

# Deal Pentecostal Church Training School

Reference Material

## Study 9 Holiness

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## **Holiness**

Petts, D., *You'd Better Believe It*, Mattersey Hall, 1999, (Ch.19, *Holiness*, pp129f)

The subject of holiness is possibly one of the most difficult doctrines in the Bible. It has certainly been the cause of great disagreement between Christians in the past, and is still the source of much misunderstanding among Christians today. Nevertheless, whatever the difficulties may be, the Bible clearly teaches that we are to be holy for the simple reason that God is holy (1 Peter 1:16) and that he intends us to be partakers of his divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). It is therefore of extreme importance that we should understand not only what holiness means, but also how we become holy ourselves.

### **The meaning of holiness**

As we examine the Old Testament we discover that there are four main aspects to the biblical concept of holiness or 'sanctification'. (The word 'sanctify' simply means 'to make holy' and in the original Hebrew and Greek of the Bible there is no distinction made between them).

First, holiness means separation. Genesis 2:3 says that God blessed the seventh day. 'Blessed' here means 'sanctified'. God set apart the seventh day. He separated it from the other days.

Secondly, holiness means dedication. God told the Israelites, 'Consecrate (sanctify) to me every firstborn' (Exodus 13:2). Every firstborn animal or child was dedicated to God. Thirdly, holiness means purity. In Exodus 19:10 the people were to be consecrated (sanctified) and were to wash their clothes. Similarly, in the New Testament, holiness is contrasted with uncleanness (1 Thess. 4:7).

Finally, holiness suggests usefulness. Aaron was consecrated in order that he might serve as a priest (Exodus 28:3). When God calls us to holiness, then, he is calling us to be separate from sin, dedicated completely to him, pure and clean that we might be useful in his service.

## **Already sanctified**

Perhaps one of the greatest problems in understanding the doctrine of sanctification is that although God constantly challenges to be holy, he nevertheless repeatedly tells us that we are holy already! In the New Testament, Christians are generally referred to as saints, which means holy ones.

Paul could write to the church at Corinth (who were far from perfect Christians) describing them as those who 'have been and still are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints' (1 Corinthians 1:2, literal translation). They had once been thieves and drunkards, but now they were washed, they were sanctified, they were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:11). This shows that their sanctification was something that had already taken place. In the context it is clear that this was at the same time as their justification — i.e. when they were converted.

Similarly Peter tells us that we are a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9), and Hebrews 10:10 declares that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all. There is, then, clearly a sense in which as Christians we have already been sanctified by virtue of Christ's death on Calvary and by virtue of our standing 'in Christ' as new-born sons of God.

## **Perfecting holiness**

There is, however, another sense in which holiness has continually to be followed and put on, until it is established, perfected and completed. If our status in Christ is one of holiness, our state, in terms of every day practical living, may be rather different. Because, by virtue of Christ's death, God counts us as holy, we are encouraged to be holy in our actual conduct. To those who are a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9) God still says, 'Be holy, because I am holy' (1 Peter 1:16).

Our sanctification is the revealed will of God. He has not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness. This involves keeping our

bodies pure by abstaining from such things as sex outside marriage and dishonesty (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7). We are to make every effort to be holy because without holiness no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). We are to put on the new self created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24). Holiness must be perfected out of reverence for God (2 Corinthians 7:1).

As we increase and overflow in love towards one another and towards all men God will strengthen our hearts so that we may be blameless and holy at the coming of the Lord Jesus (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13). Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians was that God would sanctify them through and through (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Just as we have been justified by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, so too we have already been sanctified. God counts us as holy. But the outworking of that holiness must be seen in our living from day to day, and it is in that sense that our holiness has yet to be perfected. This completing of our sanctification is a gradual process throughout the life of the Christian believer, to be culminated in that great day when finally we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:2).

In the final analysis it is God alone who can make us holy, but that does not mean that we have no responsibility in the matter. Before turning our attention to the part we have to play, however, let us first consider the part God plays.

### **The part God plays**

In fact God has already graciously done all that was necessary to make our sanctification possible. The finished work of Calvary is the sole grounds of our sanctification. Christ gave himself for us that we might be sanctified (Ephesians 5:25-26). He suffered so that we might be made holy through his blood (Hebrews 13:12). We are made holy through the offering of his body (Hebrews 10:10). He has reconciled us to God through his death on the

cross in order to present us holy and without blemish and free from accusation (Colossians 1:22).

And yet he has gone even further. He has not only died for us, but he has raised us up to sit together with him in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 2:6) where he has blessed us with all spiritual blessings so that we would be holy and blameless in his sight (Ephesians 1:3-4). It is his wish that we should be sanctified through and through. He himself has promised to bring this about by the time of the coming of the Saviour (1 Thessalonians 5:23). The work of sanctification in our lives is brought about by the 'washing of the word' (Ephesians 5:26, c.f. John 17:17) and by the discipline of the Lord. We suffer hardship in order that we may share in his holiness (Hebrews 12:10).

### **The part we have to play**

Despite God's promise to perfect the work of sanctification in our lives, however, there are certain responsibilities which we ourselves must face up to. First, we are to think differently. We are to be made new in the attitude of our minds (Ephesians 4:23). We are to count ourselves as dead to sin (Romans 6:11). We are to be transformed by the renewing of our mind (Romans 12:2). Our minds will be 'washed' with the word as we read it and meditate upon it. It is by God's promises that we purify ourselves (2 Corinthians 7:1). Our first responsibility, then, is to purify our minds with the word of God.

Secondly, we should remember Calvary. Hebrews 9:13 says, If the blood of bulls and goats (in the Old Testament) sanctified... how much more will the blood of Christ cleanse our consciences... Christ died that we might be sanctified. Let us remember his death, not only at communion, but let us be daily aware of the transforming power of his death for us.

Finally, there must be an active rejection of sin and a yielding of ourselves to righteousness. Ephesians 4:22-24 tells us that we are to 'put off the old self (our old sinful nature) and 'put on the new

self (the new nature which we have received as a result of becoming a Christian). Before we became Christians we could not cease from sinning. We were powerless to help ourselves. But now we are born again. We are new creatures in Christ. We do sin sometimes, but we do not have to. We must think of ourselves differently. We must act differently. We must 'come out and be separate' and 'touch no unclean thing' (2 Corinthians 6:17). We must avoid sexual immorality (1 Thessalonians 4:3). It is our responsibility to abstain from these things. It is our responsibility to 'increase in love' (1 Thessalonians 1:3:12), to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy, and pleasing to God (Romans 12:1), to offer our bodies 'in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness' (Romans 6:20). Once we were the slaves of sin (Romans 6:20). But now we have been set free, and have become, voluntarily, slaves to God. The benefit we reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life (Romans 6:22).

## **The Doctrine of Holiness**

Powell, D., *The Doctrine of Holiness*, Pentecostal Doctrine (Ed. Brewster, P.S.), 1976, (pp357-370).

The doctrine of holiness is fundamental. The gospel came to turn sinners into saints and to produce holiness in those who believe. The Fathers of the Pentecostal movement made much of holiness, not so much as an experience to be sought, but rather as a life to be lived. The required holiness of the Old Testament was less than that of the New Testament. Abraham, "God's friend", would not have been accepted into the fellowship of the Church, neither would David, "the man after God's own heart", because both cohabited with more than one woman. In the Old Testament it was not unholy to give blow for blow, whereas in the New Testament it would be unholy to do so. The holy person accepts wrong against himself with meekness. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto

you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt.5:38, 39).

## **Definition**

Several English words have the same meaning as that of holy: hallowed, sanctified, consecrated, dedicated and purified, and all are translations of the same original word. If we are to arrive at a correct interpretation respecting any doctrine or word, we have to consider the first occasion when they were used.

Genesis 2:3 tells us, "God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it". This does not mean that He did some special work then, or on behalf of the day, but that it was to be a special day, i.e. one set apart from all the other days. We find the same word and meaning in Exodus 13:2, when God called upon the Israelitish nation to sanctify unto Him all the first born. This thought continues throughout the whole of the Old Testament when referring to the nation, the offerings, the tent of the congregation and all its furniture, and to those who served in any capacity in the tabernacle ministry. It shows two fundamental aspects of sanctification.

They had to sanctify themselves. "Sanctify him (Aaron) that he may minister". "For I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy" (Lev.11:44). The Lord had to sanctify them. "I the Lord do sanctify them" (Leviticus 22:9).

It is important to note these two aspects. The people did what was required of them and God accepted them because He had devised means whereby they were sanctified — the atoning blood, the garments and the oil. Their sanctification could not be accepted by the mere fact of their personal holiness, nor could the divine means work for those who had not fulfilled personal holiness. The same word is used to describe God's nature. See Ezekiel 36:23: "And I will sanctify my great name". This simply means that the Lord is set apart from all other beings. It does not

imply that some powerful action took place in God's name and nature as a result of that statement. Thus we conclude that Christians are persons set apart from the sons of men. They are made saints by the atoning blood of Christ positionally, and by an act of regeneration which takes place through the agency of the Holy Spirit. As we read the Old Testament, we see that the process of sanctification was complicated, and it proceeded in stages for those appointed to serve. Nowhere do we gain the impression that any particular spiritual work was done in an individual. Their sanctification was basically concerned with the external, the setting apart from the secular to the spiritual. To arrive at the correct interpretation and application of this doctrine, we must keep to the basic meaning of the word. We cannot say that, when holiness or sanctification is applied to things such as creatures, the furniture, the tabernacle, certain days, or even God Himself, it has one meaning, but that when it comes to an individual it has another meaning, and that there is some special internal work done. The meaning must be the same and its purpose the same in all circumstances.

## **Nature**

There are two basic elements by which the Christian is sanctified, the blood of atonement and the Word of God.

See the effect of the blood of atonement. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:2). When Christ shed His blood, He died, "the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). When the sinner hears the message of reconciliation and repents of his sins, accepting discipleship by being baptised in water, he is sanctified, he is justified. "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). This divine provision and its personal application set him



apart. He is translated from one kingdom into another. He has transferred his allegiance.

As to the Word of God, John 17:17 reveals: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth". This sanctification takes place through instruction, such as is found in Ephesians 4:22-24, where we are told to "Put off concerning the former behaviour the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness". The Word of God teaches the Christian how to live out in holiness the experience which Christ gave to him at regeneration. Nowhere in the New Testament is the Christian told to seek sanctification as a separate experience.

The Agent of all God's work is the Holy Spirit. He has to convict the sinner, He has to apply the truth, He imparts the new nature, and in this sense it may be said that the Christian is saved and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our 'Saviour'" (Titus 3:5,6), just as it is said that "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe". It is not the preaching which saves them, but the Word that is preached, and that Word is preached by a human personality. The preaching is effective, however, only as it is applied by the divine Person working in the individual soul.

The Holy Spirit does not Himself do a special work of sanctification, and He does not purify the individual. The teaching that we hear, of being sanctified by the fire of the Spirit, cannot be substantiated by God's Word. The sound of a wind on the day of Pentecost was not the Holy Spirit, it was not a wind, it was "a sound ...as of a rushing mighty wind". Nor were the cloven tongues of fire the Spirit; they were but symbols. The fire

illustrates the activity of the Holy Spirit, just as the dove illustrates His person. It would not be right to say that the dove does any direct work, nor does the fire. Both are merely symbols of God's working by the Holy Spirit; neither the fire nor the dove is the Holy Spirit. It must be clearly understood that grace or power cannot be effective apart from the obedience of the recipient.

### **Holiness describes God and all His Works**

"Hallowed be Thy name": this is the same word. It indicates: "Your name is set apart. You are different from all other fathers, from all other lords. Your kingdom is a holy kingdom. Your words are holy. Your Agent is holy". All God's works are free from failure and imperfection. All His words and works are incorruptible and indestructible.

We find that the word "holy" is used with determined purpose, because it is set over against all other systems and individuals. Only God is holy. Spiritualists describe satan as the 'Great Prince', the 'Great God', the 'Good Spirit'. They never attribute anything bad to satan, whereas God's description of that prince is the very opposite. He describes him as totally bad, a liar, a murderer, a destroyer, the devil, that old serpent. All his agents are described under one general term; they are "unclean" spirits. We now see how important is this word "holiness". It is set over against the kingdom which is fallen. This word has to do with God and all that relates to Him.

### **Holiness describes the Christian in his spiritual Nature.**

By this we understand his original holiness, i.e. that nature which came to him at his regeneration. At that moment, the sinner is made holy. Just as a new baby boy is a man child at his birth, so the newly-converted Christian has within him the principle of holiness. God at that moment calls him a saint, a sanctified one, a being set apart, His own child, not only positionally, but actually. This is the very nature of the Christian upon his regeneration. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us

wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30). "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). These texts prove that complete work which takes place upon regeneration.

### **Holiness is the divinely-implanted Nature of the Christian**

This nature is placed within man's spirit, thus changing the spirit of man from darkness to light. It gives him freedom within his own personality. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear" (Romans 8:15). The spirit, being regenerated, partakes of the nature of God, which is holiness and purity and so enables the saved man to live the practical life of holiness. It is this nature that Hebrews 2:17 shows: "He was made like unto His brethren", that is, He had a human body with human blood, He had a human spirit, yet He had another nature interwoven within His spirit and body, which made Him "very man of very man and very God of very God". We can never say this of ourselves, because we are still of the earth, earthy. Our bodies are still bodies of humiliation, or, as the Authorised Version puts it "our vile bodies", whereas Christ was without taint, or failure. He was perfect. When Christ prayed: "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:19), the same word is used in both cases, i.e. "I deliberately set myself apart". "May Thy words so instruct them, so strengthen them, that they may be able to set themselves apart", is the import of the remainder.

It is impossible for the unconverted man to possess holiness, and it is absolutely impossible for the true Christian to be without basic holiness, because it is his very nature. We read in Matthew 7:18: "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit". Here, the Lord Jesus Christ is not speaking so much about the fruit, but about the root—the

tree. The Pharisees and false workers profess to be true, and they produce the evidence which they think is satisfactory to prove that they are, but actually it is all external.

All this is seen in Romans 7. There we have man's intelligence enlightened by the revelation of truth, by the Spirit of God working on the truth within man's conscience. We there find his flesh rising violently against the desires of his spirit and will, understanding what is required of him, but being totally incapable of living the life of holiness because he is bound by the nature of sin. We see the same in Galatians 5: 19-21. The key to Christian living, to spiritual power, to the product of holiness, is in Galatians 5:24: "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts". This means that the root of the whole matter is the nature of Christ operating within man's nature, and this nature is set over against the works of the flesh. "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:17). This shows that there is an endless conflict between the physical nature and the spiritual nature. The word for spirit in this verse is not the Holy Spirit. It is the same as in v.16 — not the Person of the Holy Spirit, but rather the spiritual nature.

When it speaks about the Christian having crucified the flesh, it does not mean that it is put to death once and for all, but that denunciation and renunciation have taken place. As Paul says elsewhere, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14). Both Paul and the world were alive, but the world had renounced him and he had renounced the world.

Only by those who have in them this innate holiness, this divine nature which comes to man by regeneration, can this ever be done. The conflict is not a difficult one — it is not one day

winning and the next day losing, one day joyous and the next one groaning — but it is victory upon victory, for the life which the Christian lives he lives by the faith of the Son of God. This is another way of saying that it is the outworking of that spirit of holiness in every true believer.

## **Progress and Production**

Holiness is a process. It would be fatal for a Christian to imagine that, having once received in himself, as a gift, this nature of holiness, that it will remain untarnished, unfading and unfailing whatever he became or did. The provision is once and for all. The means of assistance is once and for ever. What Christ has done, He has done. His work is finished. It cannot be destroyed. Man can never make himself holy, no more than he can save himself, for, without the basic ingredient, he remains dead to God and dead to righteousness. Having once inherited holiness in the new nature through regeneration, he now has the responsibility of progressing. The following Scriptures show this. "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1). "Now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness" (Romans 6:19). "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Romans 6:22).

Many other Scriptures portray this important aspect of holiness. These Scriptures prove conclusively that, though we are made holy, holiness has to be developed. Our whole personality needs cultivation and this cultivation produces progressive sanctification. This is why it is called "fruit". The fruit is produced by the root and, if this root is neglected, then the fruit will show it. "I am the vine, ye are the branches . . . without me ye can do nothing... If a man abide not in me... he is withered". If we keep stating and acting as if the positional and innate nature is enough

and that we need do no more, we deny the One who gave us the gift of holiness.

The activity of holiness is first shown in its basic attitude, not in the clothes it wears, or in the service it does, but in its spiritual nature reaching out to the source from which all holiness springs. The first evidence of holiness is a correct longing for God Himself. Every creature has a basic longing for sustenance, an innate appetite for the food by which it alone can live. The truly saved soul does more than pray. We know that the heathen pray, false prophets pray, devils pray, bad men can pray, but only the children of God can commune.

The true child of God is now interested in practising the presence of Christ because of the nature of Christ within him. It is like responding to like. True holiness finds true rest and satisfaction in the Source of truth and holiness. Its activity is summed up in two words—"loving kindness". Actually, this is the basic meaning of holiness. It is the kindness of God in operation. Holiness, then, is God activity within His kindred. God is not austere, He is not a despot. He does not bend men to His ways. He is all-powerful. He is Lord of all, but He is gracious, kind, loving, gentle, lowly in heart. His very disposition is meekness. This is holiness. How is it, then, that many think of God as a tyrant, vicious, cruel, unhappy, finding pleasure in subjecting creatures to His will, when the very reverse is true? When God created hell, i.e. hades and eternal hell, He did not do so primarily as a punitive policy for man. We must never overlook the fact that God stands by with utmost gentleness, with longsuffering, patiently waiting for men to change, to repent and to receive His salvation. What do men mean in their prayers by the words, "We ask this for Christ's sake"? God did not give Christ to us for His own pleasure or profit, but solely for our benefit. The blood of atonement was shed not for God's sake, not to populate heaven. He could do this out of the dust of the earth, out of the stones of

the brook. He could create creatures from nothing. What He has done, He has done out of His holiness for our sakes, that He may share with men His holiness, His kindness, His immeasurable love. This is holiness.

The Pharisees pretended to be holy. They not only observed the law of Moses, but made it of non-effect by adding to it. They displayed their religion by large, loud texts upon their garments. They found fault with the holiness of Christ because it was different from theirs. They said of Him, "Behold a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners". They charged Him with breaking the Sabbath Day because His disciples ate corn when walking through the fields and because He healed on the Sabbath Day. They were more concerned with their traditions, with their external religious performance, than they were with the nature of holiness. The Pharisee in his holiness said, "Come not near me, because I am holier than thou". Jesus Christ said to them, "You look holy, like white-washed sepulchres, but inside you are full of putrefaction". Therefore, we clearly see that holiness is at first an inward action, showing itself in the activity of loving kindness.

### **Holiness cannot be hidden, yet it does nothing to be seen.**

The character of true holiness is seen in 1 Corinthians 13. This is the very essence of holiness, not gifts, not noise, not supernatural works, not dying for one's belief, but living out the character of Christ. It is the expression of the very nature of God. This is what Christ was. This chapter portrays the character of Christ, God revealing Himself in Christ and Christ revealing Himself in His saints. The activity of holiness is revealed in the Sermon on the Mount, which deals with holiness and this is why it commences with man's disposition, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3-12). Such a man knows his poverty and mourns because of it, not moans, but mourns. This does not mean that he carries his

sorrow and dissatisfaction on his face, keeping on repeating the prayer, "Forgive us for our shortcomings", but rather it implies that he inwardly rejoices that he has found the source of all riches, yet he still feels poor. This man is dissatisfied with his spiritual condition, always asking for help, seeking to help someone else. His heart is pure and he knows it not. He is the very manifestation of kindness, meekness, patience, longsuffering, gentleness. He is the man who will go the second mile without writing a tract about it or testifying how he bore this cross with great difficulty. He has forgotten the distance, because of the gentleness and kindness of Christ which is in him.

### **Power and Permanence**

The innate power of holiness is dynamic, because it contains the power of God. Life is power, and, when a person receives the new nature, he receives the power of almighty God, not the power to do exploits only, but the power to be holy in the midst of evil. The very nature of the Almighty is implanted in his spirit. He has the power to live, the power to reproduce.

Many Christians fail to recognise the important difference between innate power and imparted power. Innate power is that power which came at the Creation when God spoke and light and life came into the animal and vegetable creation. God breathed His own power into man to enable him to live.

Every tree which God planted by an act of almighty power had the power to reproduce itself, having seed within itself. Every Christian has this power. It is holy power, the power of holiness, therefore, every Christian has the power to bring forth fruit and that fruit should remain. This must not be confused with the power which comes to men at the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The source is the same and the same word is used in connection with both — *dunamis*. When a person is born again, he has within him innate power, the power of God, God's holy nature. This nature comes by the Holy Spirit. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a



sealing of the new man and it is a divine attestation to the Mercy Seat. The Mercy Seat in the Tabernacle represented the heart of man and the heart of God, and it was on this that the glory fell. The Mercy Seat was in the Tabernacle and the glory filled the place. Likewise, with the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God comes to bear witness to the holy nature, that holy thing within the human personality which makes him a son of God. It is deeply regrettable that, in so many cases, teaching is not given to those seeking the baptism in the Holy Spirit concerning holiness of character. It is unscriptural and dangerous for anyone to teach or to imagine that He comes to abide in a house which is not made ready. The Holy Spirit never comes to make a man holy; He comes to testify to holiness, i.e. the nature of Christ. This is seen in the meal offering in Leviticus 2:4, 5: "And if thou bring an oblation of a meat offering baken in the oven, it shall be unleavened wafers anointed with oil. And if thy oblation be a meat offering baken in a pan, it shall be of fine flour unleavened, mingled with oil". It will be noticed that the oil, which symbolises the Holy Spirit's activity, had to be mingled with the flour. These verses show two very important operations of the Holy Spirit. The meal offerings portray the character of our Redeemer and also the character expected of His disciples. The Holy Spirit affects the whole personality; He is in and upon. At salvation a man receives the new nature which is achieved through the Holy Spirit. This is called the spiritual nature, the spirit of holiness, the Spirit of Christ, the new man, the new creation. All are the result of the Holy Spirit's working. The point that we have to note is that the meal offering portrays the prepared offering of the pure nature to God. The fine flour speaks of the disciplined, tested life, and it is utterly impossible for the unsaved man to make such an offering. He may be as moral as the Christian, but he has not the spiritual ingredient. His offering can never be unleavened bread. The Christian, therefore, has in him dynamic power — the power of

the Creator and it is this power which enables him to cry out, "Abba, Father". This holy man is seen in Psalm 1. He is a prince among men, but note first that his character is emphasised. He is separated, set apart. He is like a tree planted by the rivers of water, ever green, ever flourishing, ever fruitful. Thus, we see that the Christian, because of the nature of holiness, cannot be overthrown. No external power, no winds of the wastes, no drought of the wilderness, can bend or break him. The fruit remains; "He brings forth fruit in his season". He has something to give because it was first given to him. He is holy, he is set apart from sinners. He is sanctified because God has made him thus, and he has made himself like it by obeying the divine injunctions concerning his relationship with God.

Holiness produces the power of unfailing confidence. "And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God" (1 John 3:19-22). Holiness finds its full happiness in the presence of eternal light. It longs to commune, to worship, to adore, to contemplate, to serve and to anticipate, whereas those with an unholy nature shun prolonged secret communion, they shrink in the mighty presence of God and reveal their pleasure at the wisdom which is earthy, soulish and demonic. They are dead in the presence of God. They come alive in vocal eruptions, and often disruptions, and express their pleasure by physical manifestations of falsehood, like actors upon a stage. This is why in 1 Corinthians 13 it says that the holy character "does not behave itself unseemly". The holy person is full of spiritual optimism. He has in him the faith of God, that faith which prevails. The great men of the Bible and of all ages have been men of holiness. They developed the divine disposition until they knew how to ask and receive. This is entirely different to

endeavouring to claim by a belief of the mind, which often produces very serious repercussions, producing neurotics and fanatics. True holiness produces true quietness of spirit, because of the inbred confidence coming through his nature.

Holiness provides the Holy Spirit with opportunities for His full deployment. "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). The Holy Spirit has to have a holy nature to work with. There have been times, and there still are, when the Holy Spirit may use an unholy person, but this is never the rule, it is the exception. We must not imagine that the man in the Corinthian Church was baptised in the Holy Spirit, neither must we conclude that the Holy Spirit was using him in that Pentecostal Church. The tragic thing was that they were allowing him to remain, knowing what kind of man he was, and the apostle argued that, if this condition continued, it was only a matter of time before the content of holiness departed from that church. "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" (1 Corinthians 5:6). When this happened, the Spirit of God could no longer operate.

No-one must imagine that the true Pentecostals teach anything less than holiness. Holiness is our watchword and holiness is our song. We make more of holiness than we do of gifts, manifestations or success. The Holy Spirit has operations, administrations and manifestations. "And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord, and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal" (1 Corinthians 12:5-7).

Because Christ hated iniquity and loved righteousness, the Holy Spirit anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows. "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore

God, even thy God, bath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Hebrews 1:9). This shows that there is a supernatural operation of the Spirit upon the holy person which is additional to the joy of the new nature, just as peace is made by the blood of Christ. Peace is a fruit of the new nature, yet there is a gift of peace. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (John 14:27). Here in Hebrews 1:9 we have the Holy Spirit "imparting" to Christ supernatural joy which made Him irrepressible, enabling Him to live above His circumstances, thus saving Him from despair and depression. That joy, the joy of the Lord, was His strength. It can therefore be truly said that the holy person is a happy person. He cannot be otherwise. Somehow, an idea has got abroad that a holy person is one who dresses in dark colours, who shuts himself away like a hermit in some cloister, and cuts himself off from association with the world. This is not holiness. Some of the most unholy people have lived under those conditions. Holiness is not isolation, it is participation — participation in God's eternal purpose, that is, rescuing souls from sin and judgment. He goes about doing good and healing those who are oppressed with the devil. As Christ was God in action, the holy Christian is Christ in action. We need to examine our lives regularly and carefully. It is so easy to become negative and pharisaical and to get the idea that we are not like other men: "We pray, we pay tithes, we go to church, we attend the prayer meeting, we don't go here or there". At the same time we can become idolaters. We can set up the abominable thing before our eyes and have an idol in the place of Christ. We must see to it that our holiness springs from within and is not put on from without. Some people adopt a kind of religious voice when they talk to the Almighty and this always causes suspicion. It is a kind of religion cloak. If our inward holiness is right, then it will of necessity be outwardly right.

Those people who say that they are saved and belong to Christ and are dirty, dishevelled and undisciplined, are a disgrace to the name of Christ, because this is contrary to decency. God has a great deal to say about proper deportment and proper conduct in our dealings one with another, and the holy person is careful about what kind of reactions his actions cause on others. When Paul said, "I become all things to all men that I might win some", he did not mean that he became like sinners, that he frequented their haunts and observed their habits, but that he was careful and wise in the way in which he offered salvation to men. He demonstrated Christ: "To reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen" (Galatians 1:16).

When our outward nature is grotesque, unChrist-like, inconsiderate, disobedient, disorderly and disruptive, it is an evidence which shouts to high heaven that the inward holiness has not yet been received, that our profession is but a false one. On the other hand, we must be very careful, because it is possible to have a procedure and a practice of holiness which are outwardly correct not a hair out of place, always doing the right thing and saying the right word at the right time — and yet be a Pharisee. We must give attention to the cultivation of the spiritual nature through instruction which will direct us in our service God-ward and men-ward. The truth must first sanctify us and then it will sanctify others. "For their sakes I sanctify myself". If we neglect to develop the nature of holiness which is given to us at regeneration by failure to cultivate the life which we have from Christ, we will be totally unable to have the power to reproduce. This is one major reason why there is poverty in the lives of so many individuals in our congregations. They do not grow, simply because they do not develop, nourish and cultivate that holy nature. Those people who are holy and pure in heart will see God; that means to say that they will see Him now. They will see Him who is invisible. God is near to them. He is near at hand and as a

result they are united. Christ is in them and they are in Christ. The holy man is that man revealed in Matthew 7:24-27, like a house built upon a rock. He has received the correct disposition and has heard and received the correct teaching. By obeying it, he has built his character on the divine declaration of truth, and, when the rains descend and the floods come and the winds blow and it beats as it did in Job's day — on the four corners at once, it will stand, because it is founded upon a rock, the rock of Jesus Christ, the rock of experience and the rock of instruction gladly obeyed. Let us, then, see to it that we do not neglect the nature of holiness. If we do, we will very soon be without fruit and, ultimately, without root.

### **Canty's "I Was Just Thinking".**

#### **Homosexuals and 'any questions?'**

Canty, G., [www.canty.org.uk](http://www.canty.org.uk) (*IWT 9, Homosexuals and 'any questions?'*)

The BBC plonked their 'Any Questions?' team down into territory unfamiliar to them – that of church affairs, asking, "Should homosexuals hold church office?" What on earth would they (secularists, perhaps humanists, agnostics and non-religious types) know about it? I can't imagine them reading their Bibles every morning and speaking with tongues. One panellist was anxious to tell the nation he was an atheist, as if that was such a brilliant intellectual achievement it qualified him to be an authority on church appointments. Then one member of the audience said he was born a homosexual. How did he know what he was when he was born?

Political cross talk won't do for spiritual matters. They are not talk stuff. Actually, one panellist said he had been reading the Bible (sensation!) but only the bits about homosexuals. Insight into the other 750,000 Bible words might have led him to see that God has an extreme distaste for human perversity.

However, they had to answer the question given to them and they did their best, despite being handicapped by what appeared to be little understanding of the culture and language of the Christian world. It is fundamentally different. The church is not governed by opinion but by the Word of God. Spiritual truth is not decided by democratic vote.

Well, those who see no wrong in homosexuality can certainly claim overwhelming support. For thousands of years the whole world saw no wrong in it. That was the pre-Christian, pre-scientific age of almost total ignorance. Only one nation on earth knew better and treated same sex intercourse as wicked, namely Israel. That light came direct from God when He spoke to Moses. Homosexual practice has always, everywhere, been one of various sexual aberrations. Slaves were sex objects, as were young boys. 'Worshippers' visited temple prostitutes, with social customs of sex orgies and gang rape. Even wealthy Roman 'matrons' acted and dressed as prostitutes for the thrill of it. Paul's references to women wearing a head covering is a direct allusion to this in the Roman city of Corinth. Plato has some shocking social views. This sexual 'freedom' went hand in hand with slaughter as sport, unwanted babies thrown out to die, human sacrifice and other wickedness, in which they saw no wrong. The world scene is described in Scripture "There is none that does good, no not one". Israel regarded all nations as like a sea throwing up evil. This 'culture' persisted into the Greek and Rome civilisations, until the world victory of Christianity. I assumed such history would be known yet a BBC lady panellist declared that people [of pro-homosexual opinion] had 'progressed farther than the Church' in homosexual matters. Progressed? How could going back to a pre-Christian age be progress? If decency exists, it came via Christianity and from when God told Moses "Be ye holy for I am holy". How holy are homosexuals?

For all that, we would all be as corrupt and hedonistic as the ancient heathen, if we, like them, lacked any guiding light or moral reference point. The true light now shines, but it is being deliberately smothered and is evident in many TV programmes which channel ancient and gross lewdness to us. Turn from God and you find the devil. Know God and in the light of His glory, everything messy, sordid and shameful is impossible, "hating even the garment spotted by the flesh".

The Bible laws stress that God hates confusion. Garments of cotton and wool were forbidden, yoking together animals of different species, and wearing the clothes of the opposite sex. The colour 'pink' is not mentioned in the Bible, being a dilution of red with white. We are responsible to a holy God whose righteous will is mandatory and absolute.

God wants men to be men and women to be women, neither feminised nor masculinised. God formed men physically for women and women for men. Anything different is an offence against nature. The results show on medical records. God destroyed Sodom at the beginning of history as His warning that this sin would find us out. When Christianity was originally proclaimed it was a message of moral change and included condemnation of sexual aberrations. The so-called homosexual 'life style' is clearly taught in the New Testament as a 'death style'! Christians and the Bible are not in the defendant's dock. They are God's earthly attorneys at God's judgment bar. Preach the Gospel and the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. It can't do that if we are compromising. Without Divine standards, there exists no authentic moral guide whatsoever. We are thrown back on Government legislation, which itself has no moral foundation. Until World War II, all the Ten Commandments were deeply embedded as part of the British life-basis, and were an effective



brake. Today, in 2004, Parliament's 100,000 commandments can't stop runaway evil.

One thing more: The BBC panellists seemed unable to grasp that the Christian church's standards are not open to discussion. They are absolute. The Church is the pillar and ground of the truth standing to confront the world with the mind of God. The Bible is not a book of club rules for those joining the church. It is God's law and standard for all mankind, all races, in the church or out. "Here we stand, and can do no other". Unbelief gives no immunity to God's requirements. Defy His will and we are like a fly up against a 70 mph car!

Incidentally this 'Any Questions' broadcast did include an evangelical voice, but it seemed so friendly. Paul the Apostle pioneered purity and holiness against ancient evils without compromise or apology. To the 'Any Questions' heathen of sophisticated Athens he declared, "God has set a day when he will judge the world by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead." Today the devil has plenty of agents. The world needs to see the flashing two edged sword of the Word of God, the Gospel, wielded with a strong and courageous arm.

### **Well done? Good? Faithful?**

Canty, G., [www.canty.org.uk](http://www.canty.org.uk) (*IWT 10, Well done? Good? Faithful?*)

"The last shall be first," Jesus said. A liberal once remarked, "I'm inclined to agree with Jesus". Well, he had better! But I'm sure that some of the people Jesus marked for promotion from last to first, would be quite humble, in ordinary jobs, looking after home and family and filling whatever role in the church they could, but perhaps never in the front row. The architecture of the temple of God has very many small saints' niches to fill. We can't judge, but I expect endless lines of such 'last' people to be presented with the Lord's own BAFTAs and Oscars for their unrealised great

performances as extras with mere walk-on parts. No church, like no drama, could exist without them.

Of course, Jesus never meant that front line battle heroes would be last. Apostles, martyrs, and countless other giant spiritual characters are needed to lead Christian ranks forward. "Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness", Paul anticipated.

He also said, "I judge myself". I am glad he could, but personally I find it a contortion. Naturally we are each our own favourite person and to examine ourselves we need to be like a mongoose that can touch any part of itself with any other part of itself.

Somehow some of us do land in the front line. From my teens I was roped in for just about everything. I can't remember now how I reacted. My ego fizzing perhaps, inflated with self-admiration? Jesus stayed out of the limelight for his first 30 years. It is tough to let other people upstage you, jump on your shoulders and steal your show, as I very well know, but it is good discipline in the art of preferring others above one's self, as Scripture exhorts.

Having ventured thus far about myself, perhaps I'll risk a bit more, or about my wife anyway. I expected her to be always by my side through my travels and decades as pastor-evangelist. She fought shy of any limelight and never grumbled when my job for God pushed her into the obscure second place. Throughout our years of pioneering we had to count the pennies, but she never complained. It was all sacrifice for her and little recognition; I the first and she the last. But she is in glory now where the roles are different. Her quiet loyalty to me and to the Lord, like that of myriads of other pastor's wives, I know will have brought her God's "Well done, good and faithful servant".

Thinking along these lines, I've been asking honest friends if they think that God will turn around and tell me that I had taken her too much for granted, taking her away so often from a woman's

natural habitat of home? I had been accused in the past of "dragging" my wife around the globe. Will she get all the reward, not me?

I must 'wait and see', as Asquith said. But I know this, that priority for God should not leave a wife and family wondering if we even love them. Jesus never meant it to be like that. Christians are supposed to LIVE as well as die for God's work, not to burn out but to burn ON. We can put God first too much, like a pastor giving just a squeezed-in spot for his family after visiting church members all day, then spending hours behind a shut study door, with church meetings every night. Is that what God demands?

Well, I was just thinking. God will judge, and we can't re-live life. Meanwhile, zeal can outrun natural obligations. Christ's passion for God was consuming, but He still gave 30 of His 33 years to home, work and siblings. Even during His ministry He was so relaxed, never rushing to grab every opportunity to heal and save. Even in His last moments, He told John to take care of Mary, his mother.

Studying the Gospels, Jesus spoke of forsaking one's family for His sake, and loving Him more than everything else. Peter claimed he had had forsaken all, but had he? It looks as if it was not all the time. He did not neglect his wife and also went to see his mother in law. We should read one Scripture with another, for we are commanded to love our wives. That isn't just spiritually either, but is in terms of house and home. Deacons, elders and bishops were qualified by caring for their wives and families. Looking after them WAS God's service.

The Bible talks about wives and mothers over 750 times. The Scripture life-style is set in the framework of family religion. We love and serve God by loving and serving one another, particularly those in our care. If we fail in responsibilities to close relations how can we have close relations with God?

Accord in marriage is the litmus test of accord with God. It is a common field where Christian reality is tested. A difficult partner can be our opportunity for longsuffering, forbearance, patience and the love that 'endures all things'. It is hardly consistent to sing in church "I will give my life for you", then shout and bawl at home when things don't go right.

Marriage is tricky. It may hold together, but how? Affection? Or some less creditable bond? Keeping up appearances? Dread and fear of displeasing a partner? Is that Christian union? I've seen managing director marriages, with one partner running the show and the other in the outer office; boa-constrictors, swallowing a partner who ceases to be of any account; spare wheel wives with no life or will of their own, accessories who must stay close in case their owner needs them; and master and servant marriages, with he (or even she) never lifting a finger in the home.

None of this is the marriage unity of Scripture. Agape is never presuming, exploitive, demanding, selfish, one-sided or overbearing. Marriage should be freedom, not serfdom, wedded not welded, wedlock not padlock. The idea is to practice understanding and service, to provoke love and seek the happiness of the other before self, and practice makes perfect. I think how God treats us. He told Israel, "I, your Maker, am your husband". Jesus called Himself the bridegroom, and the way He is with His bride is the wonder of angels. He is our model, isn't He?

### **Why Make Christianity So Hard?**

Canty, G., [www.canty.org.uk](http://www.canty.org.uk) (*IWT 17, Why Make Christianity So Hard?*)  
Jesus did say "My yoke is easy" but when originally jammed on my neck I found it cumbrous and anything but velvet lined. True, that was a while ago, and I have lived long enough to learn, and enjoy, what Jesus meant. But my impression is that an awful lot of folk don't want it easy. Making it hard brings them credit. They remind me of Isaiah 46:1, 'Bel bows down, Nebo stoops'!

New Testament people seemed such successful Christians, real five-minute-mile-marathon-super-athletes. I was a panting pedestrian compared to them. Their language, "joy unspeakable and full of glory", and "God who gives us the victory", contrasted with my apologies at the end of every day, pleading that God would overlook my shortcomings and help me to remember the rules better tomorrow. I made the rules myself, and wrote them kneeling in prayer.

The Anglican Prayer Book speaks of miserable sinners, but I was then more the miserable saint type with a pose of perpetual penitence. At least, I thought, I do confess my frailties, which is quite humble, quite a virtue! Of course I never doubted that God loved me, just as I never doubted at 7 years old that my Irish mother loved me, but she still chased me down the street with a stick.

Jesus said "Come unto me and I will give you rest". The word 'rest' filtered through my church experience as an achievement to be attained at some indefinite future. Rest would only follow labour, after I kept up with the religious programme dumped on me. Worse, I was never sure I had done all I should. Had I unknowingly slipped up somewhere? Actually more often than not I knew very well I had, and felt God could not count on me or make me one of His blue-eyed boys, as if He ever had one at all! Saved by believing, sanctified by straining.

I wished the Bible mentioned people struggling like me to keep on the right side of the Lord. It did not oblige me with such examples, but I had friends like that who believed God's smile was reserved for rare souls, people who had reached the higher Christian standards. I visualised the Christian life as mountaineering, always with one more peak up ahead.

There was the example of Paul the apostle. I sympathised with his heart-cry: "What a wretched man I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" But he immediately swept his

conscience clean: "Thanks be to God- through Jesus Christ our Lord. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Romans 7:24/25. He never expressed any depression over weaknesses, no bewailing his poor spirituality, no remorse, no mortification, no self-deprecation. He showed every sign of assurance that God really went along with him. How did he do that?

One Bible phrase did occur to me, 'afflict your souls'. It justified me every night at prayer time. It is found in Scripture, but only in the AV of Leviticus. The NIV doesn't say "afflict" but 'deny yourselves'. The actual Hebrew says 'humble yourselves, deny yourselves, fast', and when we ask what we should fast from, the answer is – from work! "You must not do any work ... it is a Sabbath of rest'. No workaholics! The Old Testament 'types and shadows' carry the same message. Leviticus 16.25 lays it down that priests approaching God must wear linen, for coolness and bathe first. That is to avoid perspiration. Sweat is evidence of hard work and God doesn't want it to be hard work to come to Him. Strenuous effort and hard searching only give us something to boast about, and it doesn't look good about God as if He is sullen, indifferent, playing hide and seek with us as if He didn't want us to find Him. That is not the Bible God. It is the God only of mystics waiting and straining to hear Him. The Lord did not say "Labour pleases me" His favourites are not masochists wearing hair-shirts. The Word is "Call upon Him while He may be found". The Bible is the world's happiest book. It took me time to adjust my perspectives to take in the whole Bible landscape. Ultra-holiness culture clung. It would take a chapter to outline it. But I gradually wriggled out of my religious straight jacket. Did that jacket reflect a God of freedom and deliverance whose disposition is pure joy? I played in a classical music orchestra but resigned because I didn't believe God approved of my taking part in public concerts. I even stayed away from a

Gospel service because the pastor wanted the orchestra I led to play a hymn tune on their own, no singing. Well, the Pharisees tithed table condiments. I have found that life holds more realistic challenges, pride, jealousy, envy, adultery, covetousness and also the call to greater virtues such as loving our neighbour which was not meant to be a performance too wearing. Old Testament religion had its observances but was quite leisurely, no churches, no services, no Bibles to read, worship only at the Temple, doing nothing in the Sabbath and only a 'Sabbath day's journey' of about 1000 yards. They tithed and ate their tithe at the Temple two or three times a year! But all took the Sabbath, the day of rest, and turned it into an oppressive legal obligation. We still do that kind of thing. Christianity becomes something to carry instead of wings to carry us. Soar like the eagles?

A lady recently came to me distressed. She had witnessed to people but without success. Her pastor had said that bearing fruit meant soul winning, and without such 'fruit' they would appear empty handed and shamed before the Lord in heaven. It laid a heavy burden on this good soul. It was inventive theology.

Prayer is specially looked upon as a way to please God. Is that what it is? A labour? How do we know we have prayed enough to please God? The more the prayer the more we please Him? In the two hundred references to prayer in the New Testament not one suggests it. We are exhorted to pray, but God's attitude towards us is not set out as proportionate to the time we spend on our knees.

Expressions can mislead us. They say "prayer is power" meaning prayer time is power, the longer the prayer the more the power, two hours twice the power of one hour. Depending on praying enough to have power means we never know we have power. We need a sign. Only the Holy Spirit is power, and He gives a sign. We can't manipulate Him to double His presence by praying twice as long.



By waiting in prayer can we gain more of God? It is said so. But again when do we know we have we prayed enough? How long must we wait to get more? How much more of God do we get? It makes it hard to be the sort of Christian we imagine we should be. My reading of Scripture shows we should grow in grace and in knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, but I don't find 'waiting in prayer' suggested as the Scriptural means.

What is God like? Does He need a clamour at His gate to notice us? Is Christianity that hard? Is the Lord too preoccupied with a heavenly agenda to attend to us?

I miss my wife because she was always there to turn to anytime. To speak to her I did not need to make a performance of it as if I was hailing a passing ship. God is just as present as any wife, our great ever-present Comforter. Prayer doesn't need to be prefaced by appeals to Him to come and hear us. Of course He hears us. He can't NOT hear us, for He is not deaf or occupied miles away. The pagan prophets of Baal had to cry out "Hear us, O Baal!" from morning to night. Elijah's prayer was totally different, brief, assured. He knew God was listening. The fire fell at once. We don't need to cry like the Psalmists, in the age before the Spirit was given, "Awake or Lord!"

We turn to God without any preamble, a very present help. He is the 'There God,' as Ezekiel said. Run to Him and He runs faster to us, like the father ran to the Prodigal. God came to Jacob, challenged and wrestled with him. Jacob did not go searching for God. The Bible God needs no finding, no chasing. He is the God who does the finding. "Adam, where are you?" We can't claim the credit when we know Him – He found us.

God doesn't arrange for the Christian life to be hard. It is not a system for gaining credits. Circumstances impose hardships upon us, not God. He is not an inflictor of trouble, but a deliverer. The devil slips the insinuation into Christian teaching that God sends trials. He certainly allows us to be tried, but God is not in the



business of planning trouble. "In the world you will have tribulation, but fear not for I have overcome the world." God may ask us to take the Gospel and face danger, to accept a commission that necessarily involves hardship, because the circumstances are like that. Then let a man deny Himself and take up his cross. But to make difficulties or load ourselves to breaking point with endeavour and religious duties is gratuitous and lures nobody into the Kingdom. Some sing "Let me burn out for thee, dear Lord". Too many pastors are going down with burn outs. Reinhard Bonnke says "God does not want ash heaps". Reinhard also said that God doesn't want us to be horses - and that includes pastors!

The Lord knows our frame, that we are dust. He filled the world and life with good things and 'no good thing will He withhold from them that love Him'. Is God happy when we refuse His good things, and make righteousness so sorely unattractive? Eternal life means quality lifestyle, companionship with God, the source of all goodness.

### **Thinking about fasting**

Canty, G., [www.canty.org.uk](http://www.canty.org.uk) (*IWT 1, Thinking about fasting*)

It is Lent, "the period including forty weekdays extending from Ash-Wednesday to Easter-eve, kept as a time of fasting and penitence in commemoration of our Lord's fasting in the wilderness". So the Oxford Dictionary informs us and that Ramadam is "The ninth month of the Muslim year, rigidly observed as a thirty days' fast during the hours of day ". It is a strict obligation.

Fasting has always been a fairly universal religious custom but not strikingly Christian except in the Roman Catholic church. Ancient idolaters, pagans, and Greeks consulting their Oracles fasted. The Roman centurion Cornelius fasted, following Jewish custom, before his conversion. So do shaman spirit worshippers, Eastern and

mystical cults seeking transcendent experiences. Aboard a doomed ship the non-Christians fasted but Paul encouraged them to eat. The importance of fasting in the early church is measured by only two references in Acts, at special times. Religious leaders complained to Jesus that His disciples did not fast, He defended them. Devout Jews fasted Mondays and Thursdays but only till the afternoon. Jewish Christians kept up the practice, voluntarily, not by compulsion. Under persecution by Rome, Christians believed martyrdom was a sure way to heaven until Christianity became the religion of the empire and deprived them of martyrdom. Severe self-affliction and asceticism was then substituted as a way to heaven. An early two-day Lenten fast was extended on the fourth century to forty days self-denial. Ember days were added. The Vatican modified this recently, ruling that what was saved by missing meals should go to the Third World hungry. Other Christians also do that. Fasting is slimming, quite a good thing for couch potatoes!

Out of some 200 positive references to prayer in the New Testament only five to fasting and prayer, and that merely incidental and no mandatory significance.

Strangely, some Pentecostals and charismatics have treated it necessary and vital. The Voice of Healing gave great publicity to some who fasted for forty days or more. Their purpose was not explained, and it had no theology. It was simply assumed it would bring great spirituality and healing power. Looked at impartially the idea seemed to be to impress God, gain His special esteem, and oblige Him to act. It was no different from the practices of self-affliction of the medieval 'saints' denying themselves food and comfort as a means of grace and to curry Divine favour.

I think that fasting is more an instinctive reaction than a religious invention. In a prolonged spiritual crisis years ago I became so desperate that continued fasting seemed natural. But all it did was weaken me until I could not walk. On another occasion, going a

month with one meal a day, I became very irritable. It proved far more a distraction than a help, my hunger forcing itself upon my attention. Yet actually, I've never been that fond of food. I have two meals but consume practically nothing during 18 hours each day. So without these minimal calories I soon become too faint to concentrate.

Christ and the apostles make little of fasting. The New Testament seems to me ambivalent on the subject, but the Lord does not forbid it. He does warn us about its abuse and mistaken motives. He emphasised fasting as personal and private. We are not to fast and tell or even look as if we fasted. No doubt we can fast to impress friends with our spirituality.

Fasting having been strongly advocated by some Pentecostal-charismatics, one wishes their theology and purpose was clearer. Practised as a physical act to draw near to God, it becomes a sacrament, but Pentecostals are not sacramental believers.

Fasting can never pressurise God. It is an excellent way of expression and emphasis in prayer, the same as calling loudly, or weeping. Physical conditions do apply to prayer. Some kneel, or walk about, are silent, or shout, prefer to be alone, or in company, use aids, the Bible, prayer books. I heard of a young man who always prayed naked to be utterly real. Fasting is in the same category, useful to some, but not to others. If people eat and do not fast they should not feel guilty or unspiritual. We read of only one occasion when Jesus fasted, and that was probably involuntary, food not being available in the wilderness. Otherwise He was criticised for indulging in food and wine. But He is the One who has given us all things to enjoy. "The Lord satisfies the desire of every living creature". To refuse His rich provision and goodness it is hardly a way to please Him.

Fasting is self-denial. But there are other greater forms of self-denial spoken of in the Word of God and with more actual practical effect and purpose. For the Gospel's sake millions

constantly embrace real denial, sacrificing careers, money, time, fame, pleasure, home, fellowship. That kind of fasting renders us more useful and able to do God's will. In summary, miss meals to serve God if necessary, but we had better have a pure motive and articulate reason.

## **"Separation" or isolation?**

Canty, G., [www.canty.org.uk](http://www.canty.org.uk) (*IWT 2, Separation or isolation?*)

When I was young all adults were Victorians. They reared me and taught me. We had less comforts and conveniences, but 100 times less crime than today because children went to Sunday school and learned Scripture at day school. Church and chapel were barriers against the lawlessness which is now an uncontrollable flood. Civilised decency then did not need today's detailed legislation or Politically Correct fanatics policing our family affairs and legislating how to be 'sensitive' with what words we used.

I lived with grandparents, non-religious but who accepted Christian ideas of right and wrong as a law of nature and also the Sabbath with no working, buying, shopping, shows, gardening, cleaning, knitting, sewing, card playing, dominoes or children's games. We honoured a remote God by wearing our best boots. At 12 I became a Christian in a church of grown-ups all born in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Additionally they also followed the 19th century holiness culture. "Spirituality", meant separation from all worldliness. I first met the pastor at a church tea and saw him put his hand to his face shocked when a woman helper wore a sleeveless dress. Flesh-coloured stockings and lipstick would have shocked him more. Some disapproved of the church tea, saying "When the cups begin to rattle the devil begins to prattle." "Separation" was mostly against things, rightly so sometimes, smoking, drinking, betting, pubs and clubs, horse-race and dog tracks, bad language and it extended into the fields of jazz music, cinemas, Sunday travel, the 'wireless', shows etc. Theatres had

been sinful since the Globe Theatre of Shakespeare's days. A Press card authorised me to gather sports reports for the local newspaper until I realised my church did not favour professional matches. I read only religious books and played only religious music. Later I signed up in a symphony orchestra but after a while resigned, feeling I was 'sitting in the seat of the scornful'. It lost me the opportunity to play under the baton of famous Sir Henry Wood.

Maybe it is early training and my separation-conditioned conscience, but a bell still tinkles against crossing the old well-marked lines of demarcation. Once I did cross and went to a West End cinema. After 10 minutes I had savoured the world and walked out protesting at the infuriating blasphemy on the screen. In music 'pop', is simply beyond my comprehension. As for fiction - well I have even written some.

So there you are, my personal confession and recollections of formidable "separation"! But I was thinking about it, because it struck me how long it is since I heard the word separation. First, I know it made Christian witness difficult. I could not answer arguments against my austerity where I worked with qualified men. To them it was quaint, eccentric and made Christianity unattractive. My argument was that 'Jesus satisfies'. Yes, but hardly in the way I went about it! In my teens I had no truck with girls except lift my hat as I walked on past them in the street leaving church.

'Separation' is outward profession, not an inward virtue, but there should be outward profession for all that, though not as a sacrament to trigger God's approval. 'Do's and don'ts' may breed only an illusion of spirituality. The devil's temptations are more subtle than not going to the pictures. Real godliness is concerned with character weaknesses and ghastly imperfections. Outwardly separated people keeping the strict rules with an appearance of godliness, (and there's no law against that), may yet be guilty of

other kinds of sins, even the most gross failures. Outstanding leaders have exemplified this tragic fact.

Some weaknesses are very strong! Scripture declares the heart of man is desperately wicked. We are never anything else really but sinners walking on the brink of the abyss, kept by the hand of Christ. Wriggle out of His grasp and, like even great Bible characters, fall. Moses gave the world its basic laws of civilised behaviour but died because of indiscretion. Scripture even warns 'they that are spiritual among you' that while restoring the lapsed they themselves are vulnerable. But, thank God, if we crash, by His mercy we can get up, find forgiveness and restoration, and then like David in Psalm 51 determine to honour God and tell the world of God's mercy and forgiveness.

Outward piety may be easy but integrity a struggle, with absolute purity of motivation, goodness, and bringing every thought into the captivity of the Holy Spirit. To 'love not the world' means not loving what the world loves - money, fame and power. Godliness has ten thousand qualities and they are all spelled l-o-v-e. We live only as much as we love.

One vital thing must be said. We may fault Victorian rules but has separation no meaning at all nowadays? Is un-worldliness outmoded, old school? Can we now live like non-Christians? Be born-again without it being noticeable and indulge in the same pleasures like Israel adopted the idolatry of their neighbouring Canaanites? 'Separation' perhaps had indefensible interpretations, but are there no off-limits to Christians today?

Being like the world is no way to change it. Abraham changed the world for ever by steering clear of it. A cartoon showed a swearing, drinking, parson leaving a pub after telling dirty stories. A patron watching him leave remarked "I can't stand these UN-holier than thou types!" Narrow separationism may handicap Christian witness with its hair-shirt image but a pendulum swing to liberalism is worse.

Things once disapproved may change. The old rule was against football, but few think that way today. It seems innocent enough, except - the world has stamped it as its own religion, a priority 'more than life and death' as one club manager said. For the non-Christian "These be thy gods O Israel!" TV, radio and Press force-feed us with the 'beautiful game'. Every newscast ends with football like a devotional epilogue. If the game can be enjoyed, why not? But should we be more passionate club followers than Jesus followers?

The Gospel is our supremely important business. If it isn't, then perhaps it is time for repentance, renunciation, and revival. Should followers of Jesus know pop songs better than songs of the faith? Or be greater fans of the world's 'stars' than of dedicated men and women serving God? A woman said to be 'the greatest comedienne', said in a TV interview that Christianity was 'rubbish'. Rubbish, yet it commands the devotion of far greater minds than hers! What admiration can we have for people like that? The world has unworthy passions. "Lovest thou me more than these?" The love of Christ is backed by a million reasons. It ought to infuse all we do, where we go and what we say. It need not be a raucous shout in the market place, but it can be a subtle perfume that everybody notices.

Sanctity is not sanctimonious, not repellent but appealing, not judgemental but understanding. It has grace, not airs and graces. It looks up, but is not uppish, in the world but not of it, comes to save the world, not condemn it, loves the world but only as God loved it.

The thrice holy God, the Wholly Other One, came to earth, so gracious that sinners drew near Him and the common people heard Him gladly. That is our great ideal and example. That's what I've been thinking anyway.

## 'God so loved the world' and 'Do not love the world'

Canty, G., [www.canty.org.uk](http://www.canty.org.uk) (*IWT 16, Love not the world*)

John talks about the world more than anybody else in Scripture, and it is always the same word - 'kosmos', the inhabited world, people. He does not talk about the physical earth; this is a rare subject in Scripture - just that God made heaven and earth. The biblical writers had no idea about the globe.

Love, even love for your enemies, is a great theme in Scripture. So if God loved people – the world, why should we not love the world? Obviously the nuances differ.

Psalm 7 says that God is angry with sinners every day (v.11).

From that angle it is the rebel world that is the world not to love – the rebellious order.

I confess I DO love this world, the Earth. The longer I live the more I want to be alive in God's world, not half dead in it! "Thou has made everything beautiful in its time" (Eccl 3:11) – the earth is miraculously lovely. Poets fail to convey the music of our fascinated wonder. Even my humble garden borders are pageant streams of prismatic splendour. Every petal is a flake of sunshine. Abroad are tumbled rocks, stormy skies, rocking oceans and unsculpted mountains yet so awesome they catch our breath and moisten our eyes to shine with speechless pleasure. Words are too crude.

John said "love not the things of this world", and yet we read: "God saw all that he had made and behold it was very good." The Psalms also rejoice in God's good world. He waters the furrows and puts gold in the hills. Why should we not love what He has done? We must remember that John's writings contain many ambiguities and double meanings. By the love of the things of the world he means covetousness and falling in with godless aims. John writes "the whole world is under the control of the evil one" (1John 5:19). Paul also explains this to the Ephesians - "You followed the way of the world, and the ruler of the kingdom of



the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are children of disobedience... by nature the children of wrath dead in transgressions." (Eph 2:2-3)

I am baffled that apparently decent people are so prejudiced and uncomfortable with 'God talk'. While house calling for my church, I received bitter looks from householders who knew nothing of me or my church. It is startling that many who tolerate the most objectionable rubbish on television can't be quick enough to switch off anything Christian. It is as Paul says, 'the spirit of the devil'.

Our church talk is of separation from worldliness, usually referring to a church-made category of forbidden pleasures. I wrote in IWT 2 of my own early 'holiness' which hung like a chafing yoke around my neck. From this distance I can see now how hopeless were our outreach struggles when we were erecting walls of separation for converts to climb over into our religious ghetto. I was challenged but never found much justification for my self-denials and constricted lifestyle and church culture of taboos and scruples.

We can fit the 'un-worldliness' pattern of a church and yet be far from spiritual. A woman whose tongue did me enormous and lasting harm was very strict on 'worldliness'. One of the most 'worldly' items is money - we need it but to love it is rank with the world, like Lot living in Sodom. Jesus coined a word for money 'mammon', the god of gold. It is the pivot on which the world's interest swings and we are not to join that merry-go-round. Jesus showed total indifference to wealth. He suggested that we should not hold on too tight fisted even to what we have. God gives for us to live and then to give. He does not give because we give, for He is a giver already and needs no prompting or motivating. We must distinguish between culture and command. Cultural standards change. It had startled me recently when several excellent and sacrificing Pentecostal friends told me they go to

the pictures and to pop concerts - but I concluded that I was too fossilised. The Beatles were different from Elim choruses in the 1960's!

Standards are written across the pages of Scripture, but not in express commands. Issues of music, dress, hair, jewellery, entertainment are peripheral matters decided by the major principles of wisdom and love. Our rule book is love. The New Testament is not a law book like the Koran, nor does it give us the right to legislate. Christianity is not routine religious performances but action and love to please God, that is the God who sets us free.

God planted a garden, and the devil led Adam out of it. A young Scottish minister one morning found the roads too frozen so he skated to church. Afterward, called by the kirk elders to give account of his Sabbath sin, they were in a dilemma. If he skated he broke the Sabbath and if he did not turn up at church it was worse. Then clarity inspired one leader. He demanded of the young man "It amounts to this – did you enjoy it or not?" Well, I've known people refuse ice-cream because they might 'enjoy it'. I have no such conscience. I hope there is ice-cream in heaven!

### **Are we under the law?**

This question annoys me. Why ask it? If we are born-again and really Christian we wouldn't want to be lawless. If we don't want to be under the law, that is the Ten Commandments, then we are not Christian anyway. Also, if anyone thinks that keeping the Ten Commandments will qualify them for heaven, they have no idea what it means.

For the rest of the legal code of Scripture, that is the Old Testament, much does not fit modern life. I can't build a parapet to my house, nor do I gather birds from their nests. I keep no slaves or cattle, nor can I offer burnt sacrifices. The Lord commanded all men to keep three of the Feasts, but it is not possible in the twenty-first century. We can't pitch temporary

shelters of tree branches outside Jerusalem or plough with an ox and a horse and leprosy does not appear on our house walls for any priest to pronounce upon. God forbade garments of wool and cotton, but we dress with synthetic fibres. Such rules are not applicable today but were only for Israel's primitive circumstances. We are told that we must "rightly divide the Word of God", that is, divide between the absolutes and the local and temporary, but we must discern the underlying principles. Jesus said that the principle laws were love. Rigid rules are not practical. Early attempts to bring great blessings and success by strict ideas of un-worldliness actually defeated the purpose and alienated the people we wanted to win.

## **Christian Witchcraft, Getting It Wrong In Jesus' Name**

*Examining Spiritual Warfare Teaching - Getting Things Wrong In Jesus' Name*, Andrew Corbett

*“Where is the proof of all this alleged damage we’ve supposedly done to satan? How dare we pass off arrogant posturing, pep rallies and war games as true spiritual authority! In a real satanic assault, many of today’s spiritual warriors would be sent running for their lives like the sons of Sceva who made exorcism a game (see Acts 19:14).”* Mario Murillo, "Why We Need Fresh Fire", 1994

### **Introduction**

I first wrote about spiritual warfare in the early 1990s. After originally being a practitioner, I became suspicious that I had been sold a dud by the dozens of paperback books appearing in Christian Bookstores and the various visiting preachers who were espousing this mystical doctrine. My suspicions were firstly based on the fact that it wasn't working and then the concern about its Scriptural basis.

The result was that I researched the topic and wrote a short booklet: *Examining Spiritual Warfare*, which I printed as a photocopy. Nearly a thousand of these hardcopies were distributed and several more thousand off my website. The initial

response to this research was a request from my senior pastor not to make it available to anyone since it directly contradicted what he had been teaching. But my motive was a sincere quest for truth. In each edition of this booklet was the invitation for feedback and comment. Interestingly nearly all of the feedback I have received has been thankful appreciation.

Readers have commented that the booklet has helped to dispel Christianised myths and expose “pseudo-Christian” magical arts. Over time I have felt regularly that this booklet was now unnecessary because at last all Christians have realised what I had been saying. But then I hear of some church still continuing this extremely dangerous practice and I think maybe just one more edition of this booklet is still needed. So here it is!

### ***The Nature Of Our Warfare***

*“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this present age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”* Ephesians 6:12

There is little doubt that we live in a world in conflict. This is true in the natural and the spiritual realm. The Bible exposes the spiritual realm as a battle between demonic spirits and the Kingdom of God. Paul the Apostle helps the Christian to realise that once you are in the Kingdom of God you are going to have to engage in a spiritual battle. There has been a lot of fanciful teaching about what Paul wrote in Ephesians 6 regarding this spiritual battle. I wish to outline some of the things which have been taught

### **Current teaching Examined**

Most teaching on spiritual warfare includes teaching on spiritual weapons available to the believer. Care must be taken not to interpret the paper as teaching that the believer has no spiritually offensive role to conduct. Before examining a more Biblical approach to achieving advances for the present kingdom of God,

we will overview a stream of teaching that prescribes dualistic encounters.

## **Use of the Name, the Blood, the Word:**

### ***The Name***

Scriptures such as Philippians 2:9-11 are used to support this. Examining this passage will reveal a statement of eschatological and theological fact, rather than a means of warfare. Indeed, every knee shall bow, every tongue shall confess at the Name of Jesus that He is LORD! Of the six times the expression in the Name of Jesus is used in the entire New Testament, all occurrences happen during the narration of the Book of Acts. Of these occasions, only once did it involve a confrontation with a demonic spirit (Acts 16:18) and it was a direct one at that (that is, the demonic spirit was immediately present; demons are not omnipresent)!

All of the other incidents related to the conduct of the apostles—their ministry of healing and teaching. When Paul cast the demon out of the Macedonian girl, he exercised the Spirit's authority upon him based on the words of Christ in Mark 16:17 (which says believers will cast demons out in the name of Christ).

Obviously Philippi was a place familiar with demonic activity. There could have been all sorts of spirits presiding in that city. Yet from what we know of Paul's epistle to them some many years later, they became one of the more successful churches he planted. How did Paul and the church there break the supposed local demonic strongholds? After the incident with the slave girl and python spirit, Paul and Silas were thrown into jail. An attack of the enemy! What was Paul and Silas' plan of warfare? *"But at midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. . ."* Acts 16:25

This was their warfare. They worshiped God! They didn't even look at what the enemy was doing! What was the enemy's real objective in jailing Paul and Silas? I believe the answer to this is

so simple, yet the heart of what the Bible alludes to as our warfare - that the Devil wants our attention, but only God deserves it! This is why we are not to be sidetracked off into speaking to the Devil, demons or others evil spirits. They are merely decoys trying to divert our attention away from Jesus. What does the cross of Christ mean to the militant Christian? It initially resounds of death to our old nature (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 12:1-3, two of the most powerful Scriptures on warfare). Then it drives us with the love of Christ to seek out the lost with the saving message of the gospel. If the enemy can divert our eyes off the cross so that our focus is on him (even for a moment), then he's winning the war/battle. Whenever Paul came under satanic/demonic attack, he always appealed immediately to God (e.g. 2 Cor. 12:8). It was later to the Philippian church that Paul wrote about the name of Jesus. Therefore, because of the incident with the python-spirit controlled girl, and his epistle, I can not see that Paul was simply ignorant of any spiritual weapons that he had.

### ***Points of Consideration:***

- Paul cast a demon out of a girl by using the name of Jesus, as Christ said all believers would do, after: (i) 'There was an immediate demonic manifestation; (ii) he was moved in spirit to do so. He was motivated by the Word and Spirit - he didn't presume what he was doing was what God wanted him to do.
- The demon immediately left the girl without argument or battle at the Name of Jesus. The battle is not ours, but the Lord's (2 Chron. 20:15). Can any demon defy the LORD? When God commands a spirit to go, it's done. There is no yelling, fretting or fuss when God does it and so uses His servant as His mouthpiece.
- Paul and Silas were in enemy territory and as such were demonically attacked by being thrown into jail. They responded

by worshiping God with singing and by praying aloud. Their appeal was to God, not against the devil or even to the devil.

- Paul was not ignorant of the power of the name of Jesus as is demonstrated by his actions and epistles. Nowhere did he use it in a sense of speaking against territorial demonic spirits.

### ***The Blood***

*“And they overcame him (the Devil) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death”.*

Revelation 12:11

How did they overcome the devil? - (i) The blood of the Lamb and (ii) The word of their testimony. Modern, well-meaning teaching says that we are to “plead the Blood” against the devil, and share our testimony with the lost, as a two pronged attack against the devil. The result is said to be victory from attack.

Yet examine the whole verse. The ones who overcame the devil, did so by laying down their lives - firstly on the altar of God, and secondly, into the grave. This runs contrary to the modern idea of success defined as freedom from pain or discomfort.

Nowhere is the Bible described as a sword to be used for slaying demonic spirits in face-to-face combat!

These martyrs overcame the devil simply by keeping their lives as a good testimony even to the point of martyrdom. Their testimony was the proclaiming of Jesus. As one recent translation puts it: *“And our brothers and sisters defeated him by the blood of the Lamb's death and by the message they preached. They did not love their lives so much that they were afraid of death”* NCV

They didn't walk in their own righteousness, but Christ's - they were washed in His blood! They were in blood covenant with God. In the religious flesh, we tend to look for instant, easy, comfortable results. However, the greatest Book of spiritual warfare is Revelation which defines victory in terms other than merely temporal gains. This Book clearly details the spiritual battles which have taken/are taking/will take place.

Its precise word to those involved in the frontline of conflict on earth - Jesus Christ is Lord! He has won the Victor's crown. He is interceding constantly for His covenant Bride. How does He want us, His Church, to help Him in His battle against the foes of darkness? By walking in the righteousness of Christ (being washed in His Blood) and keeping a good testimony in a corrupt world. This is victory over the devil - even if it means dying for it! To plead the blood over cars, houses, possessions or cities is to display ignorance about why the Blood of Christ was shed. It was shed to redeem our lives. Christ died for us, not for our cars, houses, or possessions.

### ***The Word***

Scripture passages such as Matthew 4, where Christ and satan exchanged words, are used to cite the legitimatising of quoting Scripture at the devil. Just why Christ chose the Scriptures He used in the first place should be enough for us to understand that Christians have no place speaking at or to the devil, in the sense of being some kind of "demi-gods". When He acknowledged that man lives by every Word from God, He was living that Scripture out. When He acknowledged that man must only worship and render total obedience to God, He was doing just that.

Firstly, the Scripture has revealed only One Person authorised to speak to the devil - Yahweh (Genesis 3- the incident in the Garden of Eden; Job 1, 2 - satan accuses Job; 1 Kings 22:19-23; Matthew 4 - Christ being tempted by the devil). Not even angels, who presumably battle in some form with fallen angels (although I strongly doubt that it is the type of combat we're familiar with, that is, not face-to-face or hand-to-hand), are authorised to speak to demons (Jude 9; 2 Peter 2:11). Therefore, Christ was fulfilling His divine right in addressing satan - in the same way that it was His Divine right to receive worship from men. Not even Job spoke at or to the devil, although satan was the cause of his troubles.



The Word is indeed described as a sword. In Ephesians 6, it is the sword that advances the Gospel of Christ amidst spiritual opposition. In Hebrew 4:12 it is the sword that cuts like a surgeon's knife into our inner most motives and lays our hearts bare before God for to Him we must explain the way we have lived (NCV). In Isaiah 49:2, it is the sword of the anointed preaching of the prophet as he speaks God's Word. In Revelation 1:16; 2:16; and 19:15, it is the words of the glorified Christ.

Nowhere is the Bible described as a sword to be used for slaying demonic spirits in face-to-face combat!

Paul laments in Romans 7 that knowing the Word of God intensified his battle (war) with his flesh. He saw the Word as a Sword that revealed his inner corruption. Simply quoting Scriptures at our flesh is not enough to make our flesh obey. As powerful as the Word of God is to change lives, we must guard against the sin of treating it as a book of magic, filled with incantations to drive away evil (sin), or demonic spirits. When Jesus quoted the Word of God to the devil, He did more than merely quote it - He obeyed it.

Many believers who have been extremely well acquainted with the Bible have been snared by the devil and led into sin and apostasy. Knowing and quoting the Scriptures is not enough, we must obey it to gain victory. Certainly quoting the Word has great value for the devotional reassurance of a believer, and this practice should be encouraged. But we must guard against the fallacy that quoting the words of Scripture in a magical fashion at demonic spirits is actually what brings victory to a believer. It is acting on the Word (James 1:22). In this sense our real warfare is with our flesh (Rom. 7:23). Coming to this conclusion and conviction puts us in the very uncomfortable position of now being obliged to accept responsibility for our actions, instead of following in the steps of our forefather Adam, who immediately began to blame someone else for his sin, when confronted by God.

## ***Taking Authority***

The Church and individual believers have tremendous authority over the powers of darkness and rulers of the dust (in heavenly places). The Bible speaks of our future state with such certainty, that it often refers to it as already having happened. Even Christ spoke of the authority of believers in Matthew 16:19 when He said: *“And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”*

Interesting, the Greek reads whatever you bind on earth will have already been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have already been loosed in heaven. To claim that believers have power to bind and loose in a way that demands that heaven must comply, is to advocate sacerdotalism or priestly absolution. The true meaning of the text must be seen in its context. How would the disciples have understood Christ’s words on binding and loosing? Their reaction is not immediately stated, so we cannot draw any immediate indication from this observation of their application or understanding.

## ***Binding and Loosing***

The Rabbis of the day spoke of binding and loosing in terms of laying down rules of conduct (Halakah). As part of the Halakah, the Shimmai told them strictly what they couldn’t do - binding rules of conduct, while the Hillel being more lax, told them what they could do- loosing rules of conduct. From this, some scholars see the passage in Acts 15:10, where Peter said: *“Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?”* - as loosing what certain Judaizers wanted to bind upon Gentile believers. It also makes sense in the terms of Christ telling the Rabbinical lawyers that they had withheld the key of knowledge from people (preventing a loosing of people into a relationship with God in the Kingdom of God), and had actually placed hindrances in the way of those

trying to find God (by placing excessive rules of legalistic conduct on people), thereby binding them (Lk.11:52). This is also the case in the other reference in Matthew where the church is to exercise Kingdom rules of conduct in disciplining wayward members (Matt. 18:18). Whatever the Kingdom of God looses or binds, by way of rules of conduct, so the church dually enforces. Heaven is not bound by any decision the church invents!

Another passage used to justify taking authority over demons by speaking the words 'I bind you...' is Matthew 12:29: "*Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong-man?*"

Christ was talking in terms of destroying the kingdom of satan and everything that went along with it. He had been accused of having power over devils because He was actually in league with them, the Pharisees said. But He had come to establish His Kingdom. Ultimately His Kingdom would rule the entire world, as the Jews were anticipating, and there could be no place for the devil. How could He take over the house if someone else was currently occupying it? What was going to give Christ the right to rule? His binding of the strong man. This was achieved at Calvary, and will culminate by being carried out prior to Christ's earthly rule (Rev. 20:1-3), when satan will be bound (if one adopts the pre-millennial view), or has already been carried out because of Calvary (if one adopts the amillennial view cf Colossians 2:15) or was achieved at the close of the Old Covenant in 70AD (if one takes the Preterist view). Satan cannot be bound by anyone in any case, or since, Christ's victory at Golgotha.

The Scriptures do present us with the knowledge that we do have authority to thwart the enemy from hindering the work of God. But it is the way we go about it, and the kind of results God gives, that Scripture views differently from recent popular teaching. We need a fresh revelation of God's supremacy and covenantal protection. For example, Psalm 149 says as we

worship and praise God, we bind kings and nobles with fetters of iron. Our focus is not an “against” one, but rather an “unto” one. We give glory unto God and He in turn guards us as the apple of His eye (Zeph. 2:5), hedges us about with walls of covenantal fire (Zech. 2:8), and establishes us in His sanctuary where no outsider may enter (Psalm 15:1, 2-5; 91:1-16).

What binds or hinders the enemy? It’s definitely not when the people of God in a worship service unto their God are drawn away by speaking to demons! Rather, it’s what naturally happens when God moves amongst His people during worship (eg. 2Chronicles 20).

### ***Under Attack!***

What can lead to a sense of oppression in a worship service? Can we suggest: nervousness, lack of substantial preparation, tiredness, which all tend at times to imitate devilish opposition? But how do we take authority over what appears to be an oppressive spirit in a meeting of God's people? Exercise the weapon of joy! Joy breaks depression (Neh. 8:10). Humility breaks the spirit of pride (James 4:6). Reconciliation breaks bitterness and tensions (Matt. 6:14-15). Evangelism with good works breaks hard hearts (1 Peter 2:11; 3:1). Of course the enemy will try to hinder a service of worship, but how are we to handle it? Let us press in to God with greater fervency!

### **The Role Of Intercessors In Spiritual Warfare**

The primary role of the intercessor, which the Scripture calls a prophet, is to spend time in the presence of God seeking the LORD to move His hand in opening the eyes of the spiritually blind. Intercessors, or prophets, know how to plead with God with the lost and receive from God the appropriate answers.

They do not directly speak to (in any way) demonic spirits.

People promoting the false idea that intercessors are to engage with “territorial” spirits often refer to Daniel 10:10-13. Daniel the prophet-intercessor took no part in speaking to demonic spirits,

although his prayers played a major role in the apparent heavenly warfare that took place. On the contrary, he made his appeal to God alone. He refused to do business with the devil! His case went straight to God.

The Old Testament has numerous examples which prove this point. For example: Elijah on Mount Carmel, prayed in faith to God, despite a massive out-numbering by demon possessed prophets of Baal (1Ki. 17). He kept his focus on God and His ability and was not distracted by his spiritual opposition. Despite even the attributing of spiritual or ecclesiastical success to the ministry of intercessors in spiritual warfare, this is still no basis of divine endorsement of such unbiblical practices. Often times, God blesses us despite our ignorance or ill-informed practices. The role of the intercessor is to seek God on behalf of others. It is this calling upon the LORD and seeking His forgiveness for a people or community in the hope that the people themselves will be moved spiritually to seek God for themselves for forgiveness (for no intercessor can secure another's salvation unless that person being prayed for seeks it for themselves). The intercessor has a large role to play in praying for the work of the LORD, especially for pastors, leaders, missionaries and those involved in everyday evangelism. The intercessor should be searching God's Word and praying that the Word will be lived out in the lives of God's people in specific ways.

### ***Discerning Of Spirits***

This author has been involved in occasions where the gift of discernment has identified mis-motivated people. Several times I have had people manifest unusual things in my presence. I am aware that a person surrendered to demonic power can do super-human things. But, I wonder how much the Biblically charismatic gift called the discerning of spirits has to do with so much of popular teaching on the subject. Some have described this as the gift that enables people to identify specific demonic spirits, name

evil spirits, or sense the type of spirits ruling a city or territory. While God does often give words of knowledge to His servants in their ministry to an oppressed person (perhaps about the root cause or reason for the oppression), it can be distinguished from Paul's use of the term. It appears among the list of gifts in the verbal category. Alongside it are mentioned prophecy, tongues, and interpretation of tongues (1Cor. 12:10). All of these gifts are designed to edify the local church. Discernment appears to be closely linked with prophecy and those used to prophecy (sometimes referred to as prophets). Discernment in this sense means the same as judgment. Later in Corinthians Paul says to the prophets: *Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.* This has everything to do with false teaching being identified and rejected by the established prophets of the assembly. As false teaching became rampant in the early church, John wrote: *'Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world...'* 1John 4:1 John goes on to say that false teaching was directly linked to spirits who opposed Christ. How did John say to defeat these spirits once discernment has revealed them as false? Appeal to God! *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world* (1 John 4:4). How much longer can we try the patience of God by seeking out demons under the guise of discerning of spirits? The Old Testament was even clearer in its strict forbidding of any seeking or communication with or to evil spirits: *"Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God."* Leviticus 19:31 Our energy should be devoted to seeking the LORD and His presence. There are ample Scriptures to show that God is in total control of the heavenlies and guards His Church with love and jealousy. We are guaranteed success if we remain in covenant relationship with Him. Even Paul recognised that when someone

walked away from God, they were bound over to satan (1 Corinthians 5:5).

The enemy will seek to attack in the area of our imaginations or thought life. This is the context of 2 Corinthians 10:4 where we have weapons that are mighty for the pulling down of these strongholds by casting down every thought that exalts itself against God. Try counting to twenty in your mind while reading aloud a page of your Bible! It can't be done. Our minds must be submitted to God exclusively. We can be seeking out demons, and have our minds continually renewed in God (Rom. 12:2). As we fill our minds with God's Word it leads to greater devotion to, and appreciation of, Jesus. Indeed, as we seek Jesus we have the victory! Not as we chase after demonic spirits! Their objective is to get our thoughts and eyes off Christ (Gal. 3:1).

Interestingly, nowhere is the Church described as an army! It is described as a flock of sheep guarded safely within a sheepfold though! There's a major difference between an army and a flock of sheep. There is no doubt that we are in corporate spiritual conflict, but yet the Bible describes us as a Bride that is jealously protected by its Husband.

Paul describes the Christian as wearing armour and a sword and shield, but this is to stress the urgency of our mission to reach the lost, and the real danger that spiritual opposition poses in trying to divert us away from that mission. To carry out our mission, which directly opposes principalities and powers, we are given salvation (helmet), righteousness (breastplate), the Word of God to direct us toward God and protect us from foes who attack those who live outside of it (sword), faith in God to put out the enemy's doubts (shield), truth in action (belt), a Gospel ready to share with the lost (shoes). None of this was ever intended for use in a prayer closet locked away doing battle with demonic foes! Note even the context of what Paul is saying, when he says in Ephesians 6:19: *“and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I*

*may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”*

Paul was in prison. What an attack of the enemy! Our advice to him might be to go into our modern version of spiritual warfare and get himself out of there. But that wasn't his way of looking at things. He wanted to witness boldly to fellow prisoners, jailers, officials and anyone else who the LORD might send his way. In Paul's battle with the enemy he became deeply aware that the enemy did and could attack. But he recognised that nothing happened outside of God's control.

Around 50 AD when Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, he was ministering in Corinth (Acts 18). He wanted to go and see the Thessalonians again, but was suffering severe persecution in Corinth. He describes this in terms of satan hindering him and his companions (1 Thess. 2:18) and contextually alludes to this in the preceding verses where he said that Judaizers had persecuted them, forbidding them to speak to Gentiles. But satan couldn't overcome Paul with discouragement (satan appears to try and magnify himself and his efforts in the minds of any who will listen), for when Paul was struggling, Jesus came to him and said: *Now the LORD spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, 'Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.'* Acts 18:9, 10

Paul knew that the enemy could attack the church, but he knew how to prevent it. He did not say, as many misquote the passage, we are not to be ignorant of the devil's schemes (devices/plans), rather he said we are not ignorant of the devil's schemes. There's a world of difference between the two.

The context of this 2 Corinthians 2:11 passage is where Paul warned them against unforgiveness (vs. 10). By holding a grudge with unforgiveness toward someone, they would give the devil an opportunity to destroy their unity, fellowship and witness. What



was the weapon to use against this scheme of the devil? - forgiveness and unity.

Every church should be a worshiping church. Our motivation for worship is our love for God. Many leaders have tried to motivate people to worship God based on selfish motives, or even hatred for the devil! If we make anything other than love for God our prime motivation, we actually draw away from God and glorify what we focus on. For example, if someone is taught that worship will get them special blessings from God, the risk is that their focus could be on the blessings rather than the 'Blessed'. Every true encounter with God resulted in worship in the Bible. When Peter received his revelation about Christ in his fishing boat, his immediate reaction was to fall down in worship of Christ while acknowledging His greatness and purity (Lk. 5:8). When someone has an encounter with Jesus, they don't have to be told why they need to worship Him!

It is fair to say that worship is a part of our spiritual warfare. For a few years I was guilty of the belief and practise of focussing part of my worship on destroying the works and activities of the enemy. But God has shown me, through His Word, several dangerous aspects to this.

Judson Cornwell describes in his book: *Let us Praise*, that he used to be called upon by his song leaders to take authority over the devil if the song leader sensed a heaviness over a meeting. His usual practice was to either publicly or privately rebuke/bind/cast out/destroy the devil and his influence from their meeting. But then God showed him that this was misplaced time. By focusing on the enemy and what he was doing, he was actually giving glory to him, rather than God! No man can "bind" satan. Only Christ has the power to bind satan which He exercised at the close of the Old Covenant (Rev. 20:1-3; Col. 2:15). On every occasion that the early Church was harassed by satan, not once did they dare to speak directly to him (as the Scripture forbids: 2 Peter

2:11; Jude 9), instead they worshiped and exalted God- not for ulterior motives. The early church was quite content to worship God in a comfortable house, or in an uncomfortable prison cell! The circumstances and surroundings were not important. When Paul was being harassed by an evil spirit, he didn't speak to it, he pleaded with God about it (2Cor. 12:7). This goes against much of the current teaching on “spiritual warfare”. Our focus must be on loving God, not necessarily a cheap imitation brought about by hating the devil!

Worship means to move toward and kiss. As a congregation it's possible to worship God in various ways with the result being like a kiss to God. Broadly, worship can involve any act of service and surrender to God. James says that true worship (or religion) is when the church visits orphans and widows in their trouble, and keeps itself unspotted from the world (James 1:27). This is one way the church can worship God. Other ways include, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned (Matt. 25:31-46). Singing and prayer constitute worship.

### ***What's Needed***

Our struggle with the powers of darkness is a foregone conclusion. We win. But as it works out, we are not battling with them simply to defeat them and thus usher in some utopian concept of the kingdom of God. Rather, our objective is to promote the Lordship of Christ, which involves reaching the lost. While Christ has won the victory on the Cross, we enforce that victory in the world by proclamation of the Gospel. Our enemy will bring out every distraction to stop us. This is our real battle. The lost is our mission. The glory of the Lord is our goal.

### ***The Great Commission***

Too few people have anything other than a very superficial view of the Great Commission. As I was writing my book<sup>1</sup>: *The Most Embarrassing Verse In The Bible*, I came to consider the Great

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<sup>1</sup> Also available from Deal Pentecostal Church

Commission as truly Great. I had previously considered it a “preaching” Commission- all we had to do was preach to all the nations of the world. But then I had to take a fresh look at the text and for the first time read what it was really commissioning us to: *And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*” Matthew 28:18 - 20

True spiritual warfare is the activity involved in the fulfilling of this Great Commission! Please consider this Great Commission and I challenge you to find any hint of where Christ tells us to engage in mystical “spiritual-warfare” battles which demand prayer-mapping, binding territorial spirits, breaking ancestral curses, shophar-blowing or any other such Biblically illegal practices! I use the term “Biblically illegal” because these things may have the appearance of innocence or even Christian maturity, but in reality they have more to do with superstitious occultic practices than the fulfilling of Biblical instructions.

I dare you to take a look at the Great Commission. Please see what I had missed for years. Note what it doesn’t say. It is not just a preaching commission. It does not say to make disciples from all nations. It does not say to only teach those who have accepted the Gospel. It does not say that soul-winning alone fulfils the Great Commission. In order to begin to understand what the real spiritual war is actually about, we need to understand some Biblical concepts.

### ***Principalities and Powers***

My understanding of what Christ has commissioned us to goes much further than just preaching the Gospel. When I read the Great Commission with fresh eyes I was flabbergasted at its enormity. I discovered that if I was prepared to simply accept the text for what it says it would have huge implications for my life.

Perhaps the single greatest task contained within the Great Commission is to make disciples of all nations. As I began to appreciate the grandeur of what Christ was commissioning I wondered how on earth it could be done. In seeking the Lord about this through His Word I have wondered at the many other Biblical references which talk about entire nations seeking the Lord and choosing to worship Him.

*All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. Psalm 22:27*

*All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name. Psalm 86:9*

For this to happen, we must strip off the layers of superstitious teaching surrounding Paul's use of the expression "principalities and powers" (Romans 8:38; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12). Some have twisted this to simply mean a hierarchy of demonic spirits (including so-called "territorial" spirits). But while demonic spirits may well play a role in Paul's thinking, it seems more likely that Paul was referring to something else. Dr. Tony Campolo suggests in his book, *Speaking My Mind*, that it is far more likely that Paul is referring to influences that hinder a society from accepting the Gospel. In what might be a surprisingly literal interpretation of the text, Campolo suggests that Paul is referring to the principles ("principalities") upon which a society makes its decisions, and the power vested in its rulers ("powers") to influence a society's thinking. For Campolo, the battle is to win the hearts and minds of a society for the sake of Christ. He sees "demonic" principles enacted by wicked rulers as something which the Church must battle if it is to see the Gospel advance. These include a variety of social injustices such as racism, poverty, bigotry, and the oppression of women. I like Campolo's interpretation.

The implications of this for the Great Commission is that if we are to truly make disciples of all nations it is just simply not acceptable to consider that we can convert an oppressed person

to Christ only to leave them to unjustly remain oppressed. In fact, it is highly unlikely that the oppressed will find much attractive about a Gospel which cares little about righting injustices. I urge those who sincerely want to engage in spiritual warfare to abandon yelling at the devil and his minions and begin to do something about injustice, oppression, and poverty.

All too often Christians limit their political involvement to pressuring legislators to preventing anti-Christian interest groups (such as homosexual lobby groups) from gaining advantages. All the while the plight of the oppressed, orphaned, victimised, impoverished, or ethnic minority goes un-championed. This is disgraceful.

Therefore, I encourage Christians to stand up for the oppressed through the political process and get involved. (I urge you to get my e-book<sup>2</sup>: *Why Christians Should Get Involved In Politics and Society*, to more fully explore this.) I am in no way suggesting that any of this activity is in place of prayer. We should do both!

### ***Sacred Evangelism***

We must make our evangelism an act of worship, not merely a duty. It is truly amazing that there are some believers who have replaced evangelism for “prayer-evangelism”. If we are to truly engage in the spiritual warfare that the Bible talks about, we must evangelise by proclaiming the Gospel in word and deed.

What we focus on determines where we go. We need to stop seeking demons, and devote our entire energy to seeking God, no matter what the circumstances, surroundings or emotions.

Certainly the unseen enemy will seek to destroy God’s work and people, but every attempt will be thwarted by God for His ultimate glory as we continue to look to Him even in the midst of attacks. By abandoning closet evangelism and reintroducing proclamation evangelism, the church will again be waging the kind of war where souls can be reconciled to God. This focus

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<sup>2</sup> Also available from Deal Pentecostal Church

provides individual believers with a motivation to live right, talk right, and think right so that they will not become a stumbling block to the unsaved. This involves real spiritual warfare: the believer putting their flesh to death, despite its warring, so that the war between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness can be fought according to the design of the Word of God, and the example of the cross of Christ.

### ***Discipleship***

I am convinced that the arena for the greatest spiritual warfare is the family home. I have met mothers who are prepared to neglect their children in order to attend an intercessors meeting so they could conduct “spiritual warfare”. I have heard parents say that when they go to these intercessor prayer meetings they return to experience devilish attacks because when they get home their kids are unsettled!

One of the most urgent needs we have is for Christian parents to be Christian parents. If all we did was retain the next generation of believers by discipling them in our homes we would grow the church annually.

The family home is one of the most important tools we have in our task to “make disciples”. Christian parents not only should pray with and for their children - they must! It borders on obscene for a church to think it can evangelise its community when its homes are devoid of parental discipleship.

We need to see Christians overthrowing principalities and powers by winning the hearts and minds of a society. This requires stable, well-socialised, Biblically-literate, Spirit-filled believers who have been discipled by their parents in their family home growing up to take positions of influence in the Law, Politics, Academia, Media, the Arts, and Industry.

Discipleship involves a depth of Biblical understanding, a commitment to prayer, how to fellowship (which involves training in forgiveness and reconciliation) and the development

of spiritual gifts. The easiest (yet apparently the rarest) way to do this is for it to be modelled in the family home of Christians. I believe the fulfilment of the Great Commission is just not possible without a reformation in the family home. If we can transform families we can transform nations! Little wonder the Enemy is set on destroying the family - perhaps he knows the awesome potential to fulfil the Great Commission is through the family. (For more information about how we can defend the Biblical presentation of the family, I urge you to read my e-book<sup>3</sup>: *What Is A Family? And Why It Matters!*).

I have not dealt with the topic of deliverance. I see this as a separate issue to spiritual warfare. I would ask the reader not to confuse the issue of delivering a desperate person afflicted by demonic oppression or possession, where an evil spirit is immediately present, to that which this article has addressed. I want us to engage in authentic spiritual warfare rather than a Christianised version of witchcraft which involves seeking out devils and demons instead of God. Ultimately our battle begins within our own souls coming fully under the Lordship of Christ. It then transforms our marriages and homes and churches. Let's fight!

### **Confusing Magic For The Miraculous**

I believe in the miraculous. I believe the Scriptures present the Creator of the universe as able to do the seemingly impossible. Whenever He intervenes in the affairs of mankind in an extraordinary way we refer to this as "miraculous." I also acknowledge that the Scriptures teach that the Holy Spirit is able to gift certain believers with the gift of miracles (1Cor. 12). But there is an alarming and extremely dangerous trend in some parts of the Church to believe that they have "authority" or "power" to exercise the pseudo-miraculous. This is what we might call "magic."

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<sup>3</sup> Also available from Deal Pentecostal Church

Magic might be considered, in a spiritual sense, the human manipulation of events to make them appear to be supernatural...

### ***Magic Myth #1: Magic Apostles...***

I believe in the valid ministry function of apostles and prophets. But what often passes for “apostolic” is nothing more than hierarchal networking and borders on offering magical results labelled as “miraculous”!

The belief that if a pastor is not submitted to a network leader (usually a self-proclaimed “apostle”) then his ministry and church will be deprived of God's blessing is totally absurd, immoral, and devious! The claim by any person that if people submit to them things will go well, but if refuse to, they will not be blessed by God has more to do with magic than the Bible!

These teachers claim that God has called them to be apostles and bring divine order to the church. By doing so, they claim, it will unleash a flurry of God’s blessing.

This repulsive doctrine is being spread by certain mavericks who disguise it with such appeals for “Biblical order”, “the new move of God”, “the key to the great end time harvest-revival.” The problem with these appeals is the lack of Biblical support for their positions. If such things are clearly Biblical, why aren’t they clearly in the Bible? If you have to attend seminars, conferences, networks, and the like to “get it” then just how obviously Biblical is it?

One of the clues to this type of teaching being a gross and serious error is the emphasis placed on money. In what must be considered one of the most blatant reversals of what the New Testament actually teaches, these apostles set themselves up as “fathers” and teach that their “spiritual children” should financially support them. They cite Paul's words to the Corinthians as a proof text: *For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.* (NKJV) 1 Corinthians 4:15



But Paul goes on to say- *Now I am coming to you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you. I don't want what you have; I want you. And anyway, little children don't pay for their parents' food. It's the other way around; parents supply food for their children.* (NLT) 2Corinthians 12:14

“Fathers” or “Apostles”, according to the New Testament, are obligated to support their children, not the other way around. Any support that Paul the Apostle received was not solicited by him - as he makes plain on several occasions. Yet these modern self-appointed apostles (who sometimes place themselves over cities! and therefore by default over all of the churches within that city!!!) seem to do the opposite.

Even in Australia there are men claiming to be “Spiritual Fathers” who are all too willing to adopt new spiritual sons and daughters (and often for a regular monthly gift). This is just downright unhelpful!

Before anyone writes off my comments as being too conservative, too religious, or too ‘old school’, I would like to point out that these matters were the focus of a doctoral dissertation which I undertook. The result was that I concluded that God has indeed gifted with the Church with people who function apostolically and prophetically- but for the large part they get on with their ministry unheralded. Local churches do need a sense of external connection and accountability - but not to a group of unaccountable self-appointed network leaders! Thus, there is a genuine fathering available today. There is a genuine sense of right order. There is a genuine diversity of ministry gifts available today. But those in the “New Apostolic Reformation” or “Emerging Church” are not necessarily it. [You may like to read more about the ministry of Apostles and Prophets in a modern context in my e-book<sup>4</sup>: *Authentic Apostolic Leadership*. It may help to challenge some of the more magical claims made by these teachers.]

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<sup>4</sup> Also available from Deal Pentecostal Church

## ***Magic Myth #2: City Church Unity***

There is something curious about the global phenomena of the local church. While there are an increasing number of mega-churches emerging around the world whose congregations number into the thousands, by far the most common congregational size around the world is between 40 - 70 people. Even in the USA these figures hold true according to John Rowell in his book, *Magnify Your Vision For The Small Church*. He asks the question that if Christ is Lord of the Church and the most common congregational size globally is between 40 -70 people then what might Christ know about ecclesiology that we don't?

Could it be a divine blueprint for the Body of Christ to be organised congregationally across a city rather than there being just one all encompassing city-wide church?

Is unity of the Church the mission of the Church? I have a suspicion that Christ does not see multiple Churches, but one Church. My suspicion leads me to believe that unity of the Body of Christ in the eyes of God is a given. From a human perspective though we fail to recognise one Church because we have differences with each other and meet congregationally at different times, places and around diverse liturgies. It looks like we're not united. But the Biblical and theological reality is much different. If I am in Christ and a brother with whom I have never met is also in Christ we automatically share a unity because of Christ- not our combined church service!

Therefore, telling the Body of Christ that they need to be united is like trying to convince a person that he should breathe. If you're alive, you breathe. If you're a Christian, you're in Christ, and therefore united with all other Christians whether you fellowship together or not.

Of course what is promoted as unity is nothing of the sort. It is actually an appeal for unison. At times this is called for. But it requires humility and frank discussions where our ideas and

interpretations can be challenged. But all too often this necessary process is circumvented by an appeal to put aside differences rather than sort them out.

The magical component of this appeal for unison is the claim that if we can simply establish a city-wide church we will invoke the revival blessing of God and the result will be a great harvest of conversions. There are several major flaws to this magical idea.

1. There are times throughout history where there was only one church organisation, the Middle Ages 500AD-1450AD, and yet there was no great harvest of conversions.
2. Secondly, who determines when this magical level of unity has been achieved?
3. Thirdly, who determines what the criteria is for such unity?
4. Fourthly, do those who are advocating this magical type of unity have the qualifications for unity earned from leading their own congregations to the type of unity they are advocating for their city?

### ***Magical Myth #3: Soon Coming Revival***

I hope I'm wrong. But I question whether there is soon about to be a magical time when thousands of people will be magically converted to Christ and added to the Church. Yet there are many who are claiming that this is exactly what is about to happen.

The New Testament does not teach this. What it does teach is that we are to sow and water and leave the Harvest up to God. Therefore, without much sowing, there cannot be much reaping. But this false hope of mass conversion, variously called 'revival' 'end-time harvest', is promoted as an impending event which will be received by those who have joined the right networks, given the right amount, or invited the right itinerant speaker.

### **The Need For Faithfulness Not Magic...**

Human nature craves the easy way out, short-cut solutions, and unlimited power. The offers of some itinerant Christian network leaders to have special authority, revelation, or power to make the

job a local church pastor easier in his attempts to reach out to his community and fulfil his obligations toward the Great Commission if he will only align himself with the right network and sow enough financial seed deserves to be treated with great scepticism.

Rather than some offer of magical church growth, the New Testament exhorts believers to seek God, pray, be fruitful, love people, witness, exercise ministry gifts, and endure hardship. So let's get on with it.

## **Holy Relevant...**

*Dr. Andrew Corbett, Legana, Tasmania, February 26th 2008*

"Holy" seems to be the most precious word used to describe God. It is the only word emphasized three times to describe God (Isaiah 6). The Hebrews used this literary device to emphasize. If a word was used twice, such as "Truly, truly...", what was about to be said was very true. If a word was used three times it was absolute and ultimate. God is described not as being "holy, holy" but as "holy, holy, holy".

*And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"*

*Revelation 4:8*

The word "holy" means different. But it's more than just obscure, it means different in the sense of not common, very very special. As it pertains to God, the word holy carries a sense of beauty, magnificence, awesome. While God is holy, holy, holy, what is directly associated with Him is holy. Thus, God calls His redeemed people, holy. To be a Christian is to be made holy. Without being made holy, a person cannot see God let alone enter Heaven after this life-

*Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. Hebrews 12:14*

But, unlike God whose intrinsic nature is holy, we who have come to realise our need for God, are holy by virtue of God's

election of us. In this sense it is a new legal standing for us. It is an apt adjective of what Christ has done for us. But we are also told to be holy. In this sense, holy is a verb for a believer—something we are required to do or be.

*Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. 2Corinthians 7:1*

## **Book of Revelation**

In the Book of Revelation, the word holy is used very strikingly. It is used in its absolute sense to describe God ("holy, holy holy"). But it is also used to describe the people that God had called to be holy, yet were not. Initially in the Book of Revelation, Jerusalem is described as "the holy city". But then God laments that it was the city which had rejected His Son and become like Sodom and Egypt.

*and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified. Revelation 11:8*  
So God calls a New Jerusalem into existence with the New Covenant. He then designates this new people (comprising of converted Jews and Gentiles) as the holy city.

*And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Revelation 21:2*

The people who were called to be holy under the Old Covenant failed to transition to the New Covenant. Yet they went further than just missing it - they opposed it! The Book of Revelation describes them not just as "Sodom and Egypt" (Rev. 11:8) but as Babylon (Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2; 18:10, 21). Their depiction as "Babylon" conjures up the memory of ancient Babylon which on several occasions had significant demonstrations of God's glory (read the Book of Daniel) but still maintained their idolatry and wickedness. To be described as Babylon was to be labelled as "unholy". The Book of Revelation describes their backslidden state in terms drinking wine of lusting and immorality.

*Another angel, a second, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality." Revelation 14:8*

Revelation goes on to describe the people who were supposed to be holy as having "prostituted" themselves with the world.

*And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations." Revelation 17:5*

The modern application that we can draw from this chilling book is that God is holy. He calls His people to be holy. To be called to holiness and to refuse to comply is called wickedness (which God takes a rather dim view of). But for some believers, holiness is about mere rule-keeping looking good. Those Christians who react to this form of legalism regard holiness as something entirely derived from God and therefore nothing to be overly concerned about. For the former group of believers there is great effort involved. This effort sometimes leads to distinctions being made in their lives that takes them so far from the everyday reality of the people around them that they become irrelevant. For the latter group their concept of holiness is one that says they have been made holy by God and there is nothing they can add to that so why not relax and enjoy the freedoms and liberties that God's grace has afforded them. This might include drinking, smoking, casual church commitment, loose language, lurid entertainment. What the latter group accuse the former group (legalists) of doing, they themselves manage to commit just as successfully - albeit, unwittingly. This is because they are no longer different, distinct, mysterious, other-worldly. That is: they are no longer living as if they are holy.

The lessons of the Book of Revelation for today is that just as God wanted the Old Jerusalem in the world as a beacon of difference - a light to the world - so He has called the New Jerusalem (the New Covenant Church) down from Heaven to be in the world but not like the world. By living like Daniel lived in

Babylon, we can be holy and relevant. This is one of the greatest applications from one of the greatest books in the Bible.

*Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. 2Corinthians 7:1*