongues? If we're afraid to tell the world straight out that Jesus is Lord, we're not

with him.... we're against him. If we're with Jesus we'll never be ashamed to utter his name. And every time we utter it he will make it known that we're not only with him, but that **he's with us**.... the word will be confirmed with signs following.

Jesus is looking for disciples. He's telling us that there's no other life worth living, no other road worth taking, but the road with him. For a long while we've been putting up our hands and politely saying, "But I'm too old, I'm too young, I'm too poor, I'm too rich, I'm too involved with my job and my family." And to every excuse Jesus says, "No you're not Come! Trust me. I'm not going to lead you wrong."

My friend, you ought to thank God that you have this chance. You ought to thank God that his Son didn't walk off and leave you desolate long ago. The fact that you're reading this message with a mind that's still open ought to drive you to your knees weeping thanks to God. Now that you have this chance.... this chance to throw in your lot with Jesus and be a disciple grab it!

Time is running out. You can be sure that Jesus isn't going to waste the time that remains standing around waiting for you to make up your mind. Jesus is going to be out there seeking the lost, calling men to repentance, giving them salvation ... whether you're with him or not. But he wants you with him.... that's why he calls you right now to forsake all and follow him.

God help you to do it without delay.

CHAPTER 4 - HIS COURAGE

We like to think of ourselves as people of faith. Yet how many things we do, how many decisions we make, not from faith, but because we're scared. Underneath that veneer of faith the thing that really controls our lives so much of the time is fear. Fear tells us when to move and when to sit still, when to speak and when to be quiet. And behind that fear is the devil himself.

We sit around and stagnate until a fright comes along. Then we spring to life. The Spirit of Jesus was calling us for months to rise up and start doing that thing ... but nothing happened until we got scared. We were afraid to move out there and do the will of God until a greater fear came and kicked us from behind. We talk about being led of the Lord.

"The Lord is showing me to do this ... The Lord is showing me to do that."

But we end up going in whatever direction fear pushes the hardest. We cover it with a thousand beautiful reasons why we didn't take that step of faith, or why we didn't hold on and keep trudging that difficult road a little longer.... but we know the real reason.

Why did the people balk when they were at the very edge of the Promised Land with a trail of shining miracles behind them and the command of the living God above them, "Go in! Take it! It's yours!?" ... because they gave in to fear. And so do we... silly fear.

There are people who would be at Messiah Church (in inner-city Detroit) for Bible Study every Wednesday night but they're afraid someone might steal their wheel covers.... people who need to open their mouth and ask that question but they're afraid someone might laugh ... people who know they ought to talk to their best friend about Jesus but they're afraid they might lose him as a friend. You know you ought not be such a tightwad when it comes to those people in need but you're afraid of putting a leak in your treasure chest.

Behind these petty daily fears are the phantoms that haunt our inner life: **the fear of death**. The angel of death is on our trail. Every day death is getting closer. When will it be? how will it come? Something inside us cries, "I don't want to die.... I don't want to die!" This thing inside us will do almost anything to try to make the life of flesh and blood a little safer.

There's **the fear of rejection**.... fear of being frozen out of that group we think we belong to. The clique.... the inner circle. And when Jesus calls us to do something

that might endanger our place in the group the alarm goes off, and fear cries, "Don't do it, you'll be left out!"

There's **the fear of material loss**. What if the will of God costs me the loss of things? financial uncertainty.... poverty. What if my car gets a scratch on it? What if I lost my High Definition TV (or my Plasma TV)? What if I could no longer afford to dress in style?

Driven by these inner fears we add layer upon layer of precaution to our lives until we're so wrapped up in precaution we can't move. We're so secure we're dead. We keep telling ourselves that we're totally committed.... walking in the Spirit... true servants of God.... when in fact we're nothing but impotent cowards... slaves of Satan through fear.

"For God hath not given us a Spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."
II Timothy 1:7

When you really begin walking in the Spirit, (not just going into ecstasy, but **walking** in the Spirit), you've got to break out of that prison of cowardice. If you are really following Jesus, you have your eyes on him and walking in his steps, that fear has to go.... it's got to.... because Jesus destroys fear by his very presence.

There is no fear in him. When the Pharisees try to scare him by saying, "Get away from here, Herod wants to kill you," he answers, ***"Go tell that fox, 'Behold I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow and the third day I finish my course.'"*** (Luke 13:32)... "I'm going to do what I came to do and neither Herod nor anyone else is going to stop me. And when it's time for me to die, Herod won't take my life, I'll lay it down."

When they tried to keep him from going up to Jerusalem that last time, there was no holding him back. He didn't come here to play it safe, he came here to do the will of his Father. And as he obeyed the Father, even unto death, no man, no devil, no circumstances, no change in the weather could intimidate him.

Now Jesus imparts that courage to us. We don't have it in ourselves. In ourselves we are, all of us, either cowards or fools. Courage we do not have. The only courage we have is his courage.... and we only have it as long as he is in us and we in him.

Again and again Jesus gave courage to people by speaking to them:

"Fear not, only believe. Let not your heart be troubled".

"Don't be afraid of those who kill the body and can do no more".

***"Why are you fearful? Have you no faith? It is I.
Be not afraid! Lo, I am with you!"***

As long as the relationship with Jesus is tight, there is courage to spare. But let something come in between Jesus and the disciple, the courage goes. When Peter took his eyes off Jesus in Gethsemane, he broke contact with the source of his courage, and soon he was doing stupid, cowardly things.

Even after Pentecost when believers stepped out of the will of their Lord... when they refused to love, when they started chasing after their own glory ... they fell back into lives of fear. The reason so many of us are stumbling around in timidity and cowardice is simply because our relationship with Jesus is not what it should be. We think that all we need is a cup of hot milk and a good night's sleep and everything will be all right... "I need a little vacation... I just need a little break from the pressure." Nonsense! Your heart is sick with cowardice because your relationship with Jesus is sick. You're making it look good outside but inside it's sick. You need to do four things to drive that fear away:

1. Get your eyes on Jesus.

"Looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith."

***"Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility
against himself." Hebrews 12:2-3***

Our eyes are in the wrong places. We're tangled up in our problems, all enmeshed in our anxieties. We need to get our eyes on the Master. He is the victory. Just as the Israelites looked at that serpent on the pole for healing, we look to Jesus... focus our mind on him, fix our heart on him and soon his life within us begins to rise up and become strong.

***"Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility
against himself."***

.... Consider him think about him.

***"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, (no matter what battles are raging,
no matter how the flames are roaring), whose mind is stayed on thee."***

2. Stir up the gift you already have.

***"Stir up the gift that is within you through the laying on of my hands, for God
hath not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of self-
discipline." I Timothy 1:6***

The Spirit of God who entered into most of us long ago knows no fear... there is no fear in him ... it's power, love, and self-discipline. When you're getting timid and cautious, this is a sign that the flame of the Spirit in you is sinking low and needs to be stirred up. You've been living as if there were no such thing as the Spirit of God in you. You've been living out of your flesh. Stir up your gift ... feed that flame ... get that fire going again.

God gives you the gift of the Spirit, but God does not stir it up... you stir it up. It is your responsibility to keep that relationship bright and alive. I hear people moaning, "I just don't seem to have that life in me I used to have," as they lie around in their self-pity and self-indulgence. They haven't lifted a finger to obey the light God gave them. They haven't made one serious move in God's direction beyond their well-worn habits.

The spirit of power, love and self-discipline will sink away to nothing in you if you neglect him ... if you ignore his promptings... if you defy him at every turn. Stir up that gift before it's too late. God isn't going to say your prayers for you. God isn't going to force you to study that word. God isn't going to program his love through you as if you were hooked into a computer. God gave you the gifts ... do something with it before it withers away.

3. Let not your heart be troubled. That's not some cheap consolation, that's a command! ***"Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me."***

Who's trying to trouble your heart?... the deceiver... the accuser... the father of lies. And you're letting him do it. Satan can do a lot of things to you, but one thing he cannot do... he cannot trouble your heart unless you let him, unless you open the door to his lies and sit down and feast on them. You're letting your heart dwell on all that garbage instead of on the living God and his beloved Son. "Believe in God, believe also in me ... trust me."

4. "Stop standing there in idleness, minding everybody's business but your own and come, follow me," saith the Lord.

"If it is my will that John remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me." John 21:22

says Jesus to Peter and to everyone who reads these words. You're standing around gawking at what God is doing or isn't doing in other people's lives and you aren't following where he is leading you to go. When I'm walking with Jesus, doing what he's showing me to do this day, I have his courage. I cannot be overcome by fear. Fear slips in when I stand around looking while the Master is moving way up the road and out of sight.

Supper is over and dinner is cookin'. Old Dan Tucker standin' there lookin'.

Half the people reading these words are just standin' there lookin'.... lookin' at things you should have let go of long ago. Get on with the Master up the road.... follow him do the thing he's calling you to do right now obedience, not in the great martyrdom that faces you two years from now, but in obedience to Jesus in the situation that faces you this day.

"If it is my will that John remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me ... now!"

May God help us to get off dead center and to start being faithful to the Christ he has already sent into our hearts, that our lives from this day forth may be ruled, not by fear of men or fear of devils or fear of an uncertain future, but by faith in him who is able, daily, to fill us with power and love and a sound mind.

CHAPTER 5 - HIS POWER

*The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his thigh.
Genesis 32:31*

We all know the theory ... that we're crucified with Christ ... dead to sin, to the world, to our own powers ... that the only life we have is his life. But when God comes along and makes this truth actual, when he lets something happen that spoils us for the world ... ruins us, cripples us and keeps us weak ... we sink into despair. You don't just reckon yourself dead to sin and to this world, you experience that death.

After wrestling all night with the angel of the Lord, Jacob got his blessing. As the day broke across the sky he was no longer Jacob but Israel, he who strives with God. But Israel limped away from that night of striving with God a cripple for life. The power of God that had now come to him was contained in a vessel that was made permanently weak.

When you ask God to give you power you'd better understand what you're asking for. The only way that power of God will be safe in you so that you won't go off half-cocked and run around trying to be Mandrake the Magician, is for that power of God to be linked to something in your life that keeps you weak. For God to answer your prayer and give you his power, it means that he is going to have to work through some weakness in you or he is going to have to wound you as he wounded Jacob, and make you weak.

"And to keep me from being too exalted by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too exalted. Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Paul didn't just accept his weaknesses, he gloried in them because he knew that his weaknesses were the receptacle of God's power. Paul never gloried in his accomplishments ... Paul never gloried in his gifts or his strong points or even in his victories. Paul gloried in two things only:

1. The cross of Jesus by which the world was crucified to him and he to the world, and ...

2. his weaknesses... through which the power of the cross found a channel in his life.

If our ministries are going to have the power they've got to have in order to do the job that needs to be done in the time that's left, we are going to have to learn what to glory in and what not to glory in. Most of us understand the doctrine beautifully in our heads, but in our actual living we are glorying in the wrong things. We barely get moving in the power of God before our hearts start glorying, boasting about how many people we're reaching, how many souls we're saving, how many battles we're winning, how right we are, how much life we have and how dead everyone else is. And while we're busy glorying in all this, those springs of life in us dry up. We keep right on glorying in these things as though they were still happening but they aren't ... still going on about how wonderful it was last month, last year, two years ago. Yet inwardly we know very well that we're dry as dust and we don't know what to do.

Go back to that wound God gave you when he poured out his life upon you and glory in that. Look at that limp in your walk in this world that you've had ever since you wrestled with the angel of the Lord and glory in that. Glory in the fact that God ruined the world and its delights for you, and ruined you for the world by the power of the cross of Jesus.

We shake our heads over the evangelist who once preached about Jesus to the country folk in revival tents... spoke with the authority of God and wielded that authority. Now the man is trying to M.C. a Christian variety show on national television. It's cheap, slick, hollow religion in the place of the life he once had. That man was spoiled for the world and the world for him years ago. He has a limp, but instead of glorying in that limp that the power of Christ might rest upon him, he's trying to hide it. He's getting richer every week but the power of God is gone from him. The same thing is happening to many of us. We parade our strengths in front of each other. We pretend to be so strong, so good, so sure and so wise. How angry we get when people don't recognize how wonderful we are. We ought to be glorying in the fact that we're cripples, speckled birds, outofjoint with the world, that the power of Christ may rest upon us.

Our Lord got his wounded thigh before he ever preached a sermon. When Jesus was baptized he identified with the weakness and the sin of the whole human race. Then he was driven by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He conquered the devil but he came out of that wilderness spoiled for the world. He refused to make that deal with the prince of the world that is necessary in order to get along smoothly. When Jesus came out of the wilderness he was already stamped with the marks of Isaiah 53.

"He hath no form or comeliness; and when we shall see him there is no beauty

that we should desire him." Isaiah 53:2

In terms of the world he is already ugly... a man to be despised and rejected. **Therefore** the power of his Father rested upon him. And all through his ministry the Son of God never gloried in anything concerning himself, but his weakness.

"I of myself can do nothing ... in myself I have no strength, no wisdom, nothing. It all comes from my Father who dwells in me."

So the blind received their sight, the lame walked, the lepers were cleansed, and the deaf heard. The dead were raised and the poor had the good news preached to them.... And Satan's neck was broken when Jesus expired in weakness on that cross.

What can we expect but bungling failure even if the world thinks we're a smashing success... if we're unwilling to follow our Master on this lowly road, if our spirits scream to each other, "Look at me, I am somebody"... "Shut up, you fool, and listen to me talk!" ... "My humility beats yours hands down!"

If you want to glory in something, glory in the cross of Jesus and what it has done to you. As far as God is concerned the cross has saved you from sin, death and the power of the devil. But as far as the world is concerned the cross has ruined you ... ruined you! ... never forget that. The cross has not unlocked the door to success. It has not made you at home in this world. It has not saved your business from bankruptcy. If the cross of Jesus has really touched your life it has put you out of joint with this world and you ought to be praising God that it has. It has wounded your thigh and you ought to be praising God every time you limp.

"Far be it from me to glory, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world."
Galatians 6:14

Thank God that the cross of Jesus makes this world garbage for you. All the glittering, alluring things... all those hopes and dreams, those lusts, that vanity ... become one huge pile of refuse now that the cross of the Son of God has touched you. And you wonder how you wasted so many years chasing after nothing.

Thank God that the cross has made you garbage as far as the world is concerned. If you ever looked appealing to the world, you don't now... you bear the marks in you of him who is despised and rejected of men. You're an offense to the world just as he is. So, now you can get on with what really matters ... doing the will of your Master, proclaiming that Jesus is Lord and he's coming soon ... without forever looking over your shoulder to see whether the world likes what you're doing. If you want to glory in anything else besides that cross, glory in your weaknesses ... not your strengths ... your weaknesses. Those weaknesses are the

only place where the power of Christ is coming through in your life .

"Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities, for when I am weak then I am strong."
II Corinthians 12:9-10

God teach us this!

When somebody insults you, are you still flying to your own defense, pouring venom out of your mouth to cut him down? You may be skilled at coming back at these fools who insult you and ripping them to shreds, but by whose power? When someone insults you, says some hurting thing that really shakes you, instead of scorching your enemy with fire from your mouth, leave it. That insult that weakened you and shook you is just what you needed. It broke you and humbled you enough so that the Son of God can now safely put his power into you. Thank God for that insult that struck you dumb for three days ... it's just what you needed. Now you're down to size. Now the Spirit of God can really start moving through you. Hardships, persecutions and calamities do the same thing... they make us weak enough so that we can really be strong in God.

If you want to pray a prayer that will do you some good, pray, "Lord, make me weak and keep me weak so that I know that I have no power but yours." But, don't pray it unless you mean it because he will do it.

The churches are forever on the lookout for important people, forever trying to win the world's big names ... people of influence, people with lots of money. Every time another "important" soul is won there's a big "to do." It's something really special if we get a metropolitan opera singer or an all-star fullback, or a Wall Street banker ... that's going to make people sit up and take notice... of what? The Spirit of God is on the lookout for little people, broken people, weak people, undone people. If that cowboy or that ball player is really going to enter the kingdom, he is going to have to learn to be "little people" and stay that way. It is only the little people, the broken, weak and undone people who ever carry the mighty power of the eternal Son of God in them. And, if they want to keep carrying that power they'd better stay little, broken and weak in this world.

"My grace is sufficient for you. My power is made perfect in weakness."

Do you believe that? Are you willing to let his grace be sufficient for you? Are you willing to let his power be made perfect in your weakness? ... then tell him, and it will be done. And you will learn with Paul to gladly glory in your weaknesses that the power of Christ may rest upon you.

CHAPTER 6 - HIS BODY

If there's only one God and one Jesus, how come they've got all these churches? Why isn't there just one? Some people seem to think that Jesus blew it when it came to keeping his church together.... so they're going to help him. There are the ecumenical bugs who are busy trying to get all the denominations into one big superstructure. They have meetings and negotiations and mergers. Finally after decades of planning they get the Lutherans, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists and Catholics into one thing. But what do they have then?... a monster. Instead of five smaller monsters they have one big monster, and they call it a church. But every person who has an ounce of faith left in him knows that it's not the Church of Jesus Christ. It's just another man-made pseudochurch that will have to be torn down to make way for the glory of God.

Then there are men of deep faith who long to see the Body of Christ on earth manifestly one, so they set to work to bring it together according to the New Testament pattern. They want to bring the saints of God in our city together so that the church can be seen as one Body, but they end up as one more sect.

For centuries and centuries men have been messing around with the Church of Jesus Christ as though they could build it or revive it or cleanse it. **There is only one person who can build the church or do anything else to it, and that is Jesus himself.**

"On this rock I will build my church." Matthew 16:18

Jesus didn't blow it, he knows what he's doing. As the hour of his return gets close the saints of God are going to come out of their scattered places into an open visible unity because the Spirit of the Lord will bring them into it. The saints in Detroit will come together and become **visibly** the church in Detroit. The saints in New York, Lansing, Cleveland, Tokyo, Oslo, Berlin, Moscow, Athens and Arusha will do the same. When the King is ready to do this, **he** will do it.... he will do it. Meanwhile, the saints of God need to learn the ABC's of unity right down where they are. Our job is not to unite the denominations or bring all the believers in our city together as one. Our job is to **practice unity** with our brothers and sisters in the place where God has seen fit to put us now. If God has anything to do with the fact that you are in the fellowship where you are, then the first thing you need to learn is how to be one with those people right there.

If we are gathered in whatever fellowship, not because we like the entertainment, or because it's convenient, or because the style of worship suits our taste ... not because our father and grandfathers followed this tradition ... but because we are

answering the call of the Spirit to be here and feed on the living bread and serve God in company with these brothers and sisters, then this is the place where we are going to learn what it means to be the Body of Christ on earth.

"For as in one body we have many members and all members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually members one of another." Romans 12:4-5

You don't learn that at church conventions, or by reading books, or by having "dialogues" between the denominations ... you learn that in the flock where you happen to be ... you learn that in the motley company of saints where God has placed you.

You are not a Lone Ranger for the Lord. You are part of the Body of Christ and without the rest of the Body you are incomplete... useless... out of his will. You can no more go out there on your own and do something for the Lord than your forefinger can walk off by itself into the next room and make a land line phone call. To make a phone call your forefinger needs your other hand to pick up the receiver, your mouth to speak, your ear to hear and your mind to tell it what number to dial. Picture 250 great big forefingers sitting in the pews and a monstrous mouth standing up at the pulpit preaching to them and you have a typical church. No wonder nothing happens. What can 250 forefingers and one big mouth accomplish? They can have a "service" once a week.

But, suppose one Sunday morning, as the mouth is up there preaching to the forefingers, a miracle happens. Suppose the mouth and the 250 forefingers all fall down in repentance before Jesus. A cloud of holiness fills the room. When the cloud is passed the forefingers are gone... the big mouth is gone ... and straddling the aisles of that church stands one giant body with two eyes, two ears, a nose, a mouth, ten fingers, ten toes, feet, hands, arms, legs, a heart and a mind. The giant bursts out the door and walks down the street. Windows fly open. Crowds gather. The giant opens its mouth and begins to speak the truth of God. It reaches out with hands of love and heals the sick. It bends its ear and listens carefully to cries of pain and sorrow and guilt. It opens its eyes and searches diligently for the lost.

Seven days a week the giant is out there walking the earth, proclaiming the living word of God. Every seventh day it comes home to be fed and rested. Frequently it comes in to wash its hands and sing praises to God... but its work is out there... and it's together. The eyes and the ears and the mouth and the hands and the feet work in harmony because all the members of the body have submitted themselves to the head, who is Jesus himself ... and they fit in with each other.

One day as the giant walks down the street another giant comes around the corner and walks toward it. Will they fight? Will it be, "This is my territory, get out of

here."?... No The two giants walk toward each other and suddenly they are not two but one. All day the two giants are one. In the evening they become two once more and go to their respective places, waiting for the day when all the giants on earth will, in a moment, become one forever.

God didn't bring us together to be 250 forefingers and one mouth. He gathered us together to be one Body.

"So we, though many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another."

A miracle has to happen and be sustained in each of our lives that will cause each of us to be that member of the Body Jesus wants them to be. So, if the Spirit wants me to be an ear I will give up trying to be a mouth and be a good ear. If he wants me to be a thumb I'll quit trying to be an eye and be a good thumb. The opening verses of Romans 12 tell us what we have to do in order for this to happen:

1. ***"Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."***
Romans 12:1

You start with your body. You don't ignore your body. You don't treat it as something unclean. You present your body to God so that from now on it is no longer yours but his. Just as Jesus offered up his body on the cross for you, you now offer your body, daily, hourly to the living service of God.

People become confused about this. They think that when they become 'spiritual' the body is unimportant. They often try to act as if the body is unreal. Sometimes God has to give them a taste of pain to remind them that the body is very real. The most **spiritual** thing you can do is serve God with your **physical** body. You cannot function as part of the Body of Christ until your body is a living sacrifice to God.

2. ***"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."***
Romans 12:7

Notice that the thing that makes you worldly is not your body but your mind. The devil has no body and he is the most worldly of all, he's the Prince of the world with his mind.

So now you turn your mind away from the spirit of this world. And the spirit of this world is **self**... self-pity, self-realization, self-aggrandizement, self-indulgence, self-glorification. You haven't been able to fit into the Body because self gets in the way. You say you're busy serving the Lord but you have self on your mind all the time. Just let someone come out and put his foot on that self of yours and you'll see

how much you're serving God... you're putting your autograph on every good deed that you do.

But now you break away from that self-centered spirit of this world by means of a power you never had before. You renew your mind in the word and the Spirit of the living God. You get your mind on Jesus instead of yourself ... you dwell on him ... you look to him. Now your mind clears and your life is transformed.

"Look unto him and be saved, all the ends of the earth ..." Isaiah 45:22

not just on the day of your conversion but all your life... every day. "You are not of this world, for I have chosen you out of this world, so look to me."

3. "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but think with sober judgment, according to the measure of faith that God has given you." Romans 12:3

If you can bake a cake ... good ... there's no harm in admitting it. If you can play the piano or if you're a skilled mechanic, that's fine but don't let Satan get you to thinking you're the best one around. Don't start getting the idea that you're indispensable. People with inflated ideas of their own importance simply cannot fit into the Body.

"Think with sober judgment according to the measure of faith that God has given you..." Romans 12:3

and that measure of faith that God has given you will show you that you have a gift. The important thing is not your **self** but your **gift**. In yourself you are nothing, but this gift which God has given you will enable you to serve him and bring forth fruit.

The Son of God has given you something with which you can touch other lives in his name.... a message an ability to listen to people.... a heart that can feel what that other heart feels the power to encourage. This is what you have to offer the Body. Think of yourself as the bearer of a gift, an earthen vessel filled with a treasure from God.

4. "For as in one body we have many members and all members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually members one of another." Romans 12:4-5

You take your gift and fit in... fit in! You belong to these other ones. You are incomplete without them and they without you. They may make mistakes ... they may hurt you... they may seem gruff... but they are still part of you and you of them.

We are not together in the Body because we like each other so much... we are not here because we just naturally get along so well. We are together because God put us together and gave us work that none of us can do alone, and that no other combination of people can do...so we fit in.

"Submit yourselves to one another in the fear of the Lord." Ephesians 5:21

"Let each esteem the other better than himself." Philippians 2:3

There is a call that you know you ought to make on some friend, but there is someone in the flock who ought to be making that call with you. Fit in with your brother ... let your brother fit in with you. There is a need that you know of but you also know that you are not equipped to meet it. So you fit in with those who are. There are hundreds of things we could be doing if we would only give up being Lone Rangers and fit in with each other.

It is not for us to build the church ... only the Master himself can build the church. Nor is it for us to unify the church. The Lord of the church knows what he is doing. There is only one thing for us to do ... be that member of his Body he is calling us to be in that place where he put us.

We have to give him our bodies ... give him our minds. Take the gift he has given us and fit in with each other ... work together. If we will do that, we'll know what it means to be one Body in Christ. And into this Body will come life such as it has never had. A giant will walk out into those streets instead of 250 forefingers and a mouth ... and the world around us will hear through us, more clearly than it has ever heard from us before, that Jesus is Lord.

CHAPTER 7- HIS GIFTS

If we could somehow get back there and actually see that group of believers in Rome to whom Paul wrote his epistle, our first reaction would probably be disappointment. "These are the people who changed the world? ... Why there's nothing special about them... slaves, poor people, and even rabble. You'd think that after they became Christians they could at least start cleaning themselves up a bit ... and even the preaching isn't that tremendous. So this is the famous apostolic church!"

It's not until their worship is over that we begin to notice something different. Instead of, "Bye, bye... see you next week... say hello to Uncle Bill and Aunt Maude," it's like an army going into battle. Every single believer knows that he has specific work to do and a specific gift from God to do that work.

As we follow them around through the week we find that they don't walk up to people and say, "Come to our church.. we have a wonderful minister ... you ought to hear him preach. We have a wonderful choir and a marvelous educational program for the children." Rather, they take their neighbors aside and say, "Did you ever hear about Jesus? Let me tell you what Jesus can do for you right now." They promise miracles and miracles come. Every day, all week long, they're using their gifts to touch people with the power of God.

Gifts.... not natural gifts. It's not that they are good talkers or skilled at selling or adept at conning people ... each one of them has divine power, something supernatural within. In one it flows out through his hands as he puts bread on some empty table. In another it flows out through her mouth as she speaks. Another has eyes that can look into a man's face and see the burden that is weighing down that heart inside.

The basic elementary fact in the apostolic church, and in every living church since, is that the church is not a minister and a few pious laymen and a couple hundred Sunday spectators. The church is a body of God-gifted people, headed by Jesus himself, in which each member of the Body is engaged in a seven-day-a-week supernatural ministry using his gift.

"Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them, if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our service; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness."
Romans 12:6-8

If you are a follower of Jesus Christ... if you have been born of the Spirit of God ... you are carrying around in the earthen vessel of your body a gift. It may not be the same gift as the person next to you has ... it may not be the gift that you thought you'd like to have. It is the gift Jesus wants you to have... the gift Jesus wants you to **use**. The King will show you what it is if you don't already know. **He will show you!** You don't wake up in the middle of the night and hear an angel telling you that you have a certain gift. **You discover the gift God has given you as you begin to minister in Jesus' name to the needs that are right under your nose.**

A man or woman may have a burden for the sick and pray for the sick for a long time before they discover that God has given them a gift for healing. You may be sending groceries to poor families for a long time before you wake up and realize that God has given you a gift for this kind of thing... that when they eat the bread you send them in the name of the Lord the presence of the Lord fills that house in a special way and starts to draw them toward his cross. An older woman quietly goes around doing things for people ... helping them with their housework, visiting them in their loneliness. She does it so quietly you don't notice anything about it but her smile. That woman is exercising a gift, and everywhere she goes a trail of blessing and life and thanks to God follows her.

All you have to do is open your eyes and look at the people you see every- day. Start moving among them as a servant of the living Christ. Minister to them in whatever way seems open to you... by word or deed. Soon you will become aware of which way the power of God is moving through you, **and you will find your gift**. And when you have found it, **use it!** The more we pour out, the more he pours in. The more you use the gift, the stronger it becomes. There are several things to keep in mind as you use it:

1. **Use your gift in love. "Let love be genuine."** You don't help those people or exhort that man or pray for that child to prove something or get a merit badge or gain a following. You do it because God's love in you drives you to do it. And if the love isn't there in your heart, pray for it. Ask God to pour it out on you, because without that love your gift is flat, hard and empty.

"If I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all that I have and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing." I Corinthians 13:2-3

2. **Never use your gift in compromise with evil. "Hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good."** A man finds he has a gift of healing. Next thing you know he's incorporated ...he's big time... he's making money at it. A woman finds she has prophetic powers so she starts flashing her insights around among her neighbors and friends until she's looked upon as a semi-divine oracle. A man with a skid-row

mission finds that with a few minor changes in his message and a little public relations he can tap the local businessmen and triple his budget.

If you don't steadfastly hate what is evil and hold fast to what is good, you'll find yourself compromising ... tolerating those lies until you can't even tell the difference in your own life between lies and truth. There can be no compromise with evil.... none!

3. Remember that the power of your gift to bless people and draw them to the Master **hinges on your unity with your brothers and sisters in the Body.** *"Love one another with brotherly affection."* We're one with each other ... we're brothers and sisters by virtue of his holy blood. You will find that when you are at one with your brothers and sisters your gift is at its best. When you are at loggerheads with them, when you're aloof, distant, resentful, your gift loses its power.

If I am not right with you I might as well forget about going down to that bar to tell somebody about Jesus. If you're not right with your brothers and sisters in the Lord, your message to the sinners in the world is going to have a hollow ring.

4. Don't use your gifts in competition with others. **There is no competition in the Body except in showing honor to one another.** General Motors runs on competition ... not only competition with Ford and Chrysler, but one executive competing against another. You stay on the ball because you know that there are ten men waiting to replace you the minute you goof. But in the Body competition has no place. When the disciples started competing with each other for the high places, Jesus explained that you don't compete to **get** honor but to **show** it...

"Let the greatest among you be as the youngest and the leader as one who serves."

Luke 22:26

"Outdo one another in showing honor. Let each esteem the other better than himself."

Romans 12:10

5. **Never flag in zeal.** There are these skyrocket Christians who have one burst of enthusiasm and then they burn out ... and there are the wet blankets who can remember when they were zealous, until they "matured" into that lukewarm rut they've been in for years.

If you don't have zeal something is wrong. Moses was an old man... he still had zeal. Paul was middle aged ... he still had zeal. But there are believers who have barely hit their 20's and they're nothing but tired bores and remain so all their weary lives.

Never flag in zeal. If you're tired, go to bed. But when you get up in the morning

you'd better walk into the new day with the zeal of God or you'll soon lose every trace of zeal you have left. "But I just don't feel any zeal... I feel dry." Then start looking for some zeal. If you're content with your lack of zeal, you'll never get any.

6. **Be aglow with the Spirit.** Not aglow like a blushing maiden at the New Year's Ball ...on fire, like a burning coal with the Spirit of God. People think this is a matter of chance or luck. "Some guys are lucky. The Spirit comes on them and makes them alive. The rest of us just sit around in the gloom and nothing happens." It is not a matter of chance. It's up to you to stir up that gift and make it burn just as you stir up a dying fire. Shake it around ...put some logs on it.

Don't settle for anything less than the burning glow of the Spirit. Keep pestering God and disciplining yourself until you are on fire with his Spirit. Keep walking in obedience and staying in his word and ceaselessly praying so that the fire keeps burning.

7. Remember that with your gift you are not merely serving men, **you are serving the Lord himself.** You are **his** servant with this gift. You are doing **his will.** You are hastening the coming of **his kingdom.** You are doing it for **his glory.** It is easy to get so caught up in what we're doing ... our success, our failure ... our problems... that we forget what this is all for... **it is for Jesus...**only for him.

The test of the worship that goes on in any church is not how many people felt inspired or how many had tears roll down their cheeks. The test is how many people are really letting God sharpen their gift ... how many walk out the door and exercise the gift God has given them, and was quickening in them while they worshiped?

Are we a minister and a few pious "laymen" and a couple hundred Sunday spectators? Or, are we a Body of Godgifted people headed by Jesus himself, using our gifts seven days a week?

Our Lord tells us that when he comes back each one of us is going to give an account to him of what we've done with our gifts. God help us to make the most of the time that's left that we may stand before him without shame... **for he's coming soon.**

CHAPTER 8 - THE FIRE HE SENDS

*John answered them all, "I baptize you with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."
Luke 3:16*

We hear quite a bit about the Holy Spirit. But we don't hear much about the fire. People get "baptized with the Holy Spirit,"...but what about being baptized with fire? In the beginning of our Lord's ministry he was baptized in the Jordan by John. He came out of the water and was baptized in the Holy Spirit by his Father. He was driven into the wilderness to do battle with the prince of this world.

Then Jesus begins to preach and heal and perform signs. Marvelous things happen at his hands. Gracious words such as no man ever spoke flow from his lips ... disciples gather around him who gladly give up everything just to learn from him. But still Jesus is restless.... something is missing. There's something else that he needs yet, that he doesn't have. Jesus is waiting for one more baptism **the baptism of fire.**

"I came to cast fire upon the earth, and would that it were already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptized with and how I am constrained until it is accomplished!" Luke 12:49-50

When the hour for his baptism came, his whole being shuddered....

*"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say, 'Father, save me from this hour?' No... for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify thy name!"
John 12:27-28*

The fire fell and consumed him ... even unto death. It was the fire of suffering that was to atone for the sins of the whole race ... **his cross.**

Now the fire that fell upon Jesus as he hung from those nails beneath the black sky is still burning on this earth.

"I came to cast fire **upon the earth.**"
"He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit **and with fire.**"

Our natural inclination is to run from that fire. As soon as we see it coming toward

us we turn and flee. Who wants to be burned? Who wants to suffer? Who wants to be despised and rejected and misunderstood and slandered?

If we are following in the steps of the Master, those steps are going to lead through fire...we are going to suffer for his name. If you are a "real nice guy," the world won't persecute you.... they'll know you as a "real nice guy." They might even elect you the outstanding citizen of the year. The mayor might come to your funeral. But if you are a disciple of Jesus ... if Jesus lives in your heart and his name is on your lips ... if you are proclaiming Jesus as Lord in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation, at first they'll smile and call you a nut. But after a while they will, for some uncanny reason they themselves can't understand, begin to despise you ... hate you. They will despise and hate you, let's hope not because you are obnoxious ... not because you are a phony ... but because Jesus is living and speaking in you ... and they have hated Jesus from the beginning.

"A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me they will persecute you; if they kept my word they will keep yours also. But all this they will do to you on my account." John 15:20-21

"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you..." I Peter 4:12

This is nothing strange... this is the promised baptism of fire.

If you walk away from this baptism of fire and say, "Lord, turn it off! Give me the Holy Spirit, but don't give me the fire!" you become one of these whimpering halfbaked Mickey Mouse Christians our churches are so famous for. You are as much as saying, "God don't take me seriously ... I'm playing games. Even if I do come to church and ask for life from above and power to walk as your child on this earth, if it means pain and trouble I take it all back!"

When you partake of the bread and the wine you are joining yourself to Jesus all the way ... not just to his touch of healing, not just to his words of comfort and strength ... but to **his broken body** and to his **shed blood**. In that broken body and shed blood is **life** ... eternal life which is God's Spirit. But with that broken body and that shed blood and the lifegiving Spirit of God comes a baptism of fire. God doesn't send the fire because he likes to see you suffer. God sends the fire because it **takes fire** to make you into the mature, strong, victorious child of heaven that you were meant to be.

We need the baptism of fire for our own good

1. **because the fire refines us**. It burns the impurities out of us... it destroys those things in us that are not of God ... like our big ego, our attachment to things, our

love of comfort, our petty ways. When we begin to suffer for the name of Jesus, it's like flame being put to the ore ... the impurities are burned out... only the gold is left.

Even after we receive the Spirit we are inclined to be petty and selfcentered and gloryhungry ... until we begin to suffer. Then those things that used to upset us become as nothing. Those things which were so important show up for what they are ... useless.

2. **because the fire tempers us like steel**...so we can hold an edge like a knife. Before the fire comes to us we are sharp today and dull tomorrow. We can't seem to keep our strength. We can hold our enthusiasm no more than six months.

You can always spot the believers who have been through fire. They may not be as flashy, and entertaining but they wear well. They remain fresh and their message remains fresh year after year. They don't get discouraged when things get rough, or when the fruit is slow appearing, or when someone tells a lie about them. They may look weak and delicate sometimes, but they're tough... they're hard as well-tempered steel.

3. **because the fire unites us to Jesus as nothing else will.**

"That I may know him in the fellowship of his suffering...." Philippians 3:10

"Rejoice insofar as you share Christ's suffering." I Peter 4:13

It's all very well to know Jesus as he walks along the shore of Galilee or teaches on some grassy hillside. It's fine to know Jesus as he brings you a word of forgiveness and healing. But you don't really know Jesus ... you are not really one with him ... until you share in his agony and pain and loneliness. When you share the agony of Gethsemane, the agony of Calvary by getting a taste of this in your own life, only then you begin to know Jesus.

*"The servant is not greater than his master ...
If they persecuted me, they will persecute you ... Lo, I am with you always..."*

To get close to Jesus means to get close to the fire.

4. **because the fire is the way to much fruit.**

"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone. But if it dies, it brings forth much fruit." John 12:24

Death to self ... not just a 'reckoned' death, but an experienced death, through the denial of self in the fire of suffering makes our lives fruitful.

The real lasting God-glorifying fruit that is being produced on earth right now is not coming from the great names and famous faces... it is coming through the fire-baptism of thousands of unknown saints in every nation on earth. These saints are not forever organizing something new for the Lord ... they are out there pouring out their lives in the streets, in prisons in China, Eastern Europe and soon (if not already) the United States and Canada and Mexico, and down through the Latin nations. They are laying down their lives every day. And from their suffering ... yes, from their blood ... fruit is springing up and will spring up that will endure.

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

Psalm 126:6

5. **because the fire makes our Spirit-baptism real.**

It's wonderful to receive the Holy Spirit and have that glow inside, or speak in tongues, or prophesy. But notice that even our Lord did not begin ministering immediately after he received the Holy Spirit. He was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. There in the wilderness Jesus began to taste the fire. There he chose the way that would lead to his baptism of fire ... the cross.

I have never seen it to fail. Soon after the Spirit comes, comes the fire. We can reject the fire ... we can run ... we can choose an easier way. But if we reject the fire-baptism, our Spirit-baptism will never amount to much.

6. **because the fire brings us the joy of heaven.**

*"Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. **Rejoice** and be exceedingly glad...."*

Matthew 5:11

*"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which has come to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you, but **rejoice**...."*

Peter 4:12

When you know you're going through it for his name, not because of your stupidity or willfulness or hypocrisy, but for his name, you will **rejoice**. Why did Paul and Silas sing that night in the Philippian jail? Why did the thousands who were martyred in Rome for the name of Jesus sing as they were herded into the arena? These mild sufferings that we begin to taste ... even these bring joy.

7. **because the fire covers us with the glory of God.**

If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit

of glory and of God rests upon you. I Peter 4:14

When you see your name in print, when you are acclaimed for the work you are doing, that's glory ... but not the glory of God. It's the glory of man. Jesus says to watch out for that kind of glory... ***"Beware when all men speak well of you!"***

The glory of God comes to us when the glory of man has left us, when the Palm Sunday hosannas have died away and there is a roar of hate followed by an angry sullen silence. The glory of God comes on us when we remain faithful after all the human supports have left us and turned against us. Then God doesn't just comfort us ... he makes us positively mighty. He covers us with **his glory**.

"The Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."

Are you willing to receive from the Lord Jesus not only a baptism of the Holy Spirit, but a baptism of fire? Are you willing to start, following

Jesus, obeying Jesus, confessing the name of Jesus, to the point where it will actually mean suffering for his name?

We have come to a time when every believer ought to know that the road that leads to glory goes through the fire. God help us to lay down our toys and our games and follow the Master on that road.

CHAPTER 9 - THE VISION OF HIS COMING

The dominant note of the spiritual awakening that is stirring on the earth at this time is the strong awareness among people who are coming alive to God that the end is near. The minute Jesus Christ makes his voice heard in your heart and you wake up and shake yourself out of that death you were in since the day you were born, you begin to hear warnings and see signs on every side that it's late ... this age is almost over.

Every spiritual awakening during the last twenty centuries has carried this warning. Every time the Spirit moves, people begin to see this world as trash and begin lifting their eyes heavenward for the coming Day of the Lord. But the signs we are seeing today and the warnings we are hearing are unparalleled by anything since John the Baptist began his Elijahministry on the banks of the Jordan.

In Luke 21 Jesus told how the temple would be destroyed, Jerusalem conquered, its people led captive among all nations, the city itself occupied by the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles would be fulfilled. Then Jesus goes on to tell about what happens when the Gentile time is over ... when Jerusalem comes back into Jewish hands, it will be a time of signs in the heavens, distress of nations, natural catastrophes...a time when all men will know that something unearthly is shaking what we always thought was our stable earth ... of men fainting with fear and with foreboding at what is coming on the world. This generation, the generation that witnesses the close of the Gentile age and all these unearthly signs, will see the end.

People are getting a vision. And everywhere you go among believers the vision is the same ... they are seeing this planet coming under the visible rule of the One who died on the cross and rose again. They are seeing Jesus surrounded by unearthly glory. Already they begin to hear the hint of singing so beautiful the natural ear cannot stand it... the dawn of the kingdom. People who once believed it was in their power to end the war and ban the bomb are now proclaiming Jesus as the one who alone will end wars and ban bombs. Not Jesus as a mere symbol of love and brotherhood ... but Jesus as Lord ... Jesus as the King, who is coming to judge the earth.

"Behold I come quickly and my reward is with me to render to every man according as his work shall be." Revelation. 22:12

It is one thing to get the vision of the coming King, it's another to hang on to that

vision and live by it day-in-and-day-out ... month-after-month, year-after-year and not get stale. If six months after you got that vision of the end, the end were here, it wouldn't be so bad ... bad enough of course ... because those last days before the end will try the faith of all the saints.

But, what if it's stretched out over many years. What if it's a matter of enduring when all the assurances stop and the signs cease, and the world comes crowding in on us with mockery, "Now where's the Messiah ... you crazy fool?"

John the Baptist had such fire when he stood out there on the Jordan and called the people a bunch of snakes.

***"Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits that befit repentance!"
Matthew 3:7-8***

John shook them up... scared them to death. He spoke with such authority they began to think that maybe he was the Messiah. But when John is taken out of circulation and has nothing to look at but those prison walls, his hope lags. He sends messengers to the One he announced to the world as the Messiah asking,

"Are you the one who is to come or do we look for another?" Matthew 11:3

What happens to your vision of the King when time drags on and you have to keep going with the ordinary duties of life? The anti-Christ hasn't showed his face ... Armageddon hasn't started ... people are still buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage. That friend who broke with you when you became a disciple is now a rich man ... and what are you? He's got money in the bank ... what do you have to show for your life? Are you still able to call it all garbage and say with boldness that you're living for the coming of the King? Is your flame of hope still burning? Is your vision still clear? Is your joy still getting stronger every day? The vision of the end, that wonderful hope of his coming has to stay alive, or you will not be able to keep going in the days ahead.

In Romans 15 we hear a man whose own flame burned clear and bright telling us how it works. The Spirit is drawing a circle around these verses and saying to us, "Learn what this means ... this is for you."

***"Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that you may with united hearts and one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."
Romans 15:4-5***

The vision of his coming will never get stale, it will become brighter and brighter until the day it is fulfilled, if we will do four things:

1. **Practice God-given steadfastness.** God is steadfast ... with him is no variability neither shadow due to change. He is not one way today and another way tomorrow. He does not hold you in his grip this week and next week let you go. He loved you, before there was a speck of light in the infinite darkness. He loves you now ... and if you should end up in hell it won't be because he ceased loving you.

When this God comes to dwell in you, you don't run hot today and cold tomorrow, or pray only when you feel like it, or live in fits and starts ... a slave to your moods. You take on the nature of your Father which is steadfastness ... consistency. But you have to practice that steadfastness.

"For we are made partakers of Christ if we hold our first confidence steadfast to the end." Hebrews 3:14

You practice steadfastness in the little things, the ordinary things that are within your power, and God will hold you steadfast in the big things that are beyond your power. You practice steadfastness toward him in the sunny days and he will hold you solid as a rock when the storms come.

Steadfastness is simple obedience to Jesus...

steadfastness in prayer, steadfastness in seeking his face, steadfastness in giving praise and honor and glory to his name. Then you will keep the vision. It will never leave you.

2. **Get the God-given encouragement that you need from scripture.** The Bible has a terrifying message for the man with a hard heart. But for the believer who has forsaken all to follow Christ and is living for the day of his coming, the Bible has nothing but encouragement.

"Lo, I am with you always...." Matthew 28:20

"The eternal God is your dwelling place and underneath are the everlasting arms." Deuteronomy 33:27

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Psalm 91:1

God did not cause the Bible to come into existence through the pains of numberless people over a span of hundreds of years in order to bore you to death or to add one more chore to that weary list of "Christian duties" ... ("Read your

Bible every day or you'll go to hell"). God gave you the Bible to encourage you.

"That by steadfastness and the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope." Romans 15:4

If you go to the Bible as a chore that's what it will be. But if you discipline yourself daily to go to the Bible to let God encourage you that's exactly what he will do. The Bible is the testimony of flesh-and-blood people who knew as much as we do about trouble, sickness, temptation, sin ... their testimony to the God who spoke through his prophets and finally through his Son, to the God who washes away our guilt in the blood of the Lamb, to the God who saves to the uttermost those who draw near to him in the name of Jesus. To those who follow Jesus, God gives wonderful encouragement as they open and read the scriptures.

3. The vision of his coming will stay bright if we **live in harmony with each other in accord with Christ Jesus**. If you go off in a corner and try to have the vision all to yourself it will die. For some wonderful reason, foreshadowing the kingdom itself, the vision of his coming lives only in believers who walk in harmony with each other. The more real the harmony, the more clear the vision.

And how do we find harmony with each other? By smiling and patting each other on the back? By pretending to be in agreement on all subjects? There is only one way ... when you are in accord with Jesus and I am in accord with Jesus, then we'll be in accord with each other.

May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another in accord with Christ Jesus.
Romans 15:5

If we join ourselves in fact to his broken body and his shed blood, not just saying, "Thanks for communion, Lord, that was great!", but demonstrating our gratitude to him by being broken bread and poured out wine for that sick world in his name ... if we come away from the altar with that kind of accord with Jesus ... how can there be anything but harmony among us? How can Satan wedge anything between us? And in that harmony the vision of the Messiah will live.

4. The vision of his coming will burn most brightly when there is **unity in our worship of God**.

"That you may with united hearts and one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 15:6

We don't need some way-out instrument or some jazzy new service. Let our hearts become one before the throne of the living God in worship of his majesty ... let there be real worship of God **in us** ... and while we sing simple hymns heaven

itself will burst upon us ... we'll see the glory which is soon to come.

When you sing a hymn or a chorus, you're not in a little box by yourself, you're a member of the Body. If you are only half with it or you're trying to change the tempo, you're dragging the whole Body back. Get your mind on God. Join your heart to the hearts of your brothers and sisters in his praise and it won't just be another hymn-singing routine ... it will be worship ... life...glory ... for yourself and for all the others. And the vision of his coming will be renewed in us all.

"For still the vision awaits its time, it hastens to the end, it will not lie. If it seem slow, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not delay. Behold, he whose soul is not upright in him shall fail, but the righteous shall live by his faith."

Habakkuk 2:3-4

God grant that the vision he has given to his people on the earth at this time may stay alive in our hearts and hold us through all the things we have yet to face ... for it won't be long ... the vision hastens to its end ... it will not lie.

He's coming! Soon!

THE LAMB
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