

GOD in My Dreams

by John Beaumont

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FOREWORD

To dream the dreams of God...to be visionary...to *respond* to revelation...these things are realities in the life of John Beaumont and thus in the reading of this book one is provoked to live and walk at that level too.

One of John's catch phrases in life is "I'll say yes Lord", the spirit of which is evident in his writing. His heart is that the Church be a quick responder *to the Lord*, set free from living on the jetty of man's building, committed to the ongoing, rising tide of the Holy Spirit.

To me this book brings a timely word, for in this generation so much revelation has been entrusted to the Body of Christ. It is imperative that we receive his exhortation to wait patiently at the feet of Jesus allowing Him to initiate the fulfillment of the revelation. History reveals that in haste and presumption we continue to experience substandard church life. One can hear the heart of God calling for excellence and quality in ministry, not settling for charisma or natural ability but paying the price for what it takes to share the Holy Spirit's revelation with Holy Spirit anointing.

A beautiful theme woven into this tapestry of excellent teaching is the picture of a lover-people and a lover-King. The revelation of Jesus to His bride as she fragrantly worships Him with love songs is wonderfully expressed as an experience to be constantly enjoyed.

Respond to Jesus and enjoy Him as you read.

RON SAXBY
Johannesburg,
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Chapter 1

THE PLACE OF SCRIPTURE

There can be no question that God has often spoken to His people through dreams and visions. However, regardless of the way we feel that God has spoken to us, we must stand unequivocally on the fact that God never guides us contrary to what He has declared in Scripture. What we envision may have specific application and meaning which goes beyond any statement in the Bible, but if it is true revelation from God then it will certainly be in harmony with Biblical principle and precept.

One night Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia standing pleading, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." Paul rightly concluded that God was calling him to go and preach the Gospel to the people of Macedonia.¹

To receive a call like that today, in dream or vision, could just as clearly be an instruction from the Lord for us to go there. But, for example, if our supposed revelation had a person asking us to come and join them in ungodly revelry then that would not be compatible with Scripture. In that case such a dream could clearly never be a word from God to us.

There is never a justifiable excuse to go against what is set forth in the Book because of our personal circumstances, because of what others do, or because of anything that is told or shown us, regardless of the use of high sounding spiritual terms or other kinds of persuasive appeal.

Here and there over the years somebody has come to us and poured out their woe which has come about through the unequal yoking of a believer and an unbeliever in marriage. We have heard statements like this: "In our special circumstances we felt that God would understand, and allow us to marry."

Even worse, we have been told, "We consulted our pastor and he advised us to proceed." Such counsel must surely run contrary to what the Holy Spirit is impressing on our hearts because it is contrary to the Word of God.

How foolish to think, "God has promised me that He will turn this man to Himself, and therefore it is all right to marry him." Many a heart has been broken by such a foolish act of self-delusion.

No, never! It is always offensive to God, and at least painful to ourselves, if we ever take steps in a direction that crosses what He has set out as a "Boundary Line" for us in His written Word.

Every step the Holy Spirit guides us in is in harmony with the Book. Let this be a governing factor in determining whether a dream or vision, as well as teaching or counsel of any kind, is truly the revelation of God to us. This boundary line is for our safety and for God's glory.

WHAT GOD IS SAYING

Have you ever had difficulty in understanding a Bible parable because one statement or another doesn't fit in with what you feel

Jesus was teaching at that point? A parable is a story illustration given to emphasize and make clear to us one particular truth to be understood, one basic message to be received, one specific danger to be avoided, or one thing clearly required of us in response to what has been taught.

This is different from an allegory, where each point of a story is intended to carry meaning.

Dreams and visions are usually like parables. There is one thought that the Holy Spirit is wanting to make very plain to us. Some folk get bogged down with trying to understand each jot and tittle of a parable, and likewise some develop fanciful ideas of what each little detail of a dream or vision may mean.

How much better and wiser for us to come to an understanding of the main thing that is at the heart of what God is showing to us, and then to respond to that. Everything else in the revelation will be there to support and underline that one truth.

There have been times when at the end of my time of sharing in a meeting I have urged people, "Look to the Holy Spirit now to show you the one key fact that He has wanted to bring to your attention." Many times it is better to forget everything else that has been said and done in a meeting so that we are set free from the multiplicity of words and are able to go forth knowing "This is what God has spoken to me personally today." Then we can apply ourselves to walking in what has been revealed. So it is with dreams and visions: Find the heart of what God is revealing, and move in that. Be able to state in one sentence what God has shown you.

It has been wisely stated about the Bible. "The things that are vital are clear, and the things that are not clear are not vital." How healthy it would be for us to major on what is clear, and clearly vital!

Do not foolishly demand an answer to the meaning of some obscure side issue. Respond to the clear and unmistakable revelation of God's will for you today. Our problem is normally not with what we do not know or understand, but with the need to respond to what has become clear to us.

At the conclusion of a meeting in Sweden a man spoke out in a way we shall never forget. He said "I used to have a problem — I couldn't hear God. Now I have a worse problem — I just heard Him!"

There is only a problem of hearing God when we are unwilling to joyfully obey His call to us. One way or another He will make known what we need to know. Let us determine to wholeheartedly obey what He makes plain to us, realizing that He will reveal the pathway forward for us, one step at a time.

THE JETTY AND THE RAFT

It was a very pleasant summer scene. A jetty jutted well out into the harbour, and the people were sitting along its sides bathing their feet in the cool water. Some lay back soaking in the sunshine, and others sat chatting to one another in relaxed friendliness. There were some with little fishing rods too, who now and again cast their lines out into the water.

Nearby on the water was a raft. On this people also sat with their feet in the cool water, some laying back bathing in the enjoyable warmth of the sun, and others just sitting and sharing amicable conversation. The picture of the jetty and that of the raft appeared to be almost identical. There appeared little difference in the attitude and experience of people either on the jetty or on the raft.

One could be forgiven for wanting this kind of life-style to go on forever. There seemed to be not a worry or care anywhere among these favored folk. This was the life!

Then as I watched, the tide began to move with amazing rapidity. In almost no time at all the raft was way out in deep water. On the jetty the people seemed unaware of the change of the tide, even though their feet were no longer in the water, because of which they seemed to be becoming uncomfortably warm. Their bait wasn't reaching the water either, but they continued to go through the motions of casting out their lines. They seemed to be content to do that even though it was a futile exercise.

I became aware that from time to time the water rose around the jetty and for a while those on it were refreshed by the coolness of the water as their feet bathed in it. And then the tide would go out again.

Nearby there were several other jetties. On these some folk felt justifiably proud that their jetty jutted further out into the tide than did the first one I saw. There was one jetty where the source of pride was simply that it had been the first to be built in the area. The fact that other jetties went further out into the current meant nothing at all to those sun-bathing on it. On all of these jetties without exception the refreshing was tidal, and therefore occasional rather than continual.

A statement flooded my mind concerning the raft: "Committed to the tides of God." There was movement out there that was controlled by the tide and not by those who were on the raft. It was clear to me that these folk were enjoying a continuing refreshment linked to their feet staying in the water regardless of the motion of the currents.

When this vision was shared with a group of friends one exclaimed, "John there is no security in the raft!"

man-made structure, or on apparent sameness, or on being in a position where you can walk off when you choose to do so, then security is only found on the jetty.

But I knew that God was calling His people to a raft-style living in which security is found in walking in the will of God and in being totally controlled by the Holy Spirit, responsive to the tides

of God, and without setting the pace or direction of our own lives.

My commitment is unreservedly to that kind of life-style so that by God's grace, when I pass on there will be no derelict structure on the shoreline and no debris from human construction efforts. It is not in my heart to leave an organization or system that others will struggle to maintain and keep striving to breathe new life into. Whatever man builds will pass away. Jetties become derelict and being stuck on them become inhibiting and stultifying.

What God builds will last forever. And He will not renew what He did not build.

We would do well to ponder the contrast between structures men build by their own skill and effort compared with those elevations raised up by God, in this Scripture: "In the day of great slaughter, when the towers fall, streams of water will flow on every high mountain and every lofty hill."¹

Is there indication here of dire danger involved in organization and structure established by man? Is there indication that ultimately the water of life and the flow of the Spirit will only be from the scene where God has sovereignly been at work raising up that which will only glorify Him? Isn't it God's purpose to bring into being living organisms rather than humanistic organizations where man is able to direct and control all that takes place?

Perhaps this is something of the significance of: "After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent, and I will restore it...says the Lord, who does these things that have been known for ages."

Surely this is stating that God's heart is not towards the externalism of the grandeur of Solomon's temple, but rather towards the simplicity, mobility and emphasis of a location for the presence and glory of God which David's tent symbolizes.

Oh for a personal life, and Oh to be part of a church where His presence in glory is the one outstandingly notable feature! O God, my God, please hasten the day when this shall be reality! Amen.

From the vision of the jetty and the raft let me call you away from a life of deadening predictability to a life of constant refreshing and high adventure in the Holy Spirit.

When we first shared this vision a brother perceived, "There are only special seasons when the raft is close enough to the jetty for people to leap on board." In the fragrance of precious moments in which the Holy Spirit was speaking very tenderly and very powerfully, he added, "This is the moment for me! I am now leaping on board the raft. I commit myself to a life of responsiveness to the Holy Spirit, lead me where He will."

Perhaps this is just such a moment for you as you read this. Don't delay! Leap for the raft! You will always be glad you did. So will your Lord, Jesus Christ, the One worthy to be highly exalted for ever and ever. Amen and amen!

Chapter 2

A

NEW CROWN FOR JESUS

In the Spirit I saw Jesus in silhouette. Just the outline of His person was visible to my gaze. I could discern that He was standing astride the circle of the earth.

As I watched He lifted the crown from off His head and seemed to fling it spinning off into space, or at least beyond my capacity to see. Then He reached out and took another crown, looked at it momentarily and then placed it on His head.

With the placing of that crown, the silhouette began to fill out before me.

I saw amazing things beginning to happen on the earth. Mountains were levelled out, though I could not see how. There was no sign or indication of hand or machine at work. Polar ice-caps were melting, and continents seemed to be flowing together. It was a glorious season of rapid supernatural change on the earth. A new order and perfection seemed to be being established all across the globe.

With a great sense of exaltation and awe I heard voices, thunderously loud, proclaiming, "The kingdoms of this world have become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever!"¹

I shouted with them!

"Great and marvellous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."²

Even as I worshipped I beheld and I saw that the crown Christ now wore was a crown of people. Strangely, the people seemed joined together as one, a holy garland around His brow. All their hands were raised in adoration and worship. They sang in the Spirit, a fragrantly sweet and rare love song into the ears of the Almighty.

Because I had never thought of Jesus wearing that kind of crown, I was especially delighted to read thereafter, "You will be a crown of splendour in the Lord's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God."³

How clear it is that we dare not evade the high importance of Christ-centered lives in which we give ourselves unstintingly to an emphasis in worship. A love flow of worship to our precious, wonderful Lord ought to be the continual expression of redeemed lives. Jesus gave Himself so that He might win for Himself a radiant bride without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish.⁴ His desire is for a lover people. It is our supreme privilege to be that people who minister to the Lord in a manner that brings joy and pleasure to Him.

Can worship have any bearing on the establishment of Jesus' reign? We know that He will

reign, and that of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end.⁵ We also know that God exalted him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.⁶

We know the people praising Him will cause all the ends of the earth to revere Him: "May all the people praise you, O God; may all the people praise you. Then the land will yield its harvest, and God, our God, will bless us. God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear him."⁷

"And people from remotest lands will worship him."⁸ We are fully persuaded that today God is calling not only for a people who will love Him with all their hearts, but for a people who will give themselves to expressing that love as fully and as constantly as possible. So will the kingdoms of this earth become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign for ever and ever! Hallelujah! Amen!

REVELATION AND WORSHIP

We worship God because He is worthy, and because we love Him. We seek His face as lovers, not His hand as beggars. We do not worship because we desire anything for ourselves as a result.

Notwithstanding, times of corporate worship are times when our love focus on the Lord Jesus, and our sensitivity to the Holy Spirit can bring delightful, unsought revelation of Father's heart. It would seem obvious that such revelation is His love response to the expression of our love, even as we love Him because He first loved us. What is received at such a time should be shared in a manner that draws forth an ongoing flow of our loving response to the One we love so dearly.

Clearly, He will be wanting to tell His bride, the saints, that He loves us very deeply and finds pleasure in our love-flow worship. We are confident that many times the Lord will be wanting to say, "Please linger here in my manifest presence in tender moments of silence as well as in wholehearted expression of your love."

This is the time when our God is likely to be telling us, "You are precious to Me.

Please don't hesitate to draw very near to Me. I make you worthy." He will may also indicate that He has a perfect plan for our lives. He has us "hedged about" with His love so that we can abandon every anxious thought, trusting Him to handle every concern, and thus fully focus our heart's attention on our Lover-King.

When our focus in a gathering is God-ward we should allow no song, prayer, prophecy, sharing or teaching to distract from our praise and worship of God until we know unmistakably that He is now wanting to speak through us to one another.

Even in our open free flowing meetings we should expect that our leaders are the ones to respond to the "change of wind" in the Holy Spirit's leading of the gathering. We suspect that if we lingered in worship until the Holy Spirit clearly directed otherwise, there would be many a meeting where no sermon would be preached—to the detriment of nobody!

In our personal love walk with Jesus our primary desire should be to please the Lord by a consistent and godly walk, and by being praisers and worshippers in a continuing way. This

heart-set and mind-set will enable us to live in the realm of the Holy Spirit, and to walk in step with the Spirit.

Love hears! Love hears as nothing else can. A precious result of walking in love with Jesus will be a clear hearing of His heart, bringing an understanding of His purpose for our lives day by day.

love can hear even a whisper, and knows how to whisper back again in tender, yielding response.

We are convinced that without a major emphasis on an intimate love walk with Jesus in our daily lives, our worship will be of a lower standard than Father deserves and desires. Not only will that be so, but our hearing of God will be impaired by a dominance of natural reasoning in our daily living, and our speaking forth of revelatory insight will neither give adequate expression of the mind and heart of God, nor bring glory to Him through the simple and yet awesome wonder of the very voice of God Himself being heard among us.

Let us walk in love, keep our focus on our dear Lord Jesus, and highly appreciate the way in which He shares His love with us. He is SO wonderful! Glory to Jesus for ever!

Chapter 3

CALLED TO RUN

One Saturday night I dreamed that the captain of the New Zealand cricket team spoke to me. "John," he said, "I want you to bat for New Zealand."

The thought of it seemed to horrify me. "Oh no! I can't do that!" I exclaimed. I pictured my self-humiliation in doing everything wrong and not only getting myself "out" but letting the whole side down, and being the cause of other batsmen losing their wickets as well.

"I wouldn't know whether there was a run 'on' or not, and I'd get good batsmen run out at the other end."

There was a team of cricketers from India touring New Zealand at the time, and a test match was due to commence within a week at Eden Park in Auckland. I was very much aware that many thousands of people would be watching the match — and watching me!

In the dream Glen Turner told me that like it or not, I was going to bat. He added, "Don't worry where the ball goes, don't worry where the Indian fieldsmen are. Just keep your eye on me, and when I call you, be running!"

Then I awoke, I woke too quickly to know what score I got! Whether I ended up a hero or an abject failure seemed to be of no importance as far as the dream was concerned.

But I woke with a clear understanding that the Holy Spirit had spoken to me. He was saying, in effect, "Don't worry where the ball is and don't be concerned about where the opposition is. Just keep your eye on Me, and when I call you, be running."

The next evening I was leading worship in the denominational church we were pastoring at that time. Although many of us were seeking to walk in the Spirit, there was still a large measure of reserve and restriction among us.

With sudden, clear and unsought revelation I knew the Lord Jesus was asking me to lead the people out in singing in the Spirit as we worshipped.

We had never done that in a Sunday service, or in a gathering in the main sanctuary.

"Lord, I can't do that!" I protested. "My co-pastor won't agree to that. Our elders won't accept that!"

How clearly I heard Him! "Don't worry about the consequences. Don't be concerned about those who are trying to catch you out. RUN!"

Shamefully I admit that I didn't, even though I had been supernaturally prepared for that moment and for that call. Not surprisingly, though God was gracious as far as blessing in the meeting was concerned, He dealt very firmly with me during the hours of that Sunday night.

The next day Mary and I went to see our co-pastor and his wife. I told him, "The Holy Spirit spoke to me in the meeting last night, directing me to lead out in singing in the Spirit."

His wife commented that she knew exactly when in the service that call had come to me, but he replied, "John, you can't do that. The elders won't receive that. You'll split the church!"

How we need to learn that if obeying God splits the church, then It is already split, even though the cracks may have been masterfully and beautifully papered over. It is already split between those who are willing to obey God unconditionally and unreservedly, and those who for their own ends have imposed a limit on the recognition of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

I was able to tell my co-pastor that I hadn't thought it was a good idea either! That was obvious since I hadn't obeyed that clear, strong word from the Holy Spirit to me. But I was also able to indicate that during that Sunday night I had made an irrevocable and non-negotiable commitment to live from then on responding to the Holy Spirit no matter what He required of me, whether or not I understood what the consequences would be or even whether I liked the thought of what was being asked of me. Little wonder that we walk a different path today! Little wonder, too, that we feel far more fulfilled and blessed than we ever have in all of our life before.

"Is it God, or is it not," ought to be the only criteria for each step of our personal lives, and for each step of church life too. If it is of God, then surely it is acceptable and desirable. If it is God, then let us run with it, regardless of what the consequences are. Just be very sure that it is God! If it is not God, then it is totally unacceptable no matter whether it has appeal, is very popular and most reasonable, or the exact reverse.

Not long after the cricket dream and its consequences I was speaking in a church down country. At the end of the word I had brought, the pastor called his people to respond.

"Let's take time to respond to the Holy Spirit," he urged. "If the Spirit is calling you to come forward to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior, please do that now. If He is calling you to walk across the room to be reconciled with another brother, please do that. And if He is calling you to sit quietly in your seat communing with God, then do that. Respond to the Lord in whatever way you feel that you should."

At that moment I knew that I was being called to prostrate myself before the Lord and to worship Him flat on my face. Even though I was a fairly respectable Baptist minister, I did so. On my face I whispered, "Lord, tell me when to get up, won't you? I want to do it right this time!"

You doubtlessly know that if God sets you a test and you fail, He is likely to ask you to resist that particular examination!

After a time I stood to my feet, and everything worked out fine. Neither the pastor nor any of the people in that respectable congregation made any comment to me about my behavior. Nor did I ever get invited back there!

Later I asked, "Lord, why did you do that to me? What benefit was there to you in asking

me to do publicly what I have felt seemly only to do in private?" I felt that surely God would understand and honor the fact that I abhor showmanship, attention seeking, and flamboyancy! I know that He does too, and so I could not understand why he had asked of me what He had. I had obeyed without understanding why He had made the request.

His answer was to the point: "I was checking to see whether I truly do have a man who will respond to my Spirit, no matter what I ask of him." He made plain to me that He would check me out on that from time to time over the coming years. And He has!

A little later we were ministering in a fellowship in the South Island of New Zealand. A teacher came to see us in the home in which we were staying. "I have questions for which I need answers," she said. "May I ask them of you?"

Sensing direction from the Holy Spirit I replied, "Sister, let me pray for you first." To this she responded, very reasonably, "Let me share the questions with you, and then you will know what to pray about."

I knew that I should pray first, and having gently insisted on it, proceeded to do so. When the prayer was concluded the sister spoke with amazement. "You don't know what you just did," she exclaimed.

She had been fasting for seven days, and had been placing before the Lord three sheets of paper with numbered questions on them. By the guidance of the Holy Spirit we had prayed down those sheets, question by question, in order. As we had prayed the Lord had given her every answer she had sought. How amazing God is!

It is important not to go out looking for miracles, but rather to set ourselves to respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit, walking step by step with Jesus. Because of commitment to that, and by His grace alone, we have seen God do wonderful things. And by His grace we will live all our life responding without question to whatever the Spirit of God calls us.

Jesus said, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."¹ To hear and to follow is His clear requirement of all who are His. This opens up a delightfully simple and wondrously precious life-style in the Spirit that is within the reach and capacity of every believing believer. You, too, can hear your Captain and respond to His call. On His behalf we charge you to do exactly that, and to set yourself to do it as a habit of life.

There is a strange paradox in this. There is a call to self-crucified living, in which the world is crucified unto us and we unto the world.² That same call provides a key to healthy and vibrant resurrection life which alone can fully satisfy, and alone can bring God the glory He deserves. This way the cross! And this way resurrection living!

This is what the Lord says to you, "Don't be overly concerned with your present circumstances. Don't tolerate disturbing thoughts concerning the consequences of obeying Me. Child, keep your eyes on Me. When I call, run! In doing this you will experience the favor of My blessing, the abundance of My grace, the delight of My love, and the empowering of My Spirit for each step you take." "Yes, Lord!" I say "Yes, Lord!"

ACCEPTING GOD'S TIMING

If you do not have ready understanding of what God is speaking to you about in a dream or vision take care not to "strain" for understanding. Never demand that God give immediate interpretation of what you have seen. You may miss a lovely surprise if you do! How much wiser it is to offer what you have received back to God, thanking Him for speaking to you and trusting Him to make the revelation clear when He knows that it is right to do so.

As with my cricket dream, the specific purpose can later flash into your understanding in the midst of a situation that God has prepared you for ahead of time by giving you the dream or vision.

The understanding of the revelation can come through various means. It may be that as you are reading a passage of the Bible that you will suddenly see a deeper meaning than you knew before because you have previously been given an important key to the meaning of the passage.

It may be that as you are talking with a friend you will suddenly realize that Father has given you prior preparation to speak a significant word into his life. It may be that someone will want to speak to you about a matter that concerns him yet it will also be a key to the concern Father has for you.

It could be in the singing of a love-song to our dear Lord Jesus that you will find a richer depth of appreciation of Him because of the revelation you had received earlier.

There is no limit to the ways the Holy Spirit can use what in itself is a mystery to you when you receive it, and use it in a way that edifies you and glorifies Jesus.

We have no right to require God to fit into our timetable. He will give revelatory understanding and guidance right on time with His schedule for our lives. There can be such release into light-footedness and light-hearted freshness in our walk with Jesus if we learn not to chafe at the yoke by which we are linked to Him. To accept the pace and direction which He sets for us makes a tremendous difference in our being able to walk in a relaxed, confident and enjoyable manner.

Jesus said, "Come here to me, all who are growing weary to the point of exhaustion, and who have been loaded with burdens and .no bending beneath their weight, and I alone will cause you to cease from labor and take away your burdens and thus refresh you with rest. Take at once my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find cessation from labor and refreshment for your souls, for my yoke is mild and pleasant, and my load is light in weight."¹

If life isn't pleasant for you, come to Jesus. If your load is not light, come to Jesus. You can be sure that your heavy load did not come from Him! He wants us all to know abundant life and light loads. More often than not our own self-will is our burden, and our desire to set our own pace and direction is our downfall. Choose now to let Him have total control of every part of your life. Be content with however much or little He wants to reveal to you of the pathway ahead. One step at a time is sufficient! And accept gladly Father's choice of when and how to show you more of His wonderful, perfect will for your life. Godliness with contentment is great gain!²

Godly attitudes will bring much blessing to you, and much glory to Jesus!

Chapter 4

MUCH MORE YET I

They had seen across the river a place- of freedom, progress and high adventure. They had responded to the call to leave the routine and the secure and the understandable and acceptable place of present experience and lifestyle.

There was joy and yet trepidation as they had leaped from one stepping stone to another, water swirling and splashing around them. They had heard the call! The river flowed swiftly as they moved from one stone to another, facing challenge after challenge. there was deep determination to move forward in His Name.

Some folk who had been close friends waved goodbye, unwilling to accept the Tightness of the move. Such a radical departure from the norm was too fearful for them to seriously consider. There were too many "unknowns" in moving out like that they couldn't understand why some people just can't be content with things as they are.

That there is just too much risk in setting forth not knowing where you are going.

"Why bother to move ahead of the majority who are content with mediocrity? After all, there is no perfection in this life, and we will all be in heaven before long. Others have set out with a like sense of sacrificial dedication and eager enthusiasm, only to end up r disappointed and even worse off than they were before!" Such would be the rationalization of those whose security is in the structures of men and in a capacity to control one's own direction and pace in life.

But what joy for those who had dared to venture forth! What blessing! What freedom! They had responded to the call. There was no turning back because there was no desire to do so. They had crossed over. Now they could sing as they wanted, raise their hands in worship, laugh and shout and dance and cry and bless the Lord with all their hearts! How they rejoiced, praised the Lord, and loved each other. God in His goodness had led them away from the traditions of men and the trapping of religiosity.

Fresh understanding of supernatural dimensions of God's grace were wonderful as prophecies were expressed and lives were touched. Miracles occurred, beautiful things took place and lives were wondrously transformed.

Time went by, months and years.

Now I was caught up in the Spirit to see the situation from a higher place. Now I was seeing this people from an entirely different perspective. What had seemed like the other side of the river when they had set out I now observed to be only an island in the middle of it. I saw people who were glad that they had come thus far and yet there were now those of their number who possessed a deeper sense of frustration. Staleness had crept in, and routine predictability was again their companion, even though in a better quality of spiritual life than they had known those years before.

There was a sense of restriction, but some of those who had set forth with an

adventuresome spirit were now content to remain where they were on the island.

A call was going out! "It is time to break out from this place of restriction." What had previously been freedom had now become restrictive, and limiting to the present purposes of God for His people.

Are you on an island of sameness and staleness? Do you think that you have "arrived"?

God keeps calling His people to move on! There is so much yet in the purposes of God for His people to enter into. There is such need to keep our eyes on Jesus, and our ear open to the Holy Spirit's voice. There is a higher way yet! We dare not become content with where we are even though God has been very, gracious to us and blessed us in many ways. Our contentment needs to be in Jesus alone and not in our blessing or enlightenment.

On the other side of the island I saw more stepping stones. It would not be easy! They seemed more spread apart. But even though the challenge was greater the crossing could be made. And there was a need for them to set their hearts towards it.

This statement rang loudly in my spirit: "The next step will be significant!"

Crossing to the other side wouldn't be the end of the journey either. For I saw forests and mountain ranges. Beyond the vision of folk on the island, or even of some who had crossed the river, there was more land to be possessed than could be understood at the present time.

This way glory! Out ahead God has a splendid purpose for His people. They need to be proved in the pressure of difficulty and in the crucible of pain. God must have a people who not only trust Him, but whom He can trust. Many current experiences in the lives of the saints only exist to bring about the establishment of godly character until God does have a people whom He can really trust. He must have people who will keep on listening to His voice and continue to follow Him. When He has that His glory will be manifested in His church as never before, and His Kingdom will be established so that there will be no end to the Increase of His government and of peace.

The vision is not a call to organization nor a call to intensified activity. Heaven forbid! It is a call to sensitive responsiveness to the Holy Spirit. It is a call to hold lightly even to what has become very precious to us, and indeed has been life to us. It is a call to recognize that we are a pilgrim people. Our citizenship is in another sphere altogether.

Abraham abandoned present possession for future fulfillment. He went forth not troubling His mind as to where he was going.¹ God had spoken, and that was sufficient. He went not knowing where. He offered up not knowing why, and he received not knowing how. But God's blessing upon a man with that kind of heart goes beyond the immediate and even beyond his own lifetime. It reached out to children's children and farther yet. Thank God for the example and inspiration of many who have been willing to go forth like that. Let us join that holy band!

We must move on! We must be hearing and responding to the Holy Spirit. Yesterday's revelation becomes today's bondage unless we are receiving fresh insights into God's purposes for us and we are moving on at His direction.

They are moving forward! Yes, we are! God does have a "fore-runner" people. By God's

grace I am numbered among them. Are you? Will you be?

THE VOICE OF THE SPIRIT

Some folks can list off all the various ways in which God speaks to His people today. Ultimately however, there is only one way in which He speaks to us. This is by the Holy Spirit within us. It could be revolutionary and releasing for us if we could come to understand the simplicity and directness of God's voice to us in this way.

This is not to say that God doesn't speak to us through the Scriptures, or through circumstances, or through people sharing an understanding of God's will for us. It is saying that what is declared or shown only becomes the "Now" word for us when the Holy Spirit gives inner persuasion, indication, impression, conviction, and witness that this is what God is saying to us at this particular point in time. This is a Spirit-quickenened, Spirit-internalized and Spirit-energized word.

Jesus said, "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear."¹ Thus He taught that revelation is linked to a capacity to receive. A Spirit-quickenened word is that portion of divine truth which God in His wisdom knows we are able to bear now, and is necessary for our present progress in godliness. A Spirit-enlightened word is "Revelation Knowledge" for us to walk in so that we are enabled to "keep in step with the Spirit."²

A key way to know that what we have envisioned or dreamed is truly of God is to hear that inner, inaudible "voice" of the Holy Spirit's confirmation.

If we do our utmost to respond to what has been shown us with inner persuasion we will be in place to receive further revelation. In both the area of revelation and of usage Jesus declared, "Whoever has will be given more, and he will have abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him."³

The reason that the people who heard Jesus share the Parable of the Sower and could not understand what Jesus taught is that they had not obeyed previous revelation. Because of this they had come to a place where they could see without perceiving and hear without understanding. It is of utmost importance that we walk in what we have been shown by the Holy Spirit, otherwise even our present "light" will become darkness.

When there is an inner prompting by the Holy Spirit, and a peace that deepens with the contemplation of it, then we can be fully assured that what we have dreamed or seen in vision is truly revelation from God. Surely we understood that inner prompting when we first came to know Jesus as living Lord for at that moment "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."⁴

Then inner prompting was a spiritual feeling of peace, release, cleanness or deep assurance that may have caused us to exclaim, "I don't know how I know, but I know that I know that my sins are forgiven and I am born again."

Be alert to the way that the Holy Spirit brings assurance through an inner peace: "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."⁵

"Let the peace of God rule (arbitrate, be the referee) in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace."⁶

Chapter 5

LET HOPE SPRING FORTH

Time and time again in worshipping our glorious Lord I was deeply touched in seeing the eye of the Lord. It seemed so filled with indescribable love and also with amazing purity and power. There is something intensely awesome in the all-seeing eye of God!

Now it seemed that I was on a turntable swinging around to where I could see out of His eye, even as He saw. He seemed to speak within me, "I will bring you here from time to time that you may see the seasons of the hearts of men."

It has been so! This is the account of one such occasion.

Brothers had been ministering to a person with obvious need. They were eager for God to touch his life, but he showed clearly that he did not want their attention. How forlorn and hopeless looking he was!

In the Spirit I viewed a bleak winter's scene. The sky was leaden dull with heavy clouds, and all around the ground was covered with ice and snow. It was not difficult to recognize that this was the "season of the heart" of the downcast man.

Something was happening! The scene was changing as I gazed. A delicate spring flower was pushing up through the frozen ground. And look! It was not being destroyed by the freezing winter weather.

I saw a beautiful thing! Rather than the flower being adversely affected by the season, it was coming forth to beautiful golden bloom with supernatural rapidity. The snow and ice were receding from around about that delicate flower! That blossom coming forth was bringing a change of season. Amazingly, spring was here!

This was a prophetic vision for the man in question, and we shared it with him. He wanted to receive it but appeared unable to. At least a seed was sown in his heart that day.

In a meeting a few evenings later we spoke to this same man. Father says, "I love you dearly. You are precious to me, and I am concerned for you, I purpose to bring you to full life in me." It appeared that he found it difficult to receive the word that indicated that the Lord loved him very much. But he believed that hope was springing up within him!

Hope is the spring flower that can bring a radical change to the seasons of the hearts of men. Hope is such an under-rated commodity in the Christian church. It is often expressed as a second rate substitute for faith. How well the song puts these two in balance when it declares, "Faith for today and bright hope for tomorrow; Blessings all mine with ten thousand beside." Yes, indeed, "Great is Thy Faithfulness, Lord unto me!"

What a delight when after a few more days the person we are sharing about spoke out in a meeting. He said that he had felt himself to be at the edge of a precipice with no way

out of his predicament, but God had drawn him back. Glory to Jesus.

Here are some precious declarations of David: "No one whose hope is in you will ever be put to shame."¹

"The eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those who hope in his unfailing love."² "Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him."³

"I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I put my hope."⁴ "Blessed is he whose help is in the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God."⁵

"The Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in His unfailing love."⁶

It would seem a natural and easy thing to put our hope in Him whose love is unfailing, would it not? Why should we hesitate when God is so caring and so trustworthy?

In the New Testament we learn that God is a God of hope.⁷ We are called to be joyful in hope.⁸ Hope is one of the three things that remain along with faith and love.⁹ What a glorious trio of grace they are!

Hope in our Lord Jesus Christ inspires endurance¹⁰, and there is such a need for that grace in our lives today. "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful."¹¹ For the believer there is a sure hope of a better day as we put our hope in God and trust Him with our whole heart.

Have you ever thought that a command from the Lord carries with it a concealed promise? Since He would never command the impossible, the command has in its very nature the promise of grace to enable us to perform what is asked of us.

That is the only sense I see in God commanding us to love! How can love be commanded? It is! Husbands are commanded to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.¹² We are all commanded to love one another even as Christ has loved us.¹³ The fact that this is commanded is an iron-clad guarantee of God's help in sufficient measure so that we are enabled to do it. Bless God for that!

The same truth applies to difficult situations. We may be tempted to feel that our present circumstances are hopeless and impossible, but the fact that Father allows us to be in the present situation has a guarantee with it. God causes everything to work together for good to those who love Him.¹⁴ The fact that the circumstance exists pledges divine aid to bring us through, and to bring us through triumphantly. As we look to Him for help, He will use the situation to further conform us to the likeness of Jesus, and also to bring glory to His marvellous Name! You can count on that!

Let us see that this same provision of God's grace applies to inner Spirit-engendered thirst in our lives. There is an unsatisfying satisfaction in Jesus! He satisfies very deeply and completely, and yet that very satisfying causes a desire for more to rise up within us.

In our day the blessed Holy Spirit is stirring up desire in the people of God for a better day and a higher way than we have ever known. As the deer pants for streams of water, so we thirst for God, for the living God.¹⁵ We want to meet with God in a fresh encounter. We long to see Him lift His church to a place more heaven-like than it has ever been on earth before. We reach out for the God who is here to come in a new way and with glorious power so that Christ-like character becomes the norm amongst us and so that

resurrection life and power causes all of earth to hold our majestic God in awe and wonder.

The fact that the thirst is there carries a guarantee of its fulfillment. Be highly encouraged by that! He does not create desire only to frustrate or disappoint. No! No! No! He will give us the desire of our hearts!¹⁶ Glory to Him for ever.

Let bright hope for tomorrow lifts us all to joyously confident living today, as we delight ourselves in the Lord day and night!

Chapter 6

THE NEED OF SUPPLEMENTARY REVELATION

What God reveals to us in dreams and visions, no less than anything that is declared to us prophetically or spoken from the "Word", needs to be interpreted for us by the Holy Spirit. There is grave danger in endeavoring to comprehend through natural reasoning and logic that which God has spoken to us by His Spirit. The fact is that we need supplementary revelation to gain understanding of what has already been shown to us.

Interpreting by natural reasoning can cause us to jump to very faulty conclusions, and cause us to become very confused because what we anticipated is different from what God has purposed for us. We can also become both confused and frustrated if we try to bring about what God has shown us that He will accomplish, and actually hinder and delay the working of God on our behalf.

For example, it may be very clear to us that something is out of order in the life of a member of our family. It would be foolish to instantly assume, "I must confront them. I must rebuke them!"

Is that what Father wants? There are other options. He may simply be wanting us to pray and trust Him to accomplish a transforming work. Alternatively He may be wanting us to share the revealed situation with an elder who will, in turn, be shown what the next required step is. Then again, He may be showing us that we need to stay alert for the right opportunity to speak with caring love. Only the Holy Spirit can direct us aright in what to do with what has been shown to us.

Note that similarly we also need Holy Spirit direction in how to pray. We cannot pray effectively without or beyond revelation from God.

If a new neighbor moves in next door acting abrasively and offensively we are apt to demand, "God, please get them out of this neighborhood right now!" But are we sure that this is what is in Father's highest purpose? We need God-given understanding before we pray.

Rather than moving that person away, Father may be wanting to use us as His instruments in bringing salvation transformation to them. Possibly, He may only be wanting to teach us patience and perseverance, which frequently are ingredients that are lacking in modern Christian character. Just perhaps, God may be wanting us to move out of that neighborhood! We need to be asking, "Lord, teach us to pray — according to your will in this situation."

Let us seek not only to do the right thing, but to do it in the right way, at the right time,

and with a right motive. How essential it is for us to be receiving insight from the Holy Spirit so that our ways consistently please the Lord.

Look to God to show you one step at a time exactly how to respond to what He has shown you.

HABIT-BOUND BELIEVERS

What a privilege to see! Jesus was sitting on a low wall in the center of a Bible-times Israelite village. White washed walls, cobblestones, and the warm morning sun all added their special ingredient to a lovely scene.

Up crooked lanes people were hurrying. They had heard that Jesus was visiting their little town, and didn't want to miss one word that came from His lips. Nor did they want to hear through others later of some tremendous miracle that took place before they arrived. But there were some rushing in the opposite direction, going to bring in an aged parent or sick friend. Some were bringing little children who desperately needed the touch of the Son of God.

Rapidly a crowd gathered, but Jesus continued to sit in silence as though He were not even noticing the gathering crowd, nor noticing the group of religious leaders that I saw standing at the corner of a near-by building. They were obviously and openly furious that this "troubler" was here in their village.

Then I observed a strange, amazing, and awful thing! As needy, longing people and ill folk too, gathered with joy and hope to hear the words of Jesus and to feel His touch of loving power, there came a sudden change of mood. Cheerful chattering and quiet delight altered to become a groan of despair that seemed to rise simultaneously from every throat, except from the religious leaders. People turned away with deep disappointment, and the religious leaders rubbed their hands with glee.

"We have Him now!" They exclaimed. "He has become ineffective! Now He cannot turn the hearts and minds of the people away from the traditions in which we have bound them. He is powerless now, and so are they!"

In this strange dream Jesus had taken out a cigarette and had begun to smoke it!

Nor was that all! Further shock gripped me as I saw Jesus' face change until it was His face no longer. It had become the face of one I know who sought to walk with Jesus, and yet who continued to smoke. The change repeated itself several times; from the face of Jesus to that person I know and then back again.

Then I saw that His face became that of another smoking Christian that I was acquainted with. Again the appearance changed back and forth.

I awoke with a deep sense of sadness. Was I being shown that by their smoking Jesus was rendered ineffective in His desire to manifest His life in these two men, and through them as well? I believe I was! And not only them, of course, but others too who are slaves to the "weed".

Being in South Africa at the time I wrote home to convey the message of the dream to those concerned.

There is no thought within me of condemnation for smokers, but rather a deep longing to see them free, as well as others in the family of God who are slaves to different habits.

There IS freedom in Jesus! Friend, don't ever despair. Don't ever convince yourself that your case is hopeless. Even though you may not find immediate release, be assured that it is there for you! You may even have sought release from this bondage, but still know that there is freedom for you! Father loves you too much, and Jesus has made such ample provision for your well being, for you to consider for a moment that your case is hopeless.

Others have found glorious release from the bondage of habit, and there is no partiality with God. You can be free!

The answer to your addiction may not be in trying harder. That may only serve to make you focus your thought on the problem. That would enlarge it within your mind, and bind you so much the more. Perhaps you should simply admit to Father, "I don't want to be bound in this way. I want to be free for your sake, and for my family's sake too. I have the desire, but I don't have the ability to struggle free."

Tell Him that you recognize that you have the desire but only He has the power. So you put your case in His hands. If you are going to be free you are going to need divine aid.

Paul said, "Whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ."¹ He stated there had come such a radical change of values in his life that things that once he considered important and he had placed value on, he had now come to consider dung! I have never had a person come to me sharing, "Brother John, I have a tremendous problem. I carry a bag of dung around with me everywhere, and I just cannot shake myself free from it." Consider your habit dung, and call it what it is!

It could be extremely helpful if you were to ask the Lord Jesus to let you feel the way He feels about the thing that binds you. Admit that you despise yourself for liking and wanting a thing that grieves Him. After all, you do know that He died to set you free from it! The Holy Spirit can cause you to hate what God hates and to love what He loves. If you loathe that smoking wholeheartedly you are nine-tenths free!

"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."²

Start looking for the way out, the way of escape. Take it the first moment it appears because the "window of opportunity" may be very brief.

It is important not to let your mind focus on your problem for too long. Let Jesus be the focus of your life. Set your mind and set your heart on things above.³ Praise God repeatedly for all that He has done in your life thus far. Bless Him for being the kind of God that He is. Read the scriptures, be in meetings, fill your life with things of the Spirit until the area of failure in your life is clearly defined and very limited.

Get mad at tobacco! Throw down a cigarette, unlit or half smoked, and jump on it

angrily.

Be counting on God for freedom. Expect it! Praise Him for the fact that there is freedom ahead for you. Be listening to Him because He will want to be saying to you, "I set you free! You are now a non-smoker."

Then, even though you were to take another cigarette you should react, "This is not like me. I am a non-smoker now!" We are confident that even as you read this you could hear Him speak like that, and be free forever, from this very moment. Hallelujah!

Chapter 7

WE DON'T SEE IT ALL

At the present time "We know in part and we prophesy in part."¹ Our understanding is limited. There is a law of reserve in God's revelation of Himself and His purposes. Never feel that you know it all, or have been shown it all. There are times when what seems to be contradictory is actually only the expression of different aspects of the one truth, and even yet only a fragment of it.

Let us take care to stay "open" to further insight being given us from God. He may give us this through a variety of sources.

Our natural human reasoning wants what we share with others to be rounded off and complete so that it is logical and understandable. In prophetic utterance there is need for care lest we add some of our interpretation of the revelation as though it were an integral part of it because of a desire to make plain to others what we have heard. This is not done consciously and therefore it is advisable for those who begin prophesying to reach out to leaders or prophetic brothers requesting helpful assessment of the effort made to speak the word of the Lord. Such a course of action may promote rapid maturing in this area.

As we take care to differentiate between what has been shown and the interpretation of it we will need to listen humbly to what others say in case the Holy Spirit chooses to give them part of the interpretation of what he has shown us. It is healthy to consider the sharing of revelation as a team effort rather than "going solo", endeavoring to bring forth the whole message ourselves.

There is always a danger of our misinterpreting revelation because of our own desires, reasoning, doctrinal understanding and self-will. Allow the Holy Spirit to interpret what the Holy Spirit reveals!

Frequently we will be amazed and delighted when more than we asked or anticipated comes about. Like the Queen of Sheba we may well have occasion to exclaim, "Not even half was told me!"²

The law of limitation in revelation and knowledge is one of many reasons why it is foolish to attempt to bring about what God has shown us will be. We do not have all the answers! More than that, God is usually showing us what HE will do if we walk in humility, purity, and faith, and in a close love link with Him. Go for that!

Never allow even a very precious and delightful dream or vision to cause you to focus on that rather than to stay centered on Jesus. Rather let the receiving be the cause of a fuller and richer expression of our praise and love to Him.

Do nothing in response to revelation except the specific thing the Holy Spirit directs you to do. And bless God for His goodness!

ANGELIC AMAZEMENT

We had shared in a church gathering in Pennsylvania a word that we believed was very specifically the word of the Lord for that people at that time. The Holy Spirit had emphasized within us that this was significant for their progress in Godliness and for their entrance into a deeper and developmental experience of God's purposes for them.

As songs of love and gratitude were rising from appreciative hearts to our precious Lord, I saw in the Spirit a very large covered-in amphitheatre. The covering dome seemed to be made of a glass-like substance. In the arena with its capacity for many thousands were a handful of people, the very same people that were in the room that evening.

Above the dome there appeared a large number of angels crowding out one another in their enthusiasm to see the folk inside. They were unable to suppress their excitement, and kept exclaiming, "They have the key! They have the key! The secret is now out! Let's see what happens now that they have the key!"

Increasingly we have become aware that in any specific situation there is a key. There is a key to a person's need that keeps struggling but yet not coming any nearer to real victory in Jesus. There is a key to a meeting that drags drearily on, leaving everyone unsatisfied, including, and especially, the Lord Himself. There is a key for a people who have come so far, but now seem to be going around in circles, making no further progress. Yes, and there is a key to the next step forward for the church in coming to where the fullness of God's glorious purpose is accomplished within her and she becomes a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.¹ There IS a key!

The fact is that when we look at any of the multitude of situations depicted in the Book of Books, it seems that on every occasion the key is contrary to human understanding and reason.

Who would have thought it reasonable to make it possible for Joseph to supply the dire needs of his family through seven years of severe drought and famine by having him spend years both in slavery and in imprisonment? Who would have thought it possible that a key to the situation was in a butler and a baker being imprisoned by the pharaoh of the day? Or who would have considered the fact that Joseph had been enabled to interpret their dreams and would be crucial to the plan of God? How vital it was for Joseph to take the right steps at the right time!

Who would have thought that the key to the extreme poverty and tormenting dilemma of the widow of a son of the prophets was in a very unusual instruction given by Elisha? A small jar of oil was an indication of her hopelessness. She owed so much and her sons were to be taken as slaves, and all she had was that one small jar of oil! Wasn't it ridiculous advice for a prophet to give? "Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars," he instructed her. "Don't ask for just a few."²

The next step was even more unreasonable, if that was possible! She was to shut herself indoors, and pour out from that one small jar until all the jars were filled. And so it was!

Whoever would have dreamed that the one way to relieve Israel from the threat of defeat

and domination by Goliath and fellow Philistines was to use a stripling youth not trained for war? Certainly King Saul could only imagine it possible if David were to wear his armor and weapons. Wasn't it strange that a sling shot and pebble were the key to Goliath's downfall.

Perhaps the most astounding fact of all is in the wonder of Calvary! What man would have ever devised a way for the release of mankind from sin's bondage, and the opportunity for new wonderful salvation life, and also the way for the Enemy to be defeated and disarmed, in the apparent failure of the death of Jesus, the Christ of God?

Unquestionably none of those closely associated with Him on earth had any inkling of it, even though He had sought to share this glorious and amazing key with them! Thank God His ways surpass human understanding because His plans for His people are immeasurably higher than anything man could have envisioned or imagined!

We need to seek God for the answer, the key, to our situation and to our onward progress, knowing full well that it will not appeal to natural understanding or reason. We need to be willing for whatever the key may be even if it seems as foolish as digging ditches in a desert, throwing salt into a spring to make the water pure, or expecting Jesus to use a boy's little lunch to feed a multitude.

If we have an open heart and a desire for God's glory, and if we will wait on the Lord without demanding and claiming, and if we will want to know the way forward revealed to us for His sake alone, then our loving and faithful Father will see that the key is given to us. We need revelation from God to know which step to take!

Frequently, rather than awaiting the revelation of the key to our situation, we flounder around becoming more active as we become more frustrated. We try one thing after another and expend our energy on so much that is futile, acting on the rationale that because a particular method has worked somewhere else for somebody else then it will surely work for us if we try hard enough.

This seems especially so in the way saints express their response to a God-given holy desire to see people brought to know Jesus as living Lord and Savior. Sub-standard evangelism is rampant! Yet there is a higher way! There need not be so much effort expended for such little achievement! But we dare not look for workable methods, when the crying need is for a specific revelation of the key for this place at this time.

We must have the key for our situation and need, and only act on the basis of clear and decisive revelation! There is a key, and only God has it. Let God speak! Let Him show you the key. Wait in stillness before Him and let Him impress upon you His answer to your situation.

Find the Key!

What WILL the angels see?

Chapter 8

THE REALITY OF THE INVISIBLE

Have you ever thought about the fact that the "real" world is the unseen world? Everything that can be seen is temporary and often even illusory as well. It is the unseen realm of the Spirit that is eternal. Whatever man builds in the visible world even the visible church world— will pass away. Only what God builds is eternal.

Catch the reality of the unseen in John Wesley's statement: "Best of all, God is with us!" Yes, He is here, and an eye to see observes overwhelming evidence of His presence. But only God opens the eyes of the blind! So many are blind, and some are willfully blind, to the delights of His presence.

Love is invisible. Heaven is invisible. But how wonderfully real these are!

Revelation is God's way of sharing His heart, desire, call and purpose with His people. Dreams and visions are a means God uses to take us beyond natural limitations into revealed insights of Himself. Didn't Jesus use picture stories to reveal the will of God? Of course He did! It was said of Him, "No one ever spoke the way this man does."¹ He gave insight, surpassing anything known then, into the magnificence of God's plan for fallen, helpless man.

It isn't surprising then, is it that God still speaks in picture language to His people by the ministry of the Holy Spirit in dreams and visions? No, of course not! This kind of revelation bridges the immense gap between the seen and the invisible, which is especially large within the framework of Western civilization.

Words alone are inadequate. We all know the old adage, "A picture says more than a thousand words." Similarly dreams and visions sometimes show with amazing clarity and unforgettable emphasis something that God wants to make known to us in such a way that our lives are changed thereby.

What a challenge it is to describe a picture so that others see it in their "mind's eye", or more correctly, see it with the eye of the Heart. God-given ability is required for the adequate sharing of any revelation. We need to reach out for enabling grace so that Father's purpose is fully accomplished in the sharing of what has been entrusted to us for His people.

God calls us to walk in the invisible in the call to "Live by faith and not by sight,"² and to "Walk in love,"³ and to "Live not as unwise but wise."⁴ He challenges us to set our hearts and our minds on things above⁵ — invisible, wonderful, real, non-earth things.

It has been said that "Only those who see the invisible can accomplish the impossible." We would rather delete the word "accomplish" from this quotation and insert in its place words like "welcome", "receive", "trust for", and "walk in". Only those who live in the invisible

and who trust for the impossible can experience the supernatural as Father desires them to. There is no doubt that a walk in the Spirit, which links the unseen with the visible, can cause us to experience the supernatural power of God in our lives.

God always stands ready to reveal Himself to a seeking heart, and ready to equip those who are called and are willing to open their mouths on His behalf. Thank God He does enable us to share Holy Spirit revelation in a manner that gives both an understanding and a "feeling" of what He has shown us.

STEPPING INTO FULLNESS

While in conversation with the Lord prior to speaking in a meeting where everyone was a stranger to me, I saw in the Spirit a scene deep in a forest. In the midst of deep shadows there was an area free from trees and undergrowth. This area seemed brightly lit. There was a glow to the lighting that was brighter than the summer's sun, though I could not see the source of it. Around the clearing was a very unusual picket fence. Each paling was pointed, but the points were so elongated that there seemed to be half a man's height from where the V commenced to the upper point of the paling, which of course was quite sharp.

People were peering through the narrow slits at the bottom of the Vs. They were looking with wistful longing at other folk who were inside and who were obviously enjoying themselves immensely. In that enclosed clearing I observed whole families with their hands joined together, running and dancing and shouting with irrepressible delight. There appeared to be more and more people joining in. As they did so, the clearing seemed to grow larger and larger.

I recognized that those peering through the slits in the paling fence were envious and yet mystified. Some turned and walked away dejectedly, but even then turning around to take another look at the fence and the brightly lit area beyond it. But it seemed impossible for them to find a way to join with those in the clearing.

Other things became clear to me. The fence wasn't as high as it appeared to those who were outside of it. When they lifted their heads, looking upward, and when they stood in full height, in an unusual way they gained height until they could easily step over the picket fence.

Some had an added difficulty. They had paced back and forth outside the fence until their very pacing had dug a trench in the soft soil. The longer they had paced back and forth the more impossible it appeared to be for them to enter in. I noticed that one man had come to the fence and briefly looked inside before turning away again. He had done this so many times that his trench was deep enough to be his grave.

During the meeting, in which I had been asked to speak about life in the Spirit, I shared the vision. Immediately there was response from the people. One after another declared, "I step over the picket fence," and were then filled with the Holy Spirit! It was so precious and quite awesome to share in such a sweet work of the Holy Spirit. It was different, but very genuine, and we loved it. Soon it seemed that all had entered into the joy of those in the clearing.

Then someone asked, "What about the man who dug himself a deep trench by coming

up to the picket fence and walking away so many times?"

The minister of the church spoke out, "I am that person!" Then with gracious humility he requested, "My people, please pray for me. Please minister to me."

With joyful love his people gathered around. Some had prayed for this moment for a long time. After a while he was able to say, "I DO step over the picket fence." It is done! Even though he had looked so many times without entering into the fullness of the life in the Spirit, this time he experienced it. He was now able to bless the Lord for grace that had been extended to him by a longsuffering God who had continued to draw him back to face his need of higher dimension of the Holy Spirit's life within him.

Isn't there a very real danger of thinking, "It isn't for me," or even, "It isn't there at all," if we have sought unsuccessfully to find the key to steadfastness, effectiveness and to the joy in which early Christians walked? What makes it all seem so impossible? Is the fear of what others will think or do a high picket fence to us? Or is it the fact that we cannot fully understand supernatural dimensions of the working of the Holy Spirit.

Isn't this so much like our initial salvation, when some of us stumbled over the simplicity of it? We cannot understand how God blots out the stains and sins of years simply because we trust Him to forgive us and save us. But we have found that He does! Glory to Him for ever!

There may be deep concern at the reaction that may come from others, but in the end they will recognize reality. Besides which we cannot compromise on our stand that Jesus is Lord of our lives. And He is the one who calls us to fullness. How delightfully simple was His statement, "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"¹ Have you asked for Holy Spirit infilling, and for Holy Spirit power? If there is a lack of power in your life, may not this be the cause? It IS there, and it is for YOU! It is in God's heart for you to have as close and full relationship with Him as anyone else on earth has! He is totally impartial. "Now let the fear of the Lord be upon you. Judge carefully, for with the Lord our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery."² Even Jesus' enemies conceded, Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality....³

Why not come back to the picket fence again? Why not trust your Father to give you what He has wonderfully given to so many in our day? Yes, we acknowledge that there are hypocrites, and we are all very imperfect. But there are a great many whose lives have been sweetly touched and beautifully uplifted to a higher quality of life in God, so that He may be the more glorified in them.

Our wonderful Father deserves to have us living a quality life in the Spirit so that He is glorified thereby. For that we need an Acts 2:4 experience, and we need to be "constantly controlled by the Holy Spirit."⁴

Chapter 9

A DIFFERENT WAVE

It was Sunday morning, and the service had begun. We had been with these folk for a couple of days seeking to share the life and love of Jesus with them. But the honest truth is that we didn't feel that we fit into their situation very well at all. We felt that this was one place that Father would not have us return to.

There have been times when I have been in a church gathering and whispered, "Lord, I don't feel very comfortable in this place." It has seemed to me that He has answered, "Don't be disturbed about that John, no more do I!"

On this particular occasion I was quietly asking the Holy Spirit to give me a "now" word to pass on to the gathering. They appeared to be trying to worship freely, but what they expressed didn't ring true in our spirit. I felt that the Holy Spirit was showing me that they could not express overflowing love to our precious Savior because their hearts, minds and lives had been absorbed during the week with selfish and earthy matters so that they had not been enjoying sweet fellowship with Jesus day by day.

It came as a complete surprise to me! I was seeing in the Spirit an ocean front scene with a huge wave rolling in towards the shore. The sight did not please me, at least initially. There have been times when we have asked that what God does in our day be more than just another wave rolling in.

In a generation when man has been able to reach the moon and send rockets far beyond that, could it not be possible for God to raise His church to an orbit of grace and triumph from which it never, never descended into another cycle as in former days. Church history has been marked by a cycle of revival — blessing — comfort — pride, and then God's disfavor and judgment requiring man to call out for mercy and another revival "outpouring".

Excitement! This was different from any wave I had ever seen at a beach, pictured in my spirit, or learned of in history! The reality of what I was seeing pounded its way into my consciousness. This was a wave from which there was no receding. Hallelujah!

This is God's purpose and desire for His people — a mighty wave of grace and abundant life in which there is neither lessening of its flow nor slacking off of its power. Such a wave will come! There is as much certainty in my spirit about this, even as there was as I viewed the wave that Sunday morning.

But now I do recall having seen a similar picture in the Spirit! Some years back my heart was aching to breaking point with a cry for a move of God in New Zealand such as we had never known, and way beyond what God's people hoped for or expected.

At that time I had seen the shores of our coast line as though there were enormous cliffs all around the land. Waves kept coming in, but even though the waves grew larger the cliffs kept turning them back. Only spray splashed over the cliffs, but that only served to accentuate on how much the country was missing out.

God was telling me that there were massive obstacles to His accomplishing what He wanted to do in our land. In that vision I became aware the cliffs were higher where they represented church bigotry, pride, hypocrisy, tradition and religiosity than where they represented major evils in the non-church life of the nation! Think on that!

However in that vision the time came when a wave of God's grace overwhelmed every cliff-face obstacle, and the land was flooded. Glory! Marvellously the floods were not salt water, nor were they simply a passing wave, but they were the bringing in of a totally new and much higher dimension in the life of the people of God. Divine enablement became the mark of each step of life as God was amazingly glorified in a transformed nation.

Sitting there in that Sunday morning meeting I was asking, "Father, what significance does this wave have for this people?"

This was the word that I heard: "It is in My heart to bring My people to a fullness in Me beyond anything My church has ever known. I want to bring My followers back to the simplicity, purity and power of early church Christians, only so that I may take them on from there into the greater fullness that I propose for them today."

The revelation continued, "For those who have set themselves to be totally responsive to My Spirit, who are willing to do whatever I require of them, and who will give constant priority in their lives to magnifying and worshipping Me, for these there lies ahead an awe-inspiring wonder! They will know what it is for Me to be in their midst with power and glory! But those churches where my people are content to live just to get their feet wet, playing "ring-a-rosy" in the sand, remaining basically self-seeking and worldly, will be shattered by that wave until they are no more."

I saw the very fellowship I was ministering in as being people content with shallowness and comfortable with carnality. And the fellowship was destroyed in the force of this glorious wave which rolled in, and in which there was no receding. However I saw the precious God-loved people of the Body rise up through the wave to become a part of the wonder of a new day in the Kingdom of God. It was the structure that was destroyed, not the people.

Isn't there a very real sense in which this is a picture of what God desires to bring about in our lives, even now? He finds little pleasure in our being caught up on the wave of the moment, soon to drop back into the rut of yesterday's struggle and frustration. At this very moment He would touch us in a new way if we would set our hearts to respond to His call to be a holy lover people.

There is no reluctance in God to bless His people! Nor does He honor one person over another. He has no favorites! He longs to do in each of our lives as much as He has done in the most devout and blessed of saints.

Brother! Sister! Let another wave roll in — into your life — a wave with which there is no receding! Reach out at this very moment to receive of God's willingness in response to your yieldedness.

PICTURES OF DANGER OR JUDGEMENT

Dreams and visions do not depict inevitability, even when they are accompanied by a sense of unease and foreboding. They may be intended to provoke us to earnest prayer and faith, and also to adjust our path so that what is depicted is avoided.

When we have been shown something unpleasant about ourselves or somebody we know, possibly someone who is near and dear to us, it is very worthwhile to check out whether the revelation has been given to arouse concern in us about the matter. It well may indicate that we should give ourselves to a special season of seeking God, and of trusting Him also. Surely we can be declaring before the Lord that He is Lord of our family, and that we honor His kingly reign in that life and situation. It is invaluable to stand unwavering in the reality that reigns!

Don't be like Jonah. He was dismayed when what he had declared to the people of Nineveh was averted by their repentance! God had certainly called him to pronounce judgment, not because it was inevitable, but so that they would turn from their sinfulness. It was only imminent and inevitable if they continued on their present course.

We are hearing strong statements of judgment and doom today through some men of God. They have a "Jonah" ministry of declaring deep displeasure with the sin of our land and of the church, and of declaring it forcefully enough to jar and shock us. Well may we face the awesome fact that many of our nations are nearer the brink of God's severe judgment than any of us seem willing to realize.

But let us not forget that "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy."¹ This is a day for the church to be on its knees in confession of abject failure and of the stupendous folly of reliance on our own wisdom, fleshly self-effort and of our being comfortable with carnality.

The day may come when like King Ahaziah,² and others too, we will have gone too far in looking to the gods of our day so that the pronouncement of judgment will be irrevocable.

Covetousness is idolatry. It is a god many even in the church worship today. A desire to get more and to possess what is not ours and is not for us, is to God as though we were worshipping at a heathen shrine. But our sin is the greater because we have received much more light than they. Such idolatry is always intensely displeasing to God. What an abomination!

Many other gods abound around us. Have we become accustomed to them to a point where they horrify us no longer, and to where we easily fall prey to their allurements? God save us! Refuse to worship at the shrine of success where position, popularity and earthly possession possess you. Keep well clear of the gods of worldly wisdom which can appear to be so reasonable, carnal self-confidence which makes man feel that he controls his own destiny, and self-expression which tolerates uncleanness in thought or action. Doom stalks those who ignore the reality of such false gods.

We must take care that we do not gloss lightly over any warning that is given to us, even though punishment may not be inevitable. The fact that we have been given a foreshadowing indicates that there is hope if we take heed immediately. We need to keep a tender and sensitive conscience so that we are alert to what pleases God, and also to what displeases Him. It could work wonders in us if we were to ask Father to let us feel

the way He feels concerning the thing He is warning us about.

It is very reassuring to know that though God hates sin, yet He loves us so much that He goes to great lengths to cause us to walk in a right path. Bless Him for His grace and His loving kindness!

Chapter 10

A DIFFERENT VIEW

In your mind's eye you can easily picture what I saw.

A man was standing on the door step of his home, looking in through the open door. He stood gazing inwards like that for ever so long. Along the street I saw at door after door men staring into their homes too.

Was there something especially appealing and attractive that captivated their attention? Certainly not! They seemed incapable of taking their eyes off the drabness and smallness of their homes. They seemed to be locked within four walls even though they stood outside.

If only they would turn around! There was such beautiful scenery out there. The rolling meadows almost demanded laughter and song, and pleasant strolling. There was such grandeur in the backdrop of rugged mountains. The flowing stream and the overhanging shade trees called for resting and wading or fishing. The hand of God, and His presence too, was evident everywhere. Everywhere, that is, except in the homes into which the men were fixedly gazing. Staring like that seemed to cause them to be locked into the position they were in, and in that position they appeared to be scarcely half alive.

"Turn around! Turn around!" I want to keep shouting it out. "Don't stay looking into your house. Look out from it!"

Surely you can see what I saw and hear what I heard.

Man cripples himself if he keeps looking inward. We can so easily and tragically focus our attention upon the limitations and flaws of our own abilities and prospects, and upon the ugliness of our past until we just cannot grasp that Father has provided a way for us to walk in the enjoyment of His grace, the fullness of His love, and the wonder of His supernatural enablement.

I felt that I knew the thoughts of some of these men. Some were thinking that their home compared unfavorably with others on the street. Others were thinking that try as they might they could never make the house what it ought to be, and how they had tried!

Still others were mesmerised by the thought that they had lived their lives thus far within those four walls, and that was the way it would continue as long as they lived. They felt that they could not escape the effects of the past.

The home of my past, of my best futile self-effort and of my inner secret self may well have an ugliness that is worse than that of others about me. Trying to clean up may well have proved to be totally frustrating. But that does not mean that this will be my situation all my days. No. No. No.

Of course, you cannot lift yourself up by your own shoelaces. Even apparent improvement by that means is cosmetic and usually temporary. Efforts at self improvement may only accentuate to us our weakness and failure. There *IS* a way out, however, and it is the way of Divine Grace. God's help is available. He is eager to enable us to clean house and then to turn around in self-forgetfulness away from ourselves. He cares enough to do it, is very willing at this point, and has the power to accomplish wonders in our lives.

Think about the Bible picture of being "grafted" into the Vine. Before a branch is grafted in, it is severed from its old rootage. When it is grafted in, the life flow and rootage of the new vine becomes its own. Because we are grafted into Jesus He becomes our rootage. There is something very releasing to be able to declare with the conviction of certainty, "My past is Jesus. I am grafted into Him. He is my rootage now."

By the wonder of new birth, and adoption into the family of God, my past is neither failure nor success. My past is Jesus. There is nothing to be proud of in my past, but nor is there anything to cringe over, struggling with a spiritual inferiority complex all my days! My sins have been washed away. I am justified — made "just-as-if-I'd" never sinned, just as though my past were perfect. How efficacious the cross-work of Jesus!

"The Lord Himself is my inheritance, my prize. He is my food and drink, my highest joy! He guards all that is mine. He sees that I am given pleasant brooks and meadows as my share! What a wonderful inheritance! I will bless the Lord who counsels me; He gives me wisdom in the night. He tells me what to do. I am always thinking of the Lord; and because He is near, I never need to stumble or to fall.

"Heart, body, and soul are filled with joy. You have let me experience the joys of life and the exquisite pleasures of your own eternal presence."¹

Yes, David had learned to look out at the brooks and the meadows, and to delight in the joy of God's presence with him! Me too! You?

What is the greatest danger for a person who is ill, or for a person who is in financial need, or whose marriage has disintegrated?

A great danger for all of us in any situation that is less than ideal —and even in ideal situations — is to turn inwards in fear, remorse, pity and hopelessness. Don't focus your thoughts on your situation! Refuse to have a "Sorry for John week" — or whatever your name is! Don't dwell in contemplation of your problems and your needs. Look outwards and upwards.

Look out beyond you to see that God does have a beautiful and fulfilling life-style for you regardless of your circumstances. Let His promise of the exquisite pleasures of His own eternal presence be a sweet morsel to savor on your spirit's tongue. Look upwards to the One who is able to bring you glorious transformation! Magnify the Lord and respond to His love. Anticipate a beautiful tomorrow. Grace will supply it — if you will delight yourself in the Lord with loving trustfulness.

This way fullness! This way Glory! Let this be the way you choose today!

SELF-CENTERED DREAMS

There is one kind of dream to be particularly cautious about. It is where our own importance is emphasized rather than the person and purpose of Jesus. He well may share insights into the establishing of His kingdom, but He has no interest in helping us establish ours! A dream in which our importance is central may possibly be a sub-conscious manifestation of an inflated ego — or the opposite. If we have any thought that such a dream is from God we had better privately refer it to a mature, wise and godly Christian.

Joseph dreamed that his brothers' sheaves bowed down to his. He had a further dream that the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to him.¹ We may question his wisdom in sharing these dreams, even though the sharing of the dreams may have helped to bring them to fulfillment. Doubtless those dreams were a comfort and a source of hope to him many a time as he suffered unjustly in a foreign prison. Perhaps they kept him from bitterness as well.

So we dare not automatically discard dreams of that nature. But we ought to offer them to God and forthwith proceed step by step to walk in His present will for us, endeavouring to do so with deep love for Him and with honest humility as well.

There are some supposed prophesies that emphasize that a certain person is going to minister to their nation, or travel internationally, or preach to presidents and princes. This is usually linked with a guarantee of wonders and miracles being performed. This kind of word seems authentic and truly from God, the hearer would do well to offer it back to Jesus, leaving the matter totally in His hands and thinking about it as little as possible.

If God is going to bring about such a thing, well and good. If we try to bring it about our efforts are likely to be disastrous to us. At best they will be futile, and will cause God to delay doing what He promised because our actions will have shown that we are far too immature yet.

God's promises and callings are conditional upon our right responses, attitudes, and spirit. Self effort may mean that He rightly chooses never to use us as we had expected Him to. This would be more for our own sake than His.

A fine brother in the Lord once shared with us how things had been prophesied a couple of years previously concerning the opening up of important ministry for him. Nothing had happened, and the delay was causing frustration and confusion. Our reply: "The Lord spoke to me twenty five years ago or more about bringing me into a certain ministry. It hasn't happened, and I don't mind if it never does. I well may have long since frustrated the purpose of God in the matter."

Since then quite a measure of that word to me has eventuated. But whether life and service work out the way we anticipate or not must have no bearing on our love for Jesus and our fulfillment in Him.

Let us always maintain a sincere attitude of servant-hood no matter how Father speaks to us, nor how He chooses to use us. That will please Him! The glory is all His!

MISJUDGING JOSEPH

Joseph became especially gifted in interpreting dreams. But he was probably baffled by the dreams through which we are introduced to him in the Scriptures.¹

The first of these was that his sheaf of grain suddenly rose and stood upright and his brothers' sheaves gathered around and bowed down to him. Pride does not suddenly stand up", it grows as men feed it with fond thoughts of self-importance and with attitudes of superiority. The brothers' sheaves chose to gather around. There is no indication in the dream that Joseph would impose his authority over them.

I believe that the dream is an indication from the Lord that the day would come when only Joseph would be able to supply grain for the family. Perhaps a commendation of his upright character is also involved. The dream certainly gave a hint of a day of sudden "raising up" as was amazingly fulfilled when Pharaoh called for him to interpret his dreams. It also indicated a time to come when his brothers would recognize his unique ability to supply grain, as they would be unable to do.

His second dream had the sun and moon and eleven stars bowing down to him. It is far-fetched to interpret this as indicating that Joseph's father, mother, and brothers, were to bow down to him. Joseph's mother Rachel had died when Benjamin was born.

The Egyptians worshipped the sun, and honored the role of astrologers. Surely then, the dream foretold a day when God would demonstrate through Joseph that He alone is God, and infinitely greater than all the astrologers of Egypt. How wonderfully Joseph answered Pharaoh's request for interpretation of his dreams: "I cannot do it," Joseph replied, "But God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."² In this way God was greatly exalted above the religion of the Egyptians.

Does it seem likely that Joseph would have shared his dreams if he had anticipated that his brothers would interpret them as they did? He surely would have been able to guess what their reaction would have been and would have been too prudent to provide an excuse for them to exercise their hatred.

If the interpretation of the dreams should be as we have suggested, then it would have been virtually impossible for anyone to know the true meaning of what God was showing Joseph. Perhaps Joseph only shared them because he was mystified by them.

Joseph was the son of Jacob's old age. This did not mean that he was the youngest son, for Benjamin had been born after him. I his statement well may have meant that he was the son who was especially helpful to Jacob in his old age, and thus a special source of comfort and joy. It was obvious that Joseph was the one son Jacob could rely on. Traits of honesty and reliability were already evident in him.

Doubtless the dreams were a means of keeping hope alive during the next thirteen years before Joseph was brought out of prison to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. God had made plain to him that a day would come when his circumstances would be very different from what he had thus far experienced.

How careful we need to be lest we jump to conclusions about what God is saying to us, either in dreams and visions, prophetic utterances, or in the written word of God. It is essential that we be just as willing to hear God require one thing of us, or another thing that

is the opposite of the first. Self-will may very easily make us deaf to what God really wants to say to us. Whatever Father wants for our lives is indeed the very best thing for us, so we ought to desire His will and purposes, never our own way.

Earnestly seek for understanding of what the Spirit is saying, and never become so dogmatic that you lose an openness to further revelation, or lose an attitude of humility and a willingness for the Holy Spirit to adjust what you have thought to be right.

God's ways are higher than our ways. May we receive grace to walk in them rather than what seems right in our own eyes. So shall He find delight in us, and so shall we continue to walk in the blessing of His favor.

Chapter 11

A MATURE ATTITUDE

Do not seek dreams and visions! Don't look for God to reveal Himself to you in dramatic ways. Don't place more value on this than on other ways God may choose to speak to you.

A desire to prefer one kind of revelation above another may well be an indication of spiritual snobbery and an attempt to show your spiritual superiority over someone else. We have seen that attitude in some who have been given a revelation of heaven. Carnality revels in what is mysterious and thrives on what is spectacular.

To major on one kind of revelation is to minimize the importance of another. At times people do the same thing with gifts of the Holy Spirit. That grieves the Giver! How dare anyone consider "tongues" to be unsavoury and unwanted when the source is the Holy Spirit.

The Pharisees asked Jesus, Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Didn't they do this so that He could be accused of minimizing or overlooking other aspects of the Law?

His answer silenced them! He gave precedence to loving the Lord our God with all our heart and with all the soul and with all the mind. He declared that second to that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Finally He stated, "All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."¹

How supremely wise to focus on loving God with every fiber of our being! Other things can fit into their proper perspective in our lives when we do this. As we continue to walk in the two great commandments we will not be tempted to exaggerate our own importance or to value one kind of revelation over another.

Rejoice that God is a talking God! If He did not choose to reveal Himself to us we would never find Him, and if He did not choose to speak to us we would never be able to force Him to do so. God freely chooses to share His heart and His mind with us! This is a precious and glorious fact. If you have one ear be hearing what the Spirit is saying to the churches,² and saying to you. Set yourself to come to a consistency in hearing God clearly and in responding obediently to His word to you.

No, don't seek dreams and visions, seek Jesus! Seek His glory. Seek to walk in a manner that pleases and glorifies Him. Never, never boast about what He has shared with you by the Holy Spirit revelation. "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."³

Visions are God given. They are not created by active imagination, nor by earnest desire. So we can never praise the dreamer nor the visionary, nor even the revelation itself. Give God glory and praise, and Him alone! He is the worthy One. All the credit is His!

MOUSE OR LION?

A pastor shared with us some years ago about a loud, disruptive and offensive person who had entered their place of worship and had then proceeded to be a source of annoyance in the meeting. The pastor had called to the man, "You think you are great don't you? You think you can roar like a lion, but you are only a mouse. Now you say that — 'I am only a mouse.'"

The man had squeaked, "I am only a mouse."

Whether that story had an affect on my response to the Lord in a dream, I cannot say. In the dream the Lord had asked me, "Will you say you are whatever I say you are?"

My reply had been, "Yes Lord, I'll say that I am a mouse."

He made plain to me that He had not asked me to say that! He asked me to declare, "I am a lion." I did so, and awoke still declaring, "I am a lion!"

It certainly wasn't that I felt like a lion, but was simply stating what I had been told. It was most surprising to me, and yet I knew that my dear Lord Jesus would only put words of truth in my mouth.

A major factor in the amazement of the dream was the fact that very same day I was meeting with a church leadership in which there was ungodliness. They had pressured me into a confrontational situation. I knew that the Holy Spirit was requiring me to speak with blunt love for these men. My heart ached with desire for humility and honesty to be manifest among them that would allow them to experience forgiveness, cleansing and grace for a better day in their spiritual lives.

I was also well aware of the prophetic expression from a dear, godly brother who has since entered heaven. He had spoken with such tenderness and yet uncompromising truthfulness at the direction of the Holy Spirit: "You will be misunderstood and maligned. You will be caused to suffer deeply in that place!"

Despite that word we had been certain that we should go there and that Father had a good purpose in it beyond our understanding.

God's grace is so wonderful! When the hour of meeting came we were able to remain in perfect peace, comfortably relaxed, and confident that God would accomplish His purpose in that place. It kept coming back to mind, "I am a lion!"

Being a lion does not mean that one needs to roar! In Africa one comes to understand that a roaring lion never takes the prey. His roaring is to strike fear into the prospective prey to cause it to veer off course in panic. Then other lions lying in wait will be able to pounce.

It was an hour in which Father was glorified. Acknowledgement of failure was the first step towards the coming of a new day in the life of that church. In a beautiful way the Holy Spirit had prepared us to be lion-hearted that day. The results brought glory to Jesus!

The dream was true, and the prophetic word was also true.

There are factors in godliness that are difficult to comprehend. Paul declared, "Now, if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory."¹

It is a healthy attitude to desire to share in bringing glory to Jesus, even at the cost of suffering. There is a joy in suffering when it is in response to God's call, and for His sake. We have learned the wisdom of challenging a brother, "I love you too much to let you go on being as stupid as you are in this one area of your life!" I love God too much to be unwilling to undertake a unpleasant task if He requires it.

One lesson that many find difficult to learn is that our actions must be based on what is right, not on what is easy. Some brothers in leadership in a local church shared with me that they had not spoken to, or dealt with, a brother whose life was out of order, because they did not want to bring distress to his ill wife. They claimed that their inaction was based on compassion.

O Yes! There is great need for us all, and perhaps especially leaders, to be "moved with compassion." We follow a compassionate Christ.

However, because we knew the situation and were aware that a whole church was being affected detrimentally, we answered those men, "That is fine, as long as you know the difference between compassion and cowardice!" After a period of discussion on other matters, one of the men brought us back to this question, saying, "We need to face up to John's statement. I believe that we are cowards!"

They faced up to a need to be willing to suffer for the benefit of the people of God, and for the sake of Jesus' glory.

We should carefully note that any strength we have is in God, and not in our own ability or capacity. We can only be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power,² so that there is no contradiction in stating, "When I am weak, then I am strong."³

God's power shows up best in weak people!⁴ No wonder Paul declares, "I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."⁵ It would be wonderful if apostles today had that same attitude! In fact, they must, for grace is given as Christ apportions it⁶ for apostolic ministry, and He only gives grace to the humble.⁷ Thus if there is pride in a man recognized as an apostle, his ministry is graceless and not an "Ephesians Four" ministry at all. It may have the appearance of such gifting, but will only be counterfeit!

It is very wise to admit that we are weak, but it is very foolish to use that acknowledgement as an excuse for sub-standard behavior or for disobeying a difficult command. Let the recognition of weakness be a cause for availing ourselves of God's amazing grace.

In Him I am a lion!

Chapter 12

ANGEL IN A BOTTLE

Several of us were praying for a man who had not yet come to know Jesus experientially as Lord and Savior. His wife was a sweet believer and their children were lovely. He recognized that there was marked improvement in her life but seemed unwilling even to consider his need of Christ. We were aware of the deep need in his life and longed to see him turn to the Lord.

As we prayed I saw a strange sight. It was an angel in a bottle! It appeared to be an enormous angel hundreds of feet in height. It was hard to conceive that a bottle could be that large, but it was! The neck of the bottle was too narrow for the angel to be able to escape.

Of course we know that such a thing as an angel trapped in a bottle is literally impossible. But I was being shown this picture by the Spirit to reveal a spiritual truth in a way that would cause it to be deeply imprinted in our minds and hearts.

The angel was shown as immense to indicate its capacity to accomplish God-given direction. Angels are His servants, not ours, though "They are ministering spirits to render service, sent on a commission for the sake of those who are about to inherit salvation."¹

As the vision was shared there was mutual understanding among us that there was only one way to release the angel so that it could proceed on its mission. That was to melt the neck to the bottle. That was as much as I had been shown.

One of the brothers with us commented, "Praising and worshipping God will melt the glass."

This seemed good to us all so we began to bless God for His capacity and willingness to triumph in the situation that concerned us at that moment. With joy we blessed God for being wise, loving and redemptive. In praising Him it seemed so natural to trust Him to accomplish His purpose in the folk for whom we were praying.

I saw it happen! The glass melted and the angel was released to wing its way on Royal service.

We must never lose sight of this: God is honored in the confidence shown by a people who praise Him continually. Yes, through Jesus let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise — the fruit of lips that confess His name.² This is not intended to mean that we praise God sacrificially so much as that we gladly bring a fragrant love offering of praise to Him.

Let us take care that we do not praise and worship God merely to get Him to do what we want of Him, nor so that we are affected emotionally and "feel good" because of it.

There have been times when leadership has commented to me, "We will have a rousing time of praise and worship first, John, and that will make it easy for you to preach."

To that my heart cries, "Heresy!" We do not worship God to make it easy to preach, but because God is God, and God is deserving of even more than we can ever offer to Him in praise and worship. We dare not worship God simply to compel Him to honor His word in which praise and worship are stated to be a condition for blessing. It is extremely audacious even to contemplate for a moment the thought that we will praise God for what we get out of it. He is more than worthy of every expression of love and appreciation we can offer, even if He were never to do another thing for us!

God hears our hearts. Only a motive of love is adequate in our praising Him. We may do well to echo David's honesty: Lord, I have trusted you without wavering. Cross-examine me, O Lord, and see that this is so; test my motives and affections too. For I have taken your loving-kindness and your truth as my ideals."³

Be challenged to continue in praise to God even if it becomes clear that He is not going to do something that you have asked Him to do. In fact, continue in praise *because* He is too loving and too wise to do all that we ask of Him!

Rest assured that God is committed to give us the desires of our hearts as we delight ourselves in the Lord. But He will may bring adjustment to our desires as our focus on Him releases us from [desires that are basically selfish and out of harmony with God's; highest purpose for us. Seek His face, not His hand! Seek His pleasure and His will, not yours.

God's ways are perfect. I will rest in that, whether I understand what He is doing or what He is requiring of me or whether I do not understand it. It will make no difference. In the end I will join those declaring, "He does everything well!"

Yes, He does do everything exceedingly well. He even saves me from my own foolishness and shortsightedness I will praise Him for that even now!

LOCKED INTO LITERALISM?

When we are sharing with others something that God has revealed to us we usually have liberty to use whatever words we choose in endeavoring to give full understanding of what we have received. This is because the Holy Spirit normally "speaks" within us by impressions, thoughts and pictures, but not by words and sentences. In hearing what is shared, therefore, or in really seeing what is being shown us in dreams and visions, we should seek to discern the over-all meaning rather than dwelling on one word or phrase.

Years ago we heard a mature and godly brother prophesy with profound insight and with richer declaration of the word of the Lord than we had ever known. Amidst much joy and praising because of what had been shared, the wise brother requested, "Do you mind if I prophesy that again? I feel that there is a shade of meaning that the Spirit wants us to catch hold of, which I missed in what I just spoke out."

The next time he selected words which opened up to us an even fuller revelation of Father's heart-desire for His people.

We may dream or see in a vision a picture of what God wants of us. But we well may miss His purpose for us if we think that what is shown and declared must be interpreted literally. The picture may only be shown us so that we can learn a spiritual truth that is contained therein.

It would always be wise, surely, to hold rock firm to any true revelation from God to us, but to hold lightly to the understanding we have of its meaning. Father may plan to show us later a more important truth being taught by the picture.

An example would be the "seeing" of a building. We ought not automatically feel that God is wanting us to undertake a building program. He is not nearly as impressed with the buildings we erect as we may think! In fact, Father knows full well that buildings are mostly erected to suit us and our needs, rather than built for His need and for His glory, despite our strong avowals otherwise!

We dare not miss the mark if God is graphically calling building of godly character, quality relationships, heavenly homes and family life, and the building of His church through becoming a worshipping people beyond our present experience. The vision of an extra building, or an enlarged building may well be the Holy Spirit's way of showing us that what has been built in the Spirit in our life is still very incomplete.

We carry a concern for groups of people who feel that they have reached a place of excellence in worship and, accordingly are self-satisfied rather than reaching out for fuller, purer ways of proclaiming their love to the Lord Jesus.

No, we will refuse to be locked into literalism! Rather, we eagerly anticipate progressive revelation so that we continually respond to the call of God, and thus increasingly glorify Him in our lives. He deserves that! He is the worth One! Glory to Jesus for ever!

Chapter 13

AROUND THE THRONE

At times we have mentioned to Father that we would love Him to show every saint on earth a vision of what it is like around the throne of God. Let me share permitted glimpses of what I have seen there.

Jesus is heaven's heart! He is its center, its light and its life. Heaven's glory light is too bright for untranslated eyes, but O the purity and splendour of it.

There is an overwhelming sense of wholeness and completeness in heaven, and a deeper contentment than can possibly be described. Jesus is the source of that fulfillment and contentment!

Every person, every living thing in heaven, belongs there and fits in perfectly as though they were made for it and were always there. Thank God for transforming grace that can change earthlings who are mere creatures of the dust, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, until they are able to "feel at home" in heaven, and really belong there! Amazing grace, indeed! Glory to God forever!

Worship was birthed in eternity. It did not begin on earth among men at all. It commenced around the throne of God. There is an eternal and heavenly quality to worship.

We are privileged to join with thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, and with the spirits of righteous men made perfect¹ in singing love songs in the Spirit to God upon the throne, even our wonderful Lord Jesus Christ. In heaven every aspect of life is compatible with continual worship as it flows with exquisite harmony to the Centre of it all.

There is no "attention seeking" there, no distracting from the exaltation of Him who is called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.²

In heaven there is a delightful mixture of overflowing joy and gladness, along with amazement, awe and wonder. There is eternal freshness in the praise that magnifies the King as though it is always just now being realized with amazement how beautiful and glorious He is, and how much beyond measure is His amazing grace and love.

There is much about heaven that I want to be walking in now! Is there any good reason why we shouldn't be tasting at least in "first fruit" measure that which God has prepared for those who love Him? I think not!

It has been noted that there is more in Scripture about raising hands than about clapping hands, and less about raising hands than about dancing. I have seen that around the throne.

There is something precious and beautiful in angels and men mingling together in

dancing before the Lord. And such dancing! It commences in the heart, and overflows from there with creative expression of joy and love and abounding life, and yet it is totally free from any characteristic that would draw attention to the dancer or that would distract in any way from Jesus' glory.

I remember being in a meeting where the way people were dancing disturbed me, whereas on most occasions I would have been blessed by it. When I asked Father about it He replied, "John, they may appear as light-footed as gazelles or young stags, but on the inside they are draught horses!" There is beauty in dancing when the outside reflects the inside, and the inside is wholeheartedly seeking to glorify Jesus!

Much can be expressed through upraised hands moving to show in a visible and meaningful way that which rises from the heart in adoration, devotion and worship. Sometimes they have seemed to me in vision to be like trees waving and bowing before the winds of strong desire to bless the Lord. Sometimes it has seemed as though the very raising of hands has carried with it a fragrant offering of love to the One who alone is worthy.

I want to worship God and glorify Him with every fiber of my being, and with every expression of heart and hand and voice that is available to me. Raising hands in worship is an expression of my whole-hearted honoring of the King of Glory!

Yes, I have seen clapping in heaven, but not the heavy and rhythmic clapping which is found from time to time in gatherings of enthusiastic believers, and which has even become a bondage of tradition to others who appear to believe that the louder the clapping the more God is impressed. I would encourage folk in that kind of situation to find a better way of manifesting their delightful enthusiasm in meaningfulness and quality rather than in excessive quantity.

There is a kind of clapping that is harmonious with tenderness and able to accompany dancing in the Spirit. And at times (but NOT after every song!) great applause of clapping and shouting can be seen and heard in heaven. I am very happy to participate in that.

There is no repetition in heaven except in the showing forth of love. There is always freshness even in that! In our day on earth, as well as in heaven, God desires a people not only who love Him, but also who set themselves to be freely and fully expressive of that love without false inhibition of any kind. What does remain constant is Jesus being at the heart of everything in heaven and everything in heaven being in total harmony with His very nature. Apart from these things sameness is foreign to heaven.

However, worship, praise, dancing, shouting, hand-raising, silence and stillness, and rapid movement too, all have their place in heaven.

Frequently praising and worshipping rise and fall like waves of the sea. They flow from one portion of those assembled to another and another, and yet another, and then back again. In one section there can be excited exuberant rejoicing, and at the same time in another area deeply moving, gentle murmurs of love. In one area there can be people on their knees or prostrate on their faces while in another area there is singing and dancing. Nobody feels trapped into having to be like someone else in showing forth their love to Christ, and yet there is total harmony in the variety of expression.

It always seems unreal to me in a church if the same person always praises loudly and

another person is always silent, or if the same few always express themselves with the same kind of prayer, prophecy or song. How beautiful it is to be released into freedom from concern about doing things the way others do them so that there is harmonious variety in our gatherings. The person who is on their knees is not superior to the one standing with hands raised. The one who shouts loudly is in no way superior to the one who worships silently. We should not be pressured to praise or worship as others do, but we should freely worship God in whatever manner the Holy Spirit leads us to do so.

Why could there not sometimes be only a dozen or so folk singing at one stage while others worship silently or hum their love to Jesus? Why could there not sometimes be just a quartet of clapping saints during some songs? When can we be free from the immaturity of believing that God hears better as we speak more loudly than anyone else, or that He is pleased if we clap so loudly that it is painful to the ears of older folk in the meeting? We are aware of some churches that lament the lack of older believers being a part of their Body when the very volume of clapping and shouting would prohibit all but the hardiest of the elderly being able to feel comfortable there.

Have you ever heard it said, "My Father doesn't shout at me"? It is a way of saying, "I will not shout at Him, either."

There is no merit in noise, nor for that matter, in silence. God hears the heart. Heartfelt love and praise can be offered to God more fully with sensitivity than with selfish unbridled volume.

We would never want to give the impression that "That's exactly the way it is going to be in heaven." Because I have seen pictures that are not intended to be accepted as a literal description of what heaven is like, I can only ask that you sense something of the grandeur and splendour of heaven, and that you sense it to the extent that you are now filled to overflowing with deep gratitude to God for salvation through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. May this stir you to determine to live now in a way that marks a step towards His will being done on earth as it is in heaven. The Kingdom, the Power and the Glory are God's, and His alone. Amen.

Chapter 14

ALIGHT HERE, HEAVENLY DOVE!

There is a city in New Zealand that has been both a challenge and a frustration to us. There have been times when we have driven a considerable distance just to be in it, and being there to announce that Jesus is its Lord. We long for the day when earnest prayer will be answered so that a new day begins in the realm of the Spirit in that city.

We were spending an hour or two with friends who lived there. As we worshipped the Lord together I saw in the Spirit a large white dove flying over the city. At times it hovered briefly over one part of the city, and at times over another part. The dove circled again and again apparently preparing to alight. And several times it did settle briefly before taking to its wings again as though in fright.

Something about the scene disturbed me deeply in my spirit. This kept flooding my awareness, 'The Dove can find no place to settle.' He was wanting to settle, but could find no place to do so. There were quite a few places that the dove hovered over that I would have thought were suitable for the dove to come down and settle, but it apparently thought otherwise.

In that city there were then, as there are now, a number of churches that were recognizing the authenticity of the charismatic renewal, and who were moving into a new way of worship. They were allowing gifts of the Holy Spirit to operate in their gatherings.

Could the Dove not settle in one of those? Apparently not. Having visited some of them we had felt somewhat the same, thinking, "This is a fine enough place to visit, but not really the kind of place that we could settle in and easily make our home fellowship."

The vision seemed to indicate that to have come into newness in worship and into freedom in gifts of the Spirit was not sufficient for the Holy Spirit to feel totally comfortable with a people. To feel that we have "arrived" when we are filled with the Holy Spirit is clearly less than the fullness that God purposes to bring His people into. It may even be the expression of religious pride. If an attitude like that is persisted in, it is guaranteed to bring a fall.

There is a quirk in human nature that makes us quick to allocate pride to anyone who has come to understand and experience more than we ourselves have. Many faithful believers who do not understand, and are even afraid of the baptism in the Holy Spirit wrongly accuse sweet Spirit-filled believers of carnal pride. Being filled with the Holy Spirit does not automatically also fill a person with wisdom, though it provides fertile ground for wisdom to spring up.

However, even exuberant or unwise sharing of new joy and blessing in God, and of a newly received capacity to worship God in an unknown "tongue" is not justification for critical comments of pride. How much wiser to honestly appraise whether Jesus is being glorified in a better quality of Christian walk than was apparent previously.

In the vision I also saw the city divided by a high man-made wall. There were a couple very narrow openings in the wall where one person at a time could squeeze through to the other side, they seemed to be such narrow slits, and there were only two of them in the entire length of the wall.

It appeared to me that the wall symbolized division in the family of God which blocked both the church and the city from coming to a place of healthy wholeness. It also seemed plain that the wall of division was the key to the reason that the Holy Spirit was unable to come and dwell in fellowships of saints on either side of the wall.

It is not difficult to find precious gatherings of saints in which some meetings are wonderfully God-blessed and vibrant with Holy Spirit anointing. It is not difficult to discover churches where there is a heavenly aroma evident at times in their love-flow worship. It isn't even difficult to locate churches where there is a healthy and holy atmosphere about the quality of relationships in the Body. How beautiful it is when deep, honest and continuing relationships exist among believers, based on the love of God and a close walk with Him!

This is what is difficult to find: a fellowship of believers where the Dove has settled so that every gathering of the Body, with only a rare distressing exception, is wonderfully anointed by the Holy Spirit so that a buoyancy, freshness and maturity in grace marks those who gather. It is for this consistency that the Spirit yearns. He will bring a people to that if they will be sensitive to His promptings and deeply committed to walking in love with Jesus in their daily lives.

There are walls that need to come down. For some the problem is a wall of sectarianism even though they may profess to have abandoned carnal denominationalism. For others the barrier that both divides them from others in the family of God and also hinders and grieves the Holy Spirit is a new "sameness" that has become more binding than the bondage that was left behind because this new bondage is labeled "freedom" in their present vocabulary.

In such places the predictability factor is too high because the revelatory factor is too low: This occurs because normalcy becomes based on style and pattern rather than being based on hearing and responding to the Holy Spirit. Thus reason has been elevated above revelation. That has been the death knell of almost every move of the Spirit in the history of the Christian church.

A high wall of absolute certainty in the area of doctrinal correctness is for others a greater hindrance to the Holy Spirit than they seem able to understand or accept.

Such "Jericho walls" must come tumbling down so that Jesus is able to establish His reign more widely. Brother, sister, smash down the wall! Smash down any and every wall that restricts the Lord of the Church from truly being Head. Come to a place where you are willing to weigh up honestly and without prejudice every new thought, understanding or revelation that comes your way.

Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit, rather than to staying "balanced" or to walking a path that is acceptable to a large enough segment of the Body of Christ that you feel secure therein.

A number of men from our home church attended a conference. Prior to a meeting where the announced subject was "Balance" one of the men asked me, "John, what is 'balance'?" To this my tongue in cheek answer was, "Norman, that is what I have got!"

From God's perspective we only remain balanced as we continue to walk in step with the Spirit and in His ongoing revelation to us. Friend, please sit at Jesus' feet in quiet devotion and meditation frequently enough to "hear" His heart concerning your life-style and church-style.

There is need for perpetual recognition that yesterday's revelation becomes today's bondage, and today's light becomes tomorrow's darkness unless we continue to walk in step with the Spirit and in obedience to His every direction to us.

Today will be yesterday tomorrow! So we need to hold lightly even what is precious to us at the moment lest it become stale manna tomorrow.

"O God, please keep me from building new walls today, even as I set myself to eliminate those that I built yesterday, as you give me understanding of them." What an important, releasing, and life changing prayer that could be!

May God give us all the grace to be willing to live in a freshness in Him that makes it seem as though there were no yesterday since we cannot rely on yesterday's learning and living. This day by God's grace I will walk in the delight of His company and in a shared love with Jesus that has such freshness about it that it will seem as though my eyes are newly opened to His beauty so that I am finding wonderful exhilaration in His love and am overwhelmingly grateful for His close companionship.

VARIETY OF EXPRESSION

In some circles one grows weary of hearing someone commence speaking by saying, "I am seeing a vision." To say that too frequently may be either an expression of pride, or an indication of getting stuck in a rut through immaturity.

On the other hand, there are some gatherings where hearing a statement like that could be a beautiful tonic for the treatment of spiritual lethargy and over-emphasis on reason and order.

This is not to question the reality and validity of what is seen. But perhaps we could learn to prophesy on the basis of what we see.

How amazingly effective that can be! There are times when what we see could call for a response in prayer, in teaching or simply in living out what has been shown, without stating every time that we have seen a vision.

At least it would surely be sufficient to commence, "God is showing me..." or, "I have an understanding that Father wants us to know that..."

Phraseology neither validates nor invalidates what is expressed. "This is what the Lord

says," or the quaintly old-fashioned, "Thus saith the Lord," doesn't raise what is shared above and beyond question and sober assessment in the Spirit. There still may be God given discernment that what is spoken is out of order. Likewise the lack of that type of introductory remark does not mean that an utterance is not true prophecy.

Kenneth Wuest's expanded translation of the New Testament indicates that "The correct evaluation of those individuals who give forth divine revelations"¹ is a gift of the Holy Spirit, and that this involves supernatural assessment of the person rather than of the word brought forth.

Frequently we are trapped into accepting what is expressed as revelation simply because it is technically correct. It may not contain any 'doctrinal' error. It may be couched in terms that are normal in that particular Body. There may, for example, have been only two expressions in tongues prior to this one, and there may have been a ready 'interpretation' of the unknown tongue. All of what has been stated may be in harmony with what leadership has been teaching. So surely the revelatory word is in order, and valuable to the Body?

Not necessarily so! What is declared on the Lord's behalf must have an obvious content of God's love. Otherwise it is only "making noise"² and the speaker is "only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal".³

What we bring forth must also be the "Now" word of the Lord, quickened, anointed and released for this specific moment in time. God save us from the letter that kills!⁴ We need the life of the Spirit to flow through the channel of communication He selects at any particular time. The greatest hindrance to the ongoing of God in the marvellous way He has been moving on the earth in recent years does not come from external opposition, nor from enemy attack. We are fully persuaded that our greatest danger is in passively accepting the proclamation of truth without the life-flow of the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

God loves variety. We see this in nature. Every blade of grass is uniquely different, we are told, as is every flake of snow. Every human personality has its own special characteristics also. And God has splashed an almost infinite variety of color, shape and size across the entire universe.

How refreshing it is to find great variety of expression in the Body of Christ on earth. This is what the Lord says! And this is what the Holy Spirit inspires. He will be creative through us if we will welcome it. What a wonderful God He is!

Chapter 15

WHO IS IT FOR?

So you have seen a vision? So you have heard God in a dream? What happens next? "I will share it in a meeting of course!" Really? Don't be sure. You can not safely assume that what you have been shown is to be shared publicly.

Such a revelation is not necessarily to be shared with anyone, nor even to be remembered. It may only be for your own personal encouragement or response at the time you receive it. It certainly should never be used as a basis for making demands on God. How can a servant, a slave, make demands? What parent appreciates a demanding child? How can we stridently insist that God do what we want?

In the realm of revelation it is wise to be quick to hear and slow to speak. Not so slow that we are disobedient of course, but slow enough so that we are not just impulsively acting out of the enthusiasm or amazement of having thus heard from God.

In meetings there are many times when people do not prophesy who ought to do so, and yet there are also people who prophesy on the basis of something that Father has shown them which is intended for their own edification and challenge.

Take care not to be a blabber-mouth! Nobody shares precious secrets with such a person, including the Lord. "Lord, who is this for?" is a wise question to ask.

There are some people who pride themselves in remembering a sermon that was preached a year or more ago. The remembering isn't really very important. Obeying what God spoke through that preaching is what is important. It should long since have become a part of our daily walk. That will please Father very much more than merely being able to recite the points of the teaching.

If you feel that you have heard or seen something that may have significance for your life don't you think that it would be wise to share it with a mature and godly believer? Check that they can hear with you what God is saying, and that you haven't missed the point or application of the revelation to you. You will need to do this with humility and teachability.

A necessary requirement in Christian leadership is a capacity and consistency in hearing God clearly. Father will not give guidance to one person that is contrary to what He shows another concerning him. If there is a divergence of understanding then wisdom requires that both earnestly seek further understanding of God's heart in the matter, by the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

If you share a dream or vision either with an individual or in a gathering of people, and do so with an underlying attitude of pride, of wanting to draw attention to yourself, or to prove something about who you are or what you believe, you will displease the One you

declare to be the Lord of your life. By doing so you well may destroy the meaning and value of what you were shown.

Be equally willing either to share or not, remember or not, exactly as God chooses.

SOUTH AFRICA

It was easy to recognize a relief map of South Africa even though it appeared to be growing rapidly larger before my eyes. It was as though I had swooped down from a great height until I was in the midst of the land, surrounded by tension, fear and foreboding. There was anger and hate, and in many a sense of hopelessness.

But it was not these understandable emotions that gripped my attention. In the sky high overhead swirling tongues of fire appeared. Initially there were only a few, and they appeared to be too distant to have any effect on the land. But they rapidly drew nearer, multiplying frighteningly as they came swirling towards a people scarcely able to suppress panic at what was happening. The country-side was lit up by the strange eerie light of the flames. Awful heat began to be felt. It seemed inevitable that very shortly the heat and the flames would sear and destroy every living thing across the land.

The brightness of the flames was most unpleasant and observable from a great distance. Along the borders of the country was an even more ghastly sight! There appeared to be billows of darkness rising up and also threatening to envelop the land. It was as though there was an evil pall and stench of death billowing like clouds before a fearful tempest.

The flames of fire did not dispel the dark foreboding clouds, and nor could the clouds overwhelm the flames.

My gaze was diverted yet again. This time I saw armies moving towards each other, apparently intent on the destruction of each other. There appeared no earthly way to avoid a dreadful holocaust which could cause stench to fill the nostrils of all mankind.

Poor distressed, beloved South Africa! You have known days of great blessing and seasons of rich outpourings of God's grace. Great men have risen up from among you in days that are past, and the fragrant effect of their lives lingers on. You have been the source of wealth and strength to many. But now it seems that your imminent destruction will have a dire effect upon many nations regardless of creed or color.

South Africa, the world has condemned you! Nations have pointed the finger of scorn at you. Even godless men claim to know the only way to solve your problems, blind though they are to the ways of God.

Even in the blending of dream and vision I yearned and mourned for a land we love.

The armies draw close. Nothing on earth will be able to avert a shocking blood-bath from which will come only losers. No one in the land will win! Multitudes beyond its borders will suffer too!

"God, where are you in all this? Surely you care! Surely you have an answer! O God, what is the key to a situation as desperate as this?"

"I am God! Besides Me there is no one else. There is an answer! A new beautiful day can come for South Africa, and it is in my heart to bring it about," says the Lord.

There was an area of thought that pounded upon my consciousness. The situation will become more desperate yet, until the imminent disaster calls for desperate measures and yet, desperate measures seem totally inadequate.

"In the hour of crisis let My people look to Me, cry out to Me, and prostrate themselves before Me," declares the Lord. "I need to see an army on its knees, contrite, broken and totally yielded to Me. Reach out for the tongues of fire of the Holy Spirit to come upon you in a fuller measure than you understand, that the fiery flames of judgment and the billowing darkness of satanic evil shall not overwhelm you, and that I may sovereignly intervene on your behalf," says the Lord God, the Almighty.

"If a nation will turn to Me, and if the integrity, honor, humility and love of true Godliness become the standard that is raised throughout the land, then I will indeed move in sovereign power to deliver a nation of people. Then I will fill the land with trust and peace and fairness, and cause joyful wonder to take the place of tension and fear," proclaims the Lord, even He who has been the salvation of nations that have sought and found the face of His favor.

The Egyptians hounded the escaping Israelites until there seemed to be no way of escape. But at the last moment God opened a way through the Red Sea so that not only did the Israelites escape, but Pharaoh's army was destroyed as well.

Under King Saul an army cowered before Goliath and the Philistines. Only the lad David, seemingly so young, weak and inadequate, dared to challenge what appeared to be inevitable. As Goliath shouted defiance against the God of heaven, David ran to meet him. Others who professed to be there to fight against the Philistines did nothing at all. When he was very close, David used his sling shot to bring down a giant and to rescue a nation.

Repeatedly this kind of incident is found in the Bible. The enemy comes very close, and seems to be in a position of strength and triumph. When it comes to an "eyeball to eyeball" situation, God steps in supernaturally and gloriously. The battle is the Lord's! He triumphs! Jesus is the answer in a nation's hour of need. He has changed the course of nations in the past. He can do it now! Hallelujah!

This is the precious, priceless word that I hear in the vision, "If my people will look to Me, be willing to humble themselves before Me, and will acknowledge that only I can bring about that which is desperately needed, then I will surely intervene," says the Lord.

"And a nation that has had the world's finger pointed at it in derision, judgment, rejection and scorn will again have the world pointing in its direction. But it will be a finger of amazement and praise because of what I have done in the land. You will be a favored, accepted and honored people in that day," avows the Lord your God.

It seems that Father was showing me that the major problem in this distressed land is not racism, though the day will come when that will be no more. The African experience of racism seeks an answer in the handing over of governmental control; but "One man, one vote" once is less than useless. It is a cruel deception and usually the introduction of a worse oppression than that experienced previously.

There are twin evils at the root of South Africa's distress. One is godless, atheistic communism which feeds racial hatred and equips for murder and destruction. It does not do this so that one people may triumph over another, but so that democracy may be destroyed, godliness be obliterated, and all the people become the slaves of Marxism with its associated evils of suppression, poverty, and hopelessness.

These people seek to poison the Western news media, and to spread lies and half-truths about South Africa.

The second major cause of pain in South Africa is the same spirit of rebellion which is attacking the tap-root of life in all of western society. Rebellion comes clothed in various forms and colors, sometimes coming so surreptitiously that it seems to be arrayed as an angel of light acting in justifiable protest against God-given standards, qualities and leadership. A significant part of our danger is that we do not perceive our danger. Rebellion proposes to set people free from one form of bondage or another, feeding upon imperfect situations in our nations. It only does so in order that it may impose a harsher tyranny by far than anything we experience now.

It is my prayerful desire that South Africa may find a way in God that will roll back the tide of darkness and evil, and show a way forward into true freedom for many nations who are in peril today. A significant part of our danger is that we do not perceive our danger. South Africa can come to such a day if a people discover a way into the favor and protection of the grace of God.

Grant it Jesus!

Chapter 16

FRUITFUL SEASONS

In the midst of winter's snow I was in the Spirit viewing a beautiful springtime scene! Winter can sometimes seem long and bleak, although it certainly has its own kind of beauty.

In the spring I was observing three things which combined to bring the special touch which marks that season. Spring is a season of gorgeous color which contrasts with the lack of bright hues during nature's dormant season of winter.

There was also an awareness of spring's fresh fragrance wafting on the air, it seemed, to every nook and cranny of life. Thirdly, there was the greening effect of new shoots and leaf buds opening out to the renewed warmth of spring sunshine and warm breezes. This thought filled me, "How beautiful a springtime of beauty, fragrance and greening." Delightful indeed!

What I was seeing seemed to speak of the early development of new growth which is always attractive, but especially so in a life where the winter of dullness, dormancy and deadness has lasted far too long.

It seemed to speak of the hope of a new day, the hope of prayers being answered at last, and the hope of a new quality of life becoming reality in individual lives, and in the church of Jesus Christ. Thank God for spring growth in the spiritual life!

There was another phrase I was hearing. I don't recall ever having heard it before. It was this: "You don't gather fruit in the springtime."

What could that mean? It surely meant that beyond the rush of new life-sap in a fruit tree bringing forth bud and color in the springtime there must be many months of development and of summer's heat before fruit is ripe for harvesting.

The men of the city of Jericho spoke to Elisha, "Look, our Lord, this town is well situated, as you can see, but the water is bad and the land is unproductive."¹ The trees were coming into leaf and into blossom, but were not producing a harvest. It seems that women were coming to the point of motherhood, but the children were still-born.

Can you see the picture? Springtime of hope was not proceeding to an autumn harvest. A similar thing happens only too often in Christian experience.

At times we have looked at a dedicated life brimming with youthful enthusiasm and zeal. What a lovely sight! We have recognized that there was great promise in the springtime of that new life in Jesus. But then "Some have rejected faith and a good conscience, and so have shipwrecked their faith."² Consequently springtime promise has been aborted and autumn harvest has not been produced.

It is worth noting that this scripture does NOT declare, "Some have gone on," as though that were the exception. Thank God for that! But sadly some do make shipwreck of all the

promised potential evident in their faith in God.

We have known periods in the life of a church where a new season of godly desire has become obvious in the saints. A new earnestness has gripped them, and there has been whole-heartedness in their desire for revival blessing for God's glory. YDS, and the Holy Spirit has begun to touch lives in a beautiful new way.

Such a season of divine favor is to be highly treasured. A hearing ear and unreserved response to the Holy Spirit may usher in a glorious season of spiritual harvesting, sufficient to cause heaven itself to resound with joy!

Even in a situation of great promise something can go wrong, -(i that what was hoped for, expected, and even potentially there, seems to be dissipated and lost. What an incalculable and eternal loss may result!

This is a call for perseverance through the testing heat of summer. This is a call to allow the Holy Spirit to do a maturing work in the high hopes and enthusiasm of a new vision and renewed indication so that we remain unwavering in our faith in God. It is all for declaring, "I will not let you go unless you bless me,"³ not for my own selfish sake, but for Your sake, Your glory, and for the sake of Your Kingdom.

Elisha had an answer for the sad lack of new life and fruitfulness in Jericho. It seemed so strange. God's answers to human impossibilities usually do!

Elisha requested, "Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it." He threw the salt into the spring, saying, "This is what the Lord says, 'I have healed this water. Never again will it cause death or make the land unproductive.'" And the water has remained wholesome to this day, according to the word Elisha had spoken.⁴

It is my conviction that the water had been pure at its source, but had become contaminated as it flowed. Whether that is so or not, who can be certain of this: The river that flows from the Throne of God is absolutely pure at its source! God chooses human vessels to be conduits for the life-flow of His love and power and of His abundant salvation. Pride, human kingdom building and carnal humanism destructively contaminate the flow that God purposed should reach all of the earth with purity and fullness.

To deal with this situation in a city like Jericho Father wants to take a people-salt (you are the salt of the earth from a new bowl consecration. He wants to take lives that are willing to lose their identity and to lay themselves down for Christ's sake and the Gospel's. This calls for a willingness never to be noticed, never to be the focus of attention all the days of one's life!

That kind of total and constant yieldedness linked with undying dedication which refuses to fade through summer's sun of affliction, adversity and testing will bring heaven's guarantee of a glorious harvest.

There was a time when we asked the Lord, "What is it that hinders your people from entering into the full potential of your wonderful provision for your people? Why do your people not experience the fullness of New Covenant grace, blessing and triumph? Why do the great majority of your children live their lives under the shadow of a realization that there is a choice and higher way available in redemption's plan?"

The first thing the Holy Spirit showed me was that "Fascination with earthly pursuits" deprives saints of a higher quality of life in the Spirit. We are in the world, and need to be involved with earthly activities. But fascination with anything of earth is extremely dangerous. At this point radical surgery is required! "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away."⁶

The second thing I was brought to understand is that "Limitation of commitment or response" will set a low ceiling on what God is able to accomplish in our lives, even though it is in His heart to do much more. If He asks us to go ten miles or a thousand, if He requires that we go beyond what others in the church do, or if He requires that we lay down our goals, values and priorities, let us take care that we are unlimited in our response to God. If He gently calls us to move into dimensions of life of the Holy Spirit that we have hitherto shrunk from, let us be unreserved in our response to His call.

A third attitude through which we rob ourselves of the full measure of Father's wonderful purpose for His people today is in "Satisfaction with mediocrity." Let us take care that resting does not become drifting, or even coasting. Resting needs to be allied with reaching out for excellence in every aspect of our Christian walk.

Thank God for spring! Thank Him just as fervently for summer! And thank Him that in due season we shall reap if we don't faint! There is a sure harvest ahead in God's purposes for His people. Let us hasten the day. And Lord, *you* please hasten the day!

Hear God's promise of a day of unprecedented harvest: "In that day the mountains will drip new wine and the hills flow with milk. A fountain will flow out of the Lord's house and will water the valley of acacias."⁷

"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills."

Lift up your head in eager anticipation, and bless the Lord! Hallelujah! Glory to Jesus for ever! Bless God for His sure word of promise. It shall be so!

GO AS FAR AS YOU CAN!

At times I am asked, "How do you come to a place of confidence I in God where you can speak so directly to a person, even in public, with such obvious clarity of revelatory insight, and with full assurance that you are indeed declaring the word of the Lord?"

This is an important question, whether the present sharing is because the Holy Spirit has given discernment by means of a vision, or whether He has brought a key fact into conscious understanding by means of an inner persuasion. There are few people who suddenly come to such a place and to such a capacity in God to be able to declare His present word to specific people. There will have been a process of maturing in the gifting from the time the first effort was made to exercise the gift.

There have been occasions where I have been with a group of saints who have indicated that they want to move in gifts of the Spirit, but they don't know where to begin.

Can you imagine setting out on a journey on a foggy morning? If you wait until you see the end of the road there may be a long delay. In fact you may not even commence the journey at all, but remain locked in immobility. This is a picture of learning to walk in the Spirit and to move in gifts of the Spirit. Start driving in the sixty or seventy yards of roadway

that are clear to you, and further stretches of road will become progressively clear. In this way you will be able to complete the journey.

You may not be able to confidently declare, "This is what the Lord says..." but if you can say, "I have an idea that God may be wanting to tell us that ..." then go that far! Ask if others can recognize that this is the Lord. Go as far as you have an understanding of and you will receive further revelation and a strengthening of your faith as well. Sometimes it may be wise to ask a question such as, "Is the Lord wanting to emphasize to us that...?"

When I have been with groups wanting to become responsive to the Holy Spirit in prophetic expression we have indicated to them, "Don't worry about whether there will be an interpretation if you speak in tongues, because I will guarantee the interpretation. Don't be concerned about someone challenging what you speak, by exercising a gift of discernment, because I will take responsibility for what you express."

There have been times when a person has prayed with deep feeling, or shared a thought with keen insight. I have asked, "You felt that very deeply, didn't you?" As they have agreed we have challenged, "Will you please repeat what you expressed, but this time bring it forth as prophesy?" The result has been wonderful.

We were with a group of people wanting to learn to operate in gifts of the Holy Spirit. I asked, "Do any of you know anything that the Lord would want to say to Paul?" (One of their number.) As different ones indicated that they did, we asked that they say it to him on the Lord's behalf. One after another, they prophesied beautifully.

When you start speaking in meetings, no matter how, it would be wise to go to leaders indicating that you want to improve and mature, and so would appreciate any advice, insight or correction that can be offered. You will be surprised at how helpful such a course of action can be.

The Scripture enjoins older women to train younger women how to love their husbands, but mature folk are too wise to push in with unsought counsel. Many a young wife is the poorer for not reaching out for the wisdom that older women would be very delighted to share. Like everyone else, such folk are thrilled at being shown that they are needed, and that their advice is valued.

Many a person beginning to speak out publicly, especially in gifts of the Spirit, is the poorer for not reaching out to others who are more mature and experienced in the ways of the Spirit.

Yes, go as far as you can, and then reach out for more. You will find much blessing and helpfulness both from God and your "family" as you do. Enjoy the adventure, and give God the credit for what He does in you and through you!

CAGED BELIEVERS?

There have been a number of occasions when in the Spirit I have seen people in cages. It is a little difficult to understand how one could be in a gathering of fellow believers who may even profess to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and be seeing them in rows of cages!

A service commenced with the song, "God is so good." When we began singing, "Now I Am Free," a sense of concern filled me.

"Father, how can these people sing, 'Now I Am Free' when some of them are defeated by habit and others are locked into religiosity and tradition? Still others have so little freedom in their response to you. They are not really free in their worship, being inhibited by fear of man. They are not really free in a willingness to follow you no matter what you require, and they are not freely living overflowing triumphant lives in the Holy Spirit! How can they be singing, 'Now I Am Free'?"

The answer was delightfully revealing both of God's grace provision for His people, and of the folly of sub-standard living in the Spirit. It was, "John, my people are free to be free!"

Free to be free! We are free to be free. God has made ample provision for all of His people so that every one of us without exception may live in the fullness of the New Covenant of Jesus Christ. A key Scripture to me in coming into abundant life in the Holy Spirit is so very simple. In it the One who is Almighty declares, "I will pour out My Spirit on ALL people ... sons ... daughters ... young men ... old men ... servants, both men and women ..." ¹ I am included. Hallelujah! And so are you! Amen?

This is what I have seen: There are no locks on the doors! We can all walk out of the cages that limit, restrict and hold us back from ongoing adventure in Jesus, our caring Christ.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom²... the glorious freedom of the children of God.³ Yes, freedom is ours, if we will receive it and walk in it! It has been purchased and provided; purchased in the atonement Jesus provided in His dying, and provided in His gloriously triumphant resurrection, and through His sending the Holy Spirit to fill us and equip us. Freedom is ours for the taking! Glory to God!

Let me share from personal experience that there is freedom for us to walk free from bad temper. How ashamed I am of the way I would lash out, especially at dear ones, in carnal anger. My best effort was insufficient to deal with my need, but the gracious touch Of God has made an amazing difference

When we are enjoined, "Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold,"⁴ we are being advised that before the sun sets one more time we can be free from carnal anger for ever. There is grace for freedom this very day! Wuest translates this, "Do not allow the sun to go down on your irritated, exasperated, embittered anger."⁵ That kind of anger is clear indication that we are not trusting God to handle the practical aspects of our daily lives, nor trusting Him to equip us for every challenge we are required to face. Confidence in Him and reliance on Him can be amazingly releasing!

God is love⁶ and the fruit of the Spirit is love⁷. Love is the Family likeness, and it can

become true that "John is love" — or whatever your name is! Rapid and almost staggering changes can come to a home where we set ourselves to be that. The full God-given potential in our dear ones' lives can be released through quality love. Don't wait for someone else in the family to bring themselves to a better state of grace. Take the lead. Be a love-leader!

"My people are free to be free!" There is much encouragement in this statement. God's people so easily get entangled with the affairs of this life. Our churches too quickly become ensnared by tradition and religiosity which are Old Testament in nature, and which frustrate the grace of God towards us. It need not be!

Before a service we were worshiping and waiting on God. My prayer: "Father, will you bless your people today? Please bless your people today so that they may worship and glorify you."

His answer: "Yes, I will bless my people today, even though they worship in an Old Testament manner!"

I could not understand what Father meant and so shared it with a fellow elder. "Does it refer to the kind of building, the seating arrangement, or the style of worship?"

His answer was ever so challenging. "I fear that it is worse than that, John. It is in our hearts!"

But we are free to be free!

Robert Kennedy said, "Some men see things as they are, and ask 'Why?' I dream of things that never were and ask 'Why not?'"

"Why not," indeed! Why not me? Why not you? Why not the gathering in which we worship? Why not be gloriously free since that is God's purpose for our lives? Why not be free to walk in freshness and newness of love? Why not be free to live in the power of the Holy Spirit every day of our lives, for Jesus' sake? Why not? If God is God, why not indeed; and why not now?

We are free! We are free to be free! How much of that freedom will you walk in today? How much of that freedom will you live in? Please, please don't settle for mediocrity when God provides excellence! There is full and wonderful freedom for the people of God today! Hallelujah!

Chapter 17

THE VALUE OF SILENT CONTEMPLATION

To be quick to listen and slow to speak¹ is sound advice for every aspect of life, including dreams and visions. There is much value in lingering in the attitude of receiving in case there is more in he shown us.

Even when we are aware that a revelation is completed, wisdom would indicate that to remain still and open to impressions of The Holy Spirit within us may bring an added dimension to what has been seen and heard. The Spirit may wish to bring further insight as we meditate on what has been given to us, and give further understanding of God's heart in the area that has been opened up to us.

We have found this to be especially so when waking after a revelatory dream. The dream is over, but there may be more that we need to receive or become aware of. Beyond that, surely we will want to bathe in the special sense of God's Presence, and invite Him to hear our heart's love response to His graciousness towards us.

How sweet of the Lord of Glory to encourage us to be still, cease striving, let go, relax and know that He is God. The inner knowing that comes from quality stillness can have such profound effect upon us that He is exalted mightily through it. We can discover how to be still in mind and spirit as well as body, so that a deeper knowing of God becomes our portion.

Many times a period of stillness allows a balance of understanding to settle upon our immediate insight. When we have been called to speak out a revelatory word to an individual it has at times been on the basis of an inner picture revelation of them. Frequently what has been shown first has been what is out of order and displeasing to God in their lives. Lingering has allowed us to see beyond that to a positive picture of what the Holy Spirit purposes to bring about in the person. Following that one has often only been required to bring a positive word of encouragement in the declaring of God's high purpose for that life.

For some years now I have asked Father not only to show me the present state of a person's life from His perspective, but also to make known to me the potential that He has sovereignly placed within them. It is a high honor to speak some segment of that potential, and to call people to co-operate with God's purpose for their lives.

There have been times when a physical need in a person has been revealed to us. Lingering in stillness has allowed the Holy Spirit to give insight into a spiritual condition that may or may not be related to the physical one.

We know full well that it is unhealthy and unproductive for people with a physical ailment to berate themselves with the thought that they must be out-of-order spiritually, or that the

reason they are not instantaneously healed is that they lack faith. That may be far from the truth. What we are stating is that spiritual health is immeasurably more important than physical health. If the inward man is being renewed day by day we will not have an unnatural dread of the outer man wasting away.² In the area of physical healing we know that "Even our successes die." Spiritual betterment is intended to be eternal.

Lingering in stillness and meditation following revelation, whether it is dream, vision, prophecy, word of knowledge or wisdom, or teaching thought, could bring a far richer sharing, in His 10 season, of God's heart for His people.

"Be still before the Lord, all mankind, because He has roused Himself from His Holy dwelling."³

"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."⁴

ANOINTED SHARING

It is essential that anything spoken in a meeting of saints be a significant word. Trivia has no place in a worship gathering, nor in most other gatherings, either.

Leaders ought to be only too well aware of how much time is wasted in gatherings with other leaders, and how frequently what could have been very blessed ends up being second-rate. I ii 'cause one or another, and perhaps each one, wants to add his "penny-worth" of information and knowledge. Many give the impression that they feel that they know more, and are more important than their brothers.

When sharing a dream or vision, or sharing in any way in a meeting we must take care only to share at the direction and by the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

There is only significance in what is shared when there is a clear and beautiful anointing of the Spirit on both speaker and speech. The anointing of the Holy Spirit is God's endorsement and authentication of what is declared as being the relevant "now word" for the present occasion. It is the stamp of uncontrived, supernaturally given authority from God. Without this divine authority no one has a right to speak a word!

The anointing of the Holy Spirit brings an awareness that what is happening is that as one speaks he does it "as one speaking the very words of God,"¹ without the pathetic and dangerous substitution of the drive of a forceful human spirit.

Charismatic personality can be a deceiving "Ishmael" look-alike which is used as an attempt to cover the lack of the Holy Spirit's mantle of life. Of course soul-life can never adequately substitute for the life-flow of the Holy Spirit.

Impatience breeds Ishmaels! So does carelessness, carnality, unbelief and a humanistic attitude that we are competent of ourselves to achieve anything for God. In infancy an Ishmael may be mistaken for an Isaac, but as it grows the difference will become unmistakably and tragically clear, because, "At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now." That which is born among us by the natural means of men's efforts will conflict sharply with that

which is born of the Spirit among us. Little wonder the Scripture says, "Get rid of the slave woman and her son."²

The anointing of the Holy Spirit conveys an inner stirring and a quickening, redemptive, life-imparting revelation of God's heart. This can at times be "spine tingling" in the essential certainty that God Himself is in our midst declaring His word to us. Holy Spirit anointing will take us beyond "moving" meetings to being moved into a deeper love-life with Jesus and a more consistent walk in the Spirit.

Let us never, never share a dream or vision without the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Don't preach, teach, prophesy, sing, testify or do anything else without it either!

For God's sake, and for the church's sake also, pay whatever the cost and take whatever step is required to share the Holy Spirit's revelation with Holy Spirit unction.

The anointing of the Holy Spirit brings with it a sense of God's loving gentleness and tender caring, also an awesome and deeply challenging realization that the God of Glory, the Creator of the heavens and the earth is requiring our attention and obedient response.

We once commented to the member of a singing group, "It was beautiful singing Anne, but if you cannot sing with anointing we never want to hear you sing again." Before a meeting a day or two later, Anne and the others in the group spoke with us: "We have waited on the Lord, and done everything we know to do to assure that we minister in song with the anointing of the Spirit. If our singing is not anointed tonight we need help!"

What an amazing difference! This time the singing ministry brought a very precious sense of "God in the midst". It touched hearts, and drew people to Jesus. He was sweetly glorified in it.

There are times when people are moved by special singing in a soulful way, much as some people are moved by classical music or music of some other kind. There are also times when teaching only impresses by the breadth of understanding, and when the sharing of things God has shown us brings forth no lasting fruit and does not glorify the Lord, because it is without anointing.

The anointing of the Spirit can touch a person's heart like nothing else can. It brings deep challenge and conviction; it also brings a softening of the heart that causes the hearer to yield to God in a way that brings an amazing change to the person's life-style.

The anointing of the Spirit can equip a person to share with others with wonderful effectiveness, even though natural ability may seem to be sadly lacking. God delights to use unusual people. He chooses the foolish, the weak, the lowly, equipping them, if they will have it so, with the anointing of the Holy Spirit. This is so that no one may boast before Him.³

We plead with all who open their mouths in public! Please don't be contented with being fluent, knowledgeable, charismatic, popular, or able to sway a crowd. Settle for nothing less than an obvious anointing of the Spirit in which Jesus is glorified through you.

Only very rarely are either testimonies or announcements anointed in meetings, and too often folk are content with it being like that. Probably Father wants much less of both in our gatherings! Perhaps we can too easily feel, "This is something I can do," without any particular reaching out to God for Holy Spirit wisdom, grace and enablement.

The "Marechale", daughter of William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army once declared, "We are responsible to God to live under the utmost possible anointing of the Holy Spirit." Go for that! So shall our sharing of what the Holy Spirit reveals to us bring honor and praise to the worthy One, Jesus Christ our Lord.

MEN ON FIRE!

Brothers and sisters worshipping the Lord! How delightful to see saints expressing their love to our dear Lord Jesus with freshness and freedom.

It seemed as though I was entering an open door. The worshippers were facing the other direction so that none of them saw me enter. My attention was focused so intently on two of these men that no one else was clear to my vision. From the back these two men looked identical. Even as I moved forward and was able to see them from the side they still appeared very, very similar.

But a glimpse from the front showed a marked and somewhat startling difference between the two men. One face showed signs of tension, strain and dullness. The other manifested a relaxed, sweet, gentleness, and his eyes sparkled as though a deep well of life within was bursting forth through his upward gaze.

Is such a difference common among the followers of Christ? I fear that it is!

As I watched these two men the Holy Spirit gave deeper insight so that I was able to see the inner reason for what was showing on the outside.

It now seemed that I was looking into an inner room within these men. In each a fire burned. One was a divinely kindled flame, and the other had merely been lit and was being stoked by the man himself. You will readily understand that one burned with a constant, steady flame, where as the man-made, man-maintained fire kept dying down, needing hurried activity to cause it to burn brightly again.

Besides the fact that the first was burning evenly and without the strain of constant effort, it also burned without soot and ash.

Have you ever sung John Wesley's hymn, "Send the Fire"? Surely that is a wise request.

John the Baptist proclaimed that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.¹ David shares, "My heart grew hot within me, and as I meditated, the fire burned."² In these two statements we observe that the Holy Spirit kindles a fire within us as we are baptized with and in Him, and that there is a way for that fire to burn unabated across the years of life. This is by sitting at the Lord's feet and listening to what He says, just as Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha did.³

Mary loved Jesus dearly. On another occasion she took a pound of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.⁴ It was such a privilege for her to be near her Lord, and to have opportunity to express her pure and tender love to Him.

In the book, "Your Life — His Glory" I have told of the time when I found a deep challenge in this incident in the life of Jesus. I had prayed, "Father, am I a deprived child in your

kingdom? I would love to be able to pour out an expensive, overflowing expression of my love to you like that, until the fragrance fills the entire house. But I cannot because you are not here now in literal, physical person."

Then the Holy Spirit showed me a heavenly scene where there were golden bowls filled with sweet perfume which is the worship of the saints. All of that house is filled with the fragrance! Worship wonderfully pleases and glorifies the Lord Jesus!

There was a sad event in Mary's life. Her brother Lazarus died, and Jesus wasn't there when his death occurred. The sisters had sent word to Jesus of Lazarus' illness, but He had not come in time. It was actually four days after his death that Jesus appeared on the scene. Mary had so ached with longing for His earlier arrival. When she reached the place where Jesus was, outside of the village, she fell at His feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."⁵

Mary knew that the presence of Jesus was very special and would make an enormous difference in any situation. Her expression, "If you had been here," possessed prophetic content. For the day would come, after Calvary, after the triumphant resurrection, and after the glorious ascension of Jesus to His Father's side, that He would send forth the Holy Spirit who would make the presence of Jesus a continual reality for every believer!

There were times when Mary had opportunity to sit at Jesus' feet, and times when He was absent. Not so with us! Through the Holy Spirit Jesus is with us constantly. Not only does the Spirit make the presence of Jesus known to us, but He brings us into a precious oneness with the Lord, and at the same time He works to change us increasingly into the likeness of Jesus. He also equips us with power, and brings a foretaste of heaven to sweeten and lighten life's pathway.

There are two alternative ways of having a bright fire burning within us. This is the basic message of the vision.

We must make sure that our inner fire is kindled on the altar of our heart by the Holy Spirit, having entered the Family of God by the door of repentance and faith, and by having set ourselves to allow the Holy Spirit to fill every part of our being. To be baptized with and in the Holy Spirit and fire is both a high privilege and also the means by which Father equips us for consistent godly living.

It is imperative that we do not get trapped into thinking that human striving marked by intense activity is the way to keep the fire of God burning brightly in our hearts. Nor should we think that keeping to sets of laws is the answer. Love is the fulfilling of the law, and the fire of love can only burn as it should if we give priority to an intimate love-walk with Jesus.

In my vision it seemed that in futile effort to keep the inner flame burning brightly enough, the man with the tension of self-effort obvious on his countenance was even chopping up some of the furniture, and even a wall or two, in the house of his life! Men have been known to fuel the fire of humanistic zeal in their lives by destroying the wall of peaceful and happy home lives, and by destroying the furniture of personal good health and proper enjoyment of life.

Such men are noticeable by their sombre seriousness where a sense of humor is sadly lacking and everything in life to them is shining white or stark blackness. Such men can be very judgmental and are especially prone to pressuring others into the "rightness" of

whatever viewpoint they currently adhere to!

"Fan into flame the gift of God,"⁶ was Paul's wise counsel to Timothy. "Keep constantly blazing the gift of God," Wuest translates this exhortation.

While we cannot kindle the flame of God within us we are well able to smother and even quench it, until spiritual fervor and enthusiasm as well as overflowing praise are no longer active ingredients of our Christian life. How vital it is for the fire of love's desire for our dear Lord Jesus to burn ever more brightly. Desire for Him and desire to express Him clearly to men, should be a constant flame within us. It can be so!

There is no substitute for sitting at Jesus' feet in quiet contemplation of His loveliness, and in a stillness that allows us to be listening to what He says. The intimate place of nearness in love becomes the place of revelation as well as the place of restful trust.

Life will be transformed wonderfully if we learn to sit at Jesus' feet as we drive to work, pause at our desk for just a few moments, or delight in His close company as we wheel our shopping trundler to the check out. If we make it our goal to please Him⁷ we will discover many opportunities for inner stillness in the awareness of the presence of Christ, and thus allow Him opportunity to share His heart with us down through the day and across the week.

Some may protest, "But we must be busy, doing the work of the Lord!" Whose work? Others may declare, "There is a world to win for Jesus and time is frighteningly short." Perhaps it is too short for continuing with so much effort to achieve such small results!

Jesus shouted out in a loud voice, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him be coming to me and let him be drinking. He who believes on me, just as the scripture said, rivers out of his inmost being shall flow, of living water."⁸

Yes, there is a thirsty, needy world out there. For too long however, some have thought that the harder they work at winning people, the quicker the task will be accomplished. Not so! We need to learn to achieve more by doing less, by only doing exactly that the Spirit specifically calls us to do and anoints us with power) do, this very day!

If we will become a "Mary", a fire will burn brightly within us, we will clearly hear direction from the Lord with respect to sharing His love, and we will be able to touch redemptively a world that is disgruntled and weary with religion and religious laws, and also with the burden of meeting-oriented sub-standard, hypocritical churchdom! They need Jesus! They need love! They need someone to share the joy of sweet intimacy with Jesus and the)ad-lifting effect of sitting at His feet.

Jesus offers freedom, rest and quality life. Today He still says, Take at once my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find cessation from labor and refreshment for your souls, for my yoke is mild and pleasant, and My load is light in weight."⁹

Surely this love-yoke will allow the flame of God and the flame of our love for Him, to burn within us continually with a brightness that glorifies Jesus all the days of our lives!

Honestly, friend, which of the two men do you most resemble?

Chapter 18

BEWARE OF "PEOPLE PRESSURE"

There is no need whatever to feel pressured or trapped because someone shares something that they have seen in the Spirit that involves you. Nor, for that matter, should you feel that you are called to blind obedience because someone "prophesies" to you personally, or "gives you a word" from the Lord — or supposedly so.

Are you deeply confident and conscious that this truly is the word of the Lord to you? Are you sure that it is not being colored by the desire or the emphasis of doctrinal understanding of the person who shares with you?

Take your time to come to a clear and un-pressured understanding at this point! You need to have full assurance in answering this: "Is it God, or is it not?" Do nothing until you are positive about it. The old advice, "If you doubt, don't!" has a great deal of merit.

There have been times when someone has told us very positively that Father required us to follow a certain line of action. Our reply has been, "Thank you for letting us know that Father has shown you this. We will be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. As soon as He lets us know that He requires it, we will do it." Father and I are on good speaking terms, so the least I can expect when somebody shares what they understand to be His word to me is His inner prompting, "Yes, John, this is what I want of you."

Don't forget that in the final analysis it is the inner voice of the Spirit speaking in harmony with the written word of God that we are called to obey. Others may hear God with us, but not for us.

Reject people pressure! The Holy Spirit is the persuader. Allow people to share what they will, but do not allow yourself to be talked into anything that doesn't "sit well" in your spirit.

It could be so easy to assess what is shared with us on the basis of its appeal to reason, popular thought, normal expectation, personal pride or even our desire for ease, material increase or the enlargement of our sphere of influence. The question, "Is it God, or is it not?" asked with frank honesty can save us from foolish presumption and erroneous decision making.

Fear of man will prove to be a snare¹, if we allow ourselves to be trapped by it. Whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe², however, so that people pressure does not force us into a wrong path. This kind of trusting is the result of walking in close company with Jesus so that we are fully aware of His trustworthiness. Holding the Lord in loving and yet reverential respect will make a way for the Holy Spirit to set us free from the fear of man.

When God is truly speaking, then of course we must obey wholeheartedly, however He

speaks and whatever He requires. But it is always in order to ask our loving and understanding Lord to make it so plain that no uncertainty remains. It is His responsibility and delight to make a thing plain and clear to us. It is our responsibility and obligation to respond with obedient joy once He has made it plain.

Even when we know that what is expressed is a true word from God for us we still ought to take time to ascertain when and how we should respond to it. When this is crystal clear, as we have sought for it to be, then we certainly must be prompt to obey. In such a circumstance, delayed obedience is disobedience.

TREE TRUNKS EVERYWHERE!

I was attending a conference in Pennsylvania where there was discussion and teaching about the role of apostles in the church today. One of the things concerning me was that some seemed to have a misconception that prophets minister by revelation, but that apostles function by understanding, reason, and the wisdom of experience.

The truth is that we cannot be fully effective in anything we are called to do for the Lord Jesus unless we move by revelation knowledge of what Father wants of us and know how He wants us to move in the thing we are called to, and also have God-given understanding of His timing. It frequently requires supplementary revelation for each step of our obedience in walking the pathway we have been shown to be for us.

Because of being asked to speak briefly in one of the meetings, I was waiting on the Lord for His instruction. He took me in spirit into a deep dark forest. Although the sun shone overhead, no gleam of sunshine penetrated the gloom of the forest floor. My attention was drawn to only one thing. I was surrounded by tree trunks! There were so many of them that it was impossible to see anything else.

In this vision the Holy Spirit showed me that when people are forced to be made too aware of structure the church is a gloomy place! Thank God some are discovering the delight of low profile leadership which exalts Jesus, and majors in life-flow. For a forest to be attractive there have to be places where the sun shines through and where green leaver are very evident.

There have been times when, in gatherings of leaders, I have commented, "I have been standing before you for fifteen or twenty minutes, and none of you have thought about my skeleton at all!" Without the skeleton I would just be a blob on the floor, but isn't it great to see the expression of life for which the bony structure exists, rather than being aware of the skeleton itself? Surely the skeleton of structure exists for the sake of the body and operates best when it is not observable, though the effect of its existence is obvious.

The skeleton of a lobster is obvious to everyone. It is the first part of the creature that you meet. External skeletons are not alive and do not grow as internal skeletons do. The only time therefore that such a creature can grow is when it undergoes the dangerous, and vulnerable process of shedding its hard casing and then forming a larger one.

A corpse may have a complete skeleton, perfect in shape and size. The Body needs life-flow rather than tedious emphasis on structure. If the skeleton is healthy there is no need to give the Body instruction as to how it should relate to it. In a healthy Body relationship is natural and unstrained, not artificially forced or imposed.

Isn't it enjoyable to attend a Fellowship where everyone has a brotherly attitude to everyone else so that elders and other leaders are friends and brothers? They are "elders among you" and not elders over you! To want to rule over and control people is a carnal desire that needs to be avoided at all costs.

I am so glad that in our day the Holy Spirit is restoring all the "Ephesians Four Ministries" to the church. However, there is a need for caring concern lest we understand the role of apostle and prophet in the same way that has made us content with less than an ideal understanding and function of the other ministries which have been among us for a long time.

No matter what place we have in the family of God, our life should be marked by the humility of servant-hood, the caring emphatic gentleness of Jesus, and revelatory walk in the Spirit which brings a lively uniqueness to our response to the call of God on our lives.

True servant-hood — and that IS what "ministry" is — will not be dominating, will not be drawing attention to itself, and nor will it be applying pressure to gain its own ends. Servants, love slaves of Jesus, claim no rights for themselves, and do not consider a people to be "my" or "our" church, when in reality it either belongs to Jesus or is simply a religious club. True leadership will at least recognize a responsibility shared with others to care for the flock of God, never claiming exclusive function in the Body. And it will be very much aware that it *is* God's flock.

In our day it has become popular to ask, "Who is your shepherd?" or, "Who is your covering?" Note that David declared, "Because the Lord is my shepherd, I have everything I need." We do need each other, but our commitment and covenant is with the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ Himself. Our relationship to one another needs to be based on the fact that love is the perfect unifying factor.

In whatever measure we have a shepherd responsibility we should readily accept the responsibility of enhancing the Shepherd role of Jesus, not take it over from Him! The manner in which some teach about covering, shepherding and discipleship seems to be just a new ploy to keep believers in bondage to man-made systems and structures.

In leadership it is wise not to try to be what men declare that we are, or even what God called us to be in the sense of following our own, or our church's understanding of that particular kind of leadership. If a leadership quality has been recognized in us by others, then it came about, surely, because we have been walking with Jesus and responding willingly into what the Holy Spirit has prompted us to do.

The same kind of walk will beautifully bring forth what God purposes to be our ministry, and at the same time allow us to be the person Father intends us to be. Even official recognition of our ministry should only enlarge our opportunities to walk in it, and not impose a straight-jacket of additional and different responsibilities so that a human system is maintained which is similar to a service club or business institution.

Thank God for pillars in the church! But let none be caterpillars, trapped into doing what man requires rather than standing strong in what the Holy Spirit desires, and let no one feel any importance in their role, nor merit in their diligent service. That would be detracting from the centrality of Christ in the church, thereby depriving Him of the glory that is His alone.

Today the Lord Jesus is taking giant strides in building His church. Let us pray that there will be a purity of character and a life-flow of grace marking us all. Nothing less is

acceptable servant-hood.

"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to the power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."¹

Chapter 19

IT'S THE LORD!

Can a Worship Meeting be 'usual'? This one certainly was not! The assembled saints were deeply in love with Jesus, and were seeking to express their love as fully and freely as possible. More than that, they were folk who sought to consistently live in a manner pleasing to the Lord Jesus.

Sometimes we falsely believe that we can divide our lives into water-tight compartments so that we can worship wholeheartedly even when relationships in our home are strained and unpleasant. But it just won't work! Can a bad-tempered person be a good praiser? Can a person who cheats in his work pray effectively?

Can someone with a critical, slandering tongue please God with a generous offering?

God looks on the heart, and observes the whole life. He calls for honesty and integrity in the inner man so that our praise and worship may truly exalt Him. God abhors deceit and hypocrisy. Two people can be side by side in a meeting, singing the very same love song to Jesus. The song of one may be a great delight to the Lord, and the song of the other be an unacceptable affront.

But these folk had an open honesty in their lives. Of course there are imperfections in us all, but God looks on the heart and sees the desires, the motive and the intent of the heart. To Him love is the fulfilling of the law!

In the midst of this worship I stood with my hands raised and my eyes closed singing my personal love song to Jesus. In the Spirit I saw Him right there before me! How beautiful He is! There is an amazing depth and quality of love in His countenance, and tenderness too. I noticed with awe that His eyes were misty with delight in the enjoyment of love songs coming from sincere, wholly yielded and adoring hearts.

The Lord Jesus stretched out His hands to me! I lifted my hands to His and we stood there lightly touching each other's fingers. Very quickly my song seemed superfluous for He was hearing the love-beat of my heart, and I was melted before Him.

How long I stood thus I do not know. Time is forgotten in the wonder of such an event. Others in the gathering proceeded to sing or be silent, to pray or praise, but I was totally unaware of it. It was as though there was just Him and me in the whole wide world for those precious moments.

Later if anyone had looked in my direction there well may have been mystified questions in their minds. I just could not help smelling my hands to see whether the sweet, rare and special fragrance that I had become so aware of as we had touched hands together, had lingered beyond the moments in which I had seen Jesus so clearly and been touched so deeply.

It did not matter whether the fragrance lingered or not. What did matter was that my wonderful Lord had made me unforgettably aware deep within my spirit, of His loving kindness and unreserved acceptance of this child of His who has no claim upon His grace

but is deeply appreciative of His mercy.

Friend, He loves you as much as He loves anyone anywhere. Please never doubt your Father's love towards you! Is there anything so hurtful for a person who loves deeply, as in having their love doubted? God is love!² and He loves you!

May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love; and may you be able to feel and understand, as all God's children should, how long, how wide, how deep, and how high His love really is; and to experience this love for yourselves, though it is so great that you will never see the end of it or fully know or understand it.³ The God of love loves you personally, deeply and intimately. Bless Him for that as long as you live!

There was another occasion when we were worshiping with the same fellowship of saints. Actually we had simply started out to spend a relaxed evening together learning some new songs. We had all become so blessed by what we were singing to the Lord that fragrant worship welled up within all of our hearts so that we gave ourselves to blessing and exalting our Lover-King in singing songs of love to Him.

Isn't it important that we get away from singing *about* Him so much, and rather sing *to* Him the joyful praise and adoring love of our hearts? In many churches we would gladly see this change take place, altering the words of songs and hymns so that they are addressed directly to the Lord Jesus.

It would also doubtless help if we changed the "Thee's" and "Thou's" into our present day language rather than using an unnatural, archaic and religious form of expression. That may well release us to involve God more readily in every realm of our life, rather than shutting Him into religious segments for which a special language is used. It would also make it much easier for non-church people to feel comfortable among us. They would be saved as well from thinking that God is still living in the nineteenth century!

On this occasion the Lord revealed Himself to the vision of my inner eye. How I love Him! God is a speaking and self-revealing God. If He did not choose to speak, we could never make Him do so, and consequently we could never find the Way. If He did not freely choose to reveal Himself to us we would never find Him. Bless Him for ever for His grace towards an undeserving world!

Whether the Lord reveals Himself to us in vision or not is not really of ultimate importance. What is important is that He does make Himself known to us in many ways. God revealed Himself to us supremely in sending Jesus to live among men for a season, and to die triumphantly on our behalf. He reveals Himself to us through the written Word, and He reveals Himself to us through the sweet ministry of the Holy Spirit who prompts, persuades, draws, and whispers within our human spirits. Who would not want to be as filled with the Holy Spirit as it is possible to be?

But that evening was so special to me as the Lord of my life drew me closely to Himself. There was a precious and sacred offering, receiving and returning of love. To gaze upon His loveliness is pure delight! It would be worth going to heaven for just one glimpse of the Lamb in His glory.

With that insight John wrote, "That which we have seen with discernment and at present is in our mind's eye, and that which we have heard and at present is ringing in our ears, we are reporting also to you, in order that as for you also, you may be participating jointly in common with us (in our first-hand knowledge of the life of our Lord.)"⁴

During the moments when we were all wonderfully aware of the presence of the Lord in special intimacy and revelation of His heart, one or two brothers felt that we should break bread together. Like those who wished to erect booths on the mount of transfiguration they probably felt that the moment was too precious and special to let pass without doing something to cause the delight of it to remain.

Folk sat to receive the bread and wine, but I remained standing still, not daring to break the beauty of a special season of revelatory relationship with Jesus. My wife passed the bread, but I shook my head and so it was passed to someone else. Then a brother came and stood in front of me. When I paid no attention he whispered, "John, the cup."

"I don't need the cup," I replied. "I have Him, and am already communing with Him."

O yes, I do break bread with brothers and sisters in the Family. However I understand that in the first century of the Christian church breaking of bread was always in homes and associated with fellowship meals. How easily "Communion" becomes a religious tradition.

We once commented to a beloved brother in Ireland that "Jesus didn't tell us anything to say. He just gave us something to do." This was in response to a request for further insight into bringing deeper meaningfulness into Breaking Bread. If the same format, the same ritual is used, at least we should be honest enough to admit that this is an arrangement of man's making and not a God given requirement. Many saints have known precious limes of breaking bread in the midst of worship when no comment at all was made about it.

Communion with Jesus is such a precious privilege and honor that we all need to take care that it is not substituted for a religious activity in which the intensity of feeling may be more soulful than we would easily acknowledge.

Perhaps a part of the linking of taking bread and wine as a celebration reminder of Jesus' loving presence and provision for our spiritual well-being, with the partaking of a family meal, is that He wants us to partake of food for our physical need. The eating of food well may have been intended to be a repeated reminder to eat of the Bread which came from Heaven.

Let Jesus Himself, His love, His grace and His presence, be of supreme value and delight to us. We should seek to know Him far more than seeking to know the "Word", and we should see far greater value in walking in His fellowship and communion than in any kind of ceremony.

Let us note well that the Holy Spirit seems to take special joy in sharing revelation knowledge with the people of God in times of worshipping love-flow. It is far better to give priority in our lives, in our gatherings, to expressing our love to the Lord more than to anything else. It is less than ideal to come to God scarcely able to linger in adoration because of our impatience either to bring our requests to Him, or to proclaim His word to others.

We may see the Lord Jesus in a special way occasionally, but we may know his presence with us constantly. His eye is on us continuously in jealous love, and that is infinitely more important than visionary glimpses of His loveliness, precious though they are.

Our Father's loving care and His full provision for our welfare are more than sufficient to

cause joyful praise and adoring worship to rise from us continually. Let it be so! Amen and amen.