

A scenic landscape at sunrise or sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow over a range of mountains. The sky is filled with soft, wispy clouds. In the foreground, a rocky slope is covered with numerous small white flowers with yellow centers. The overall mood is peaceful and hopeful.

Moving Forward

John Beaumont

Introduction

John Beaumont [1934 – 2020] was a very good friend with a passion for Jesus and His Church, we have seldom witnessed. In this article, written in 2005 we hear the prophetic voice. Calling His people to follow. What John shares is as relevant today as when it was first shared with believers in different parts of the world. Read it slowly, prayerfully, and as you do, listen to Him who calls us to follow with wholehearted obedience as He makes His ways clear to us.

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MOVING FORWARD

For a considerable length of time I have had mixed feelings about where we and dear friends of ours are, in the spiritual dimension of life. On one hand I am delighted for freedom from tradition which has released us to love and follow the Lord Jesus more wholeheartedly. On the other hand, I have a deep grieving within me that we seem to be making unacceptably slow progress into whatever it takes to see Christ as wonderfully glorified as He deserves to be, here and now – as well as hereafter.

Others have indicated a similar concern, not wanting for a moment to go back to where we were, and yet deeply longing to move towards the fullness of where we should be. Last year Nina spoke of this after I had commented on my

yearning for ‘the next generation,’ which is about us now.

Recently, after re-reading ‘Revelatory Adventure’ again, Ronnie wrote to me. Here are excerpts: First question; where to next in the adventure? . . . Which has been to the fore in my heart for most of 2004. I guess it was sparked by your comments last Easter ‘Maximise the grace of God in your life’ . . . I can only think that in SA or Ireland there should be so much more where a community can impact others around them. Second question; something new and beautiful was brought to birth, but where is the maturing baby/child/person?

Ronnie continues: ‘I want to go to a third question that came to mind when reading Revelatory Adventure again. Page 91 ‘Why have you done

it?’ Please remember that . . .we all move freely and unencumbered into a godly and attractive lifestyle, magnifying Him in all the earth. Here is my question: Is now the time to move into this?’

Here is a little more of what Ron wrote: ‘My most significant concern about the Church is that we make little or no impact on the world around us! I am so aware of my own weakness and inability to effect change. This made me think of Evan Roberts who I think when asked ‘could this happen again?’ said that he was not sure if someone could be found who would pay the price . . . A very challenging statement! Down through biblical history there are those who paid the price. When I look inwardly, I see desires for comfort and ease in conflict with a heart that wants to see an expression of the Kingdom of God. I do know

though that I want to move on from where I am at this point.?

In one of my letters to Ronnie I said, ‘Sometimes I find an inner exclamation rising within me’ following on from something I’ve just heard, read or thought of – ‘May God have mercy on us all, especially on me!’

Near the end of 2004 I also wrote ‘Last week I watched a programme on Shine TV about the Welsh revival of 1904-1905 with Evan Roberts as a key figure in it. It touched me deeply to hear statements that had been hidden in my heart throughout this year and which express my own heart’s desire before the Lord.’

KINGS IN SACKCLOTH

2 Kings 6:30 ‘When the king [of Israel] heard the woman’s words, he tore his robes. As he went along the wall, the people looked, and there, underneath, he had sackcloth on his body.’

2 Kings 19:1 ‘When King Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the Lord.’

As children of the King, wearing lovely robes, there are many things we should experientially enjoy and marvel at. Among these are acceptance, forgiveness, cleansing, rest, peace like a river, deep inner joy, a family relationship with Father, oneness with and in Christ, being objects of Father’s love, care and grace, knowing wonderful brothers and sister in the family of God, and being seated with Christ in the heavenly

realms. ‘Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.’ [Ephesians 1.3]

I have recently been marvelling at the recognition that all of my life I have been wrapped up in the amazing grace of our Almighty God. This has been true in times of challenge and adventure, times of [so to speak] hum-drum daily living, times of danger, need, rejection, weakness, failure, as well as in times of special blessing, amazing provision and breath-taking glory. In every season and in every situation God in His wonderful grace has been my provider and sustainer. King’s robes indeed!

In addition to rejoicing in all the goodness of God, it may be vital to experiencing the

grieving that sackcloth and ashes typify. In Hebrews 1:9 we read about the Lord Jesus, ‘You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by *anointing you with the oil of joy.*’ However, the prophet Isaiah describes Jesus as ‘. . . *a man of sorrows*, and familiar with suffering.’

In Ezekiel chapter nine is a vision of the city of Jerusalem where vice and evil are rampant. A man clothed in linen who had a writing kit at his side was instructed to go through the city and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it. Following that, the evil doers were to be slaughtered, but those who had the mark were not to be touched. These grieving ones experienced the mercy of God. It paid to grieve! Perhaps a

little strangely, my brothers and sisters, I believe ‘this way glory.’

Another passage in Ezekiel [chapter 22:29 -31] was tremendously meaningful to me as a young man, as the Holy Spirit challenged me through it: ‘The people of the land practice extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and mistreat the alien, denying them justice . **I looked for a man among them who would stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so that I would not have to destroy it, but I found none.** So, I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger, bringing down on their own heads all they have done, declares the sovereign Lord.’

As God touched my heart through this scripture away back then, He made very plain that I was not

to be concerned about what other believers were doing, but that God was saying, ‘I look for one man, even one man, even the likes of you!’

THINGS THAT GRIEVE ME

When we chatted with David and Nina last year and I shared about my own youth and my desires for the next generation [which includes you, my reader, unless you are my age?] **the Holy Spirit brought the thought to me of being a child of the King, with kingly garments, and yet having given a glimpse of the sackcloth underneath.**

I know I must share a little more of what grieves me deeply, but never with a sense of hopelessness. I want to do this briefly, so leave you to interpret what is written. This sharing is a prelude to my detailing the way forward, as I currently understand it.

I grieve for the church ‘not so much for what is generally known as the church, but for those who may be described as believing believers. Are too many ‘at ease in Zion?’ Is there an easy acceptance of sub-standard Christianity? Is there absorption with earthly, visible things? Is there a lack of God’s people seeing themselves as pilgrims and strangers? Are we ‘fiddling while Rome burns,’ or ‘re-arranging deck chairs on the Titanic?’

I also grieve at the general perception of ‘church’ – irrelevant, powerless, worldly, meaningless, stale and out-dated, with heretical views [or no views] of salvation, faith and eternity.

I grieve for lost people, for multitudes rushing headlong to a lost eternity, and for New Zealand’s populace being in steep moral decline with utter

godlessness, violence, break-up of families, and the incredible selfishness typified in the Prodigal son's '...give me'

Where is the fire, the passion, the burning love and spiritual desperation, resulting in sleepless nights, anguish in prayer, someone daring to 'go it alone' with what looks like reckless obedience to the Holy Spirit? Where is there a new, deep, pure sense of spiritual urgency and Spirit inspired and Spirit fuelled enthusiasm? Where, oh where, is the fire, the passion, the anointing, the power, the glory? Oh, for the glory days again!

Where is there a healthy fear [reverential awe] of God among believers? Where is undeniable and pure Holy Spirit activity, conviction, anointing in life, word and

emotions? Where is conviction of sin, deep repentance, whole-hearted, radical conversion?

I grieve over humanistic and psychological substitutions for the Holy Spirit's work, and for sub-standard, flesh-tainted Ishmaels . . . for so called conversions where individuals retain control of their lives; where more-or-less living by Christian [or church group] standards are the norm, but where yet there is no on-going intimate love relationship with Jesus, and no eager responsiveness to the Holy Spirit. Is there any expectation of knowing His promptings in daily life? Is there shallowness at best in these realms?

Does what I have written thus far stir your heart a tad? Perhaps a chat with Father would be a healthy exercise for you.

Is what I have written thus far compatible with joyous faith? Yes, indeed it is! I am fairly confident that folk who know me will agree with that. As Paul wrote: 2Co 6:10 ‘sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.’

WHAT COMES NEXT?

What if God had to, or chose to, start all over again – now – here where you live and where I live, in this generation? I don’t mean starting over again by rejecting and disowning what is already in existence. Thank God for His tolerance of the bruised reed and smoking flax! Bless Him for all He is accomplishing on earth in our day! I refer to God initiating a display of divine grace in a fresh, new, pure way. **And what if He has *already* started?**

Many years ago, my good friend Eric Chambers, who is in heaven now, prophesied about my life in a way that made me shrink back and urge him not to do that again. During the following night the Lord spoke to me saying, ‘I take years to prepare a man for what I choose. If he then draws back, I will need to start all over again in the next generation.’ Ouch!

I have thought that God in His grace sought to bring about a new day, a new beginning for His people, in the ‘Charismatic Renewal’ in my home country. Did He try to do the same in the ‘Pentecostal,’ ‘Latter Rain’ and ‘House Church’ movements, as well as on a multitude of other occasions throughout history? God have mercy on us all! Why, oh why have men seemed eager taken control of such special activities of the Holy

Spirit and steered them in a direction they were comfortable with, so that the glory departed?

Now, why have we gone through the adventures, challenges and traumas of leaving the comfortable and acceptable paths and systems we once enjoyed? What is the purpose, and where is the value?

What if all we have experienced in our new freedom is simply to provide a platform, a starting point, for a new generation?

In my youth, as a youth leader, there was more than one occasion when I challenged assembled young people with, ‘We cannot follow our elders, we cannot accept present patterns, plans, and well-trodden paths. For Jesus’ sake we must discover a way to go beyond all this.’ This was said in front of elders and leaders, none of whom

objected, and some of whom were deeply touched, agreeing wholeheartedly! Who could deny such statements while another generation of precious but blind and lost unbelievers were heedlessly and relentlessly moving towards a doomed eternity, and all the while the church was busy ‘making daisy chains’

AN ALLEGORY

[If allegory isn’t a word you are familiar with, it simply means ‘A story or description in which the characters and events symbolize some deeper, underlying meaning.’]

Picture in your mind a typical city with its rush and bustle, noise and crowds, stresses and strains, streets and alleys, cars, buses and trucks, and in the evenings its lights, home fires and a measure of smog as well. People are busy with

work, family commitments, appointments to keep, meetings to attend, and interminable workloads.

In the city among those who are weighted down with continual busy-ness, problems, burdens and a sense of helplessness there are one or two who dream that there has to be a better way, and who crave for a more leisurely personal life as well as a more satisfactory family life. One such person fills a backpack and heads for the mountains, wanting to breathe the mountain fresh air and to gaze at the stars and night sky away from the city's glare, smoke and fog.

Several others individually head in the same direction, wanting to live more simply for a while, to view the skies, listen to the silence and leave the old familiar routine that has become so regimented, irksome, frustrating and 'soul

destroying'. Before long others also get the same idea and head in the same direction until quite a crowd of folk are there, developing their own alternative lifestyle. Some notice, however, that before long they are beginning to form their own set of ordinances and by-laws. Gradually questions begin to be asked. Why are we here? What lies ahead for us? Are we in danger of stagnating and becoming satisfied with what is good but not really ideal? Are we becoming like what we left? Is this all there is?

Is that the way it is with you and me?

Why has the Holy Spirit led us to our present lifestyle?

What has been God's purpose in releasing us from the bondage of a man-made and man-

controlled church lifestyle that never did really satisfy? Are we in a place where we certainly do not want to return to the ‘city’ I have pictured above, and yet do not know how to move on so that God is more glorified than ever through His people, and is able to accomplish all He intends to accomplish in and through us at the present time?

I want to attempt an answer to these questions, with things that the Holy Spirit has been showing me.

But first let me comment that here and there one sees that a person who became free from bondage to the will and ways of church systems has slipped back there again – or contemplates doing so. Has such a person missed the whole purpose of coming to where they are?

Consider Abraham who ‘by faith, when called to go to a place he would later receive as an inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the Promised Land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.’

If it has been in his heart he could have gone back. But if he had done so surely both he and multitudes of others would have been ever so much the poorer. Thank God Isaac and Jacob dwelt in tents with him. I sincerely hope that you folk with growing children who may be young adults now, explain very clearly to them why you have come to where you are. I fear that too many

of our offspring are finding their way back to yesterday's 'city'.

Would it be fair to say that if someone keeps on longing to go back, or even if they are content to stay where they are, enjoying good company and freedom to do what *they* prefer, that they are in a place not too different from the one they were once so glad to leave?

Some seem to have brought aspects of the old life with them or to have re-established them where they now are. In that old city there will always be plenty of entertainment and 'show-business', as well as popularity, personal promotion, and 'babying'. It will always be an easy, cross-less path, with pleasing intellectual stimulation and where 'king reason' reigns. There will be sights

and sounds galore, even if with human rules and regulations, bondage and emptiness.

RESPONDING TO GOD

Inland from Fairlie, in the Southern Alps of New Zealand, is the Mount John Observatory. It is placed there in a pristinely clear atmosphere, away from man-made air pollution, so that observers may view the heavens much more clearly than would be possible elsewhere.

We dare not become involved again with the hubbub of the city's multitudinous activities and the constant din of man-made, man-controlled church structures!! We have been brought into a clearer place so that we can see further and hear more clearly what Father wants us to know.

Is there a fresh need for spiritual ears and eyes to be opened – towards God, here and now? –

Towards our true state, towards the reality of lost people about us, and towards the brevity of time and the reality and imminence of eternity? Do I need to come to a place where I see things and feel about them like He does?

The first key to a way forward is to be listening attentively to the Holy Spirit as a norm of life. Whatever it takes, let us get there!

As somewhat of an aside, if we came out to hear . . . What were we brought out to leave? Stultifying sameness/repetitiveness; unrewarding busy-ness; misplaced values on property and past achievements; misdirected reliance ? on leaders, teaching, and numbers; either shallow, partial, limited and deeply unsatisfying friendship or an

inward looking ‘I’ll bless you and you bless me’
clinging together kind of friendship all were
continuing dangers. What else?

Let this be stamped deeply on our hearts:

***God needs a people who are
constantly hearing and harkening to
HIM...***

Please note well that we need to ‘hear with
humility,’ [and obey with alacrity,] not sounding
bombastic or dogmatic, taking care not to express
what we have heard in a way that brooks no
question or challenge. At the same time, we need
to rely utterly on an inner certainty given to us by
the Holy Spirit. At times it may be better to
simply say, ‘It seems to me the Lord is saying’ . .

leaving it to the Holy Spirit to convince our hearers.

OTHER IMPORTANT REASONS

God called us away from man-made systems not only to bring us to a place where we can consistently hear Him with God-given clarity, but also because **He has been wanting to wash us clean from the influence** of the patterns, forms and systems of traditional church life where its types of ‘structure,’ styles of worship, and methods of gathering were of human origin. Would you not agree that we have all seen, read, heard and been involved in so much that needs washing away?

This involves dealing with thought patterns, habits, norms and false values that have been developed over many years. Without thorough

washing we will never hear as clearly as we should, and it will be impossible to be continually led by the Spirit in the way He desires for us. The washing God will provide for the one who longs deeply for His glory alone also includes our being cleansed from any attraction to the fads and foibles of the modern ‘church’.

We need to be freed from being drawn to the ‘blessing’ relating to one city, the ‘revival’ found in another, or the ‘prophetic expression’ found in a third, as well as from any desire to copy and imitate styles of leadership, methods of ministry, patterns of gathering and all other stultifying external sameness that mitigates against inner freshness and newness.

Allan Bell told me once that he had told a brother we know that 90% to 95% of what came from him

was right and good. Does that sound like a high percentage? The Holy Spirit immediately put into my heart a thought which I passed on to Allan, ‘Can pure water flow from a tank that has 5% to 10% contamination in it? As the Scripture says, ‘My brothers this should not be.’

Jas 3:11 Can both fresh water and saltwater flow from the same Spring? Jas 3:12 “My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.”

Ronnie’s addition: Who then can stand in this test? I have with tears and heartfelt pain sought purity. And I clearly recall the Spirit dealing with me on the issue of being a hireling after we had laid all things down! I will never do it again, but who is sufficient for this task?

To be honest, I have come to loath and detest things in man-made church systems where, I fear, most of you would say, ‘But there is plenty of good in them as well.’ Maybe, but perhaps the question should not be, ‘Is there some good in them?’ but, ‘Is God in them?’ As seen on a noticeboard in our city, **‘GOOD without GOD equals O.’**

The question is, is God in control there; is God in His fullness there; is God glorified there; is God evident in every aspect of the life there [and here!]; and is God able to fully accomplish His whole purpose for and in the folk there? Where God is manifest in His wonderful fullness there will be pure and radiant lives and there will be a fragrant life-sharing that draws people to Himself alone.

AT THE HEART OF THE MATTER

I have shared that God in His infinite mercy and grace has brought us away from paths we once walked, [1] to bring us to where we are clearly and consistently hearing the inner voice of the Holy Spirit, and also [2] to take us through a process of being washed from sub-standard aspects of our past.

Let me now mention [3] a *third reason* involved in His leading that well may be the most important of all. If we do not excel in this area of life, then you may be sure that nothing else that is written in this entire paper will have the effect that I believe God desires.

There is inestimable value in Father's purpose in bringing us to where we are at the moment, **to raise our love relationship with Christ, and our**

experience and appreciation of oneness with Him, to a considerably higher level. I would like to presume that this fact is so obvious that it scarcely needs mentioning. Although I am mentioning this quite briefly, I trust that each brother and sister who reads this will carefully consider its application to their lives this day.

For some of us, a very real reason why God has brought us to where we are is to **TEST whether we can maintain and increase our love relationship with our wonderful Lord Jesus,** without the props we have leaned on in the past. Have we learned to live worshipping lives without much of what many call worship, limiting it to a special kind of singing?

There is a personal challenge to each of us to maintain steadfastness in this vital aspect of

spiritual living, without dependence on the props of formal meetings, official leaders, and man-made systems. Such things can never bring us to true maturity. Moving away from them has been quite a test of the reality of our relationship with Christ, has it not?

MOVING ON

There is a major challenge in Romans 8:14. In Wuest this reads, **‘For as many as are being constantly led by God’s Spirit, these are sons of God.’** Verse 16 reads, ‘The Spirit himself is constantly bearing joint-testimony with our [human] spirit that we are God’s children, and since children, also heirs . . .’ NIV: 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.’

Constantly hearing the voice of God leads on to this:

God needs people who are being constantly led by the Holy Spirit above everything and everyone else

In a sense I feel like saying, ‘Who cares about meetings or no meetings . . . about different beliefs and practices? All is futile and irrelevant!! The only question of vital importance is, ‘Are we, am I, are you being led by the Holy Spirit?’ In every aspect of life, that is!

Romans 8:6,9,13 ‘The mind of sinful man is death, but *the mind controlled by the Spirit* is life and peace. . . **You, however, are controlled** not

by the sinful nature but **by the Spirit**, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. ..For if you **live** according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if **by the Spirit**, you will live.’

ROMANS 8.14 has been thundering within me for a long time now. In a paper I wrote a year or two ago I stated that I was no longer sure who is a Christian. I received a letter kindly spelling out for me in somewhat theological terms just who such a person is! Who is a Christian? Without tritely repeating a well-used answer to the question, perhaps I could ask, ‘Who is being constantly led by the Holy Spirit?’ We may not use that actual term, but none-the-less be responding to the Lord day by day in a totally self-crucified way. That is being constantly led by the Spirit, isn’t it?’

Jesus said, ‘If anyone will come after me let him *deny self*, take up his cross daily and follow me.’ It is simply not good enough to merely follow His teachings and precepts. We must follow **Him** as he leads us by the Holy Spirit. ‘Where He leads me, I will follow.’ Follow anywhere, anytime, whether I understand why or not, and whether others follow or not.

Romans 10:9 ‘That if you confess with your mouth, ‘*Jesus is Lord*’, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.’

1 Cor. 12:3 ‘Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus be cursed, and **no one can [truly] say ‘*Jesus is Lord*’ but by the Holy Spirit.** ‘

‘Lord’ means boss, chief, commander-in-chief, and/or president. That means president without a balancing congress or senate, without a judicial system of appeals and with no place for man-made laws. He is neither a figurehead monarch nor statutory head, but a hands-on, total control leader, with absolute and final authority. Please note well that He will always retain the right to total, absolute Lordship of our lives, and of His church. How very wonderful that He is also a God of infinite wisdom, mercy and love.

Continuing ‘inner’ hearing requires trust. Being constantly led by the Spirit, where Jesus is the Lord of our lives also requires continuing faith in God. This is because:

[a] It may mean ‘getting out of the boat’.

[b] It well may mean going beyond or even contrary to natural reason.

[c] It may also mean going where none have ever gone before.

[d] It may mean walking alone, with no one understanding, but the Lord.

[e] It could cost you everything but give riches of eternal worth.

Here are examples from Hebrews chapter 11, where faith goes beyond reason:

v7. By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family.

v8. By faith, Abraham, when called . . . obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

v13. By faith they admitted that they were strangers and aliens on earth.

v17. By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice.

v22. By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus-

v29. By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land

v30. By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days.

v31. By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

vv32-40 And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about –

I see an interesting triangle linked with Romans 8.14 and Gal. 3:26 ‘You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.’ To me the three adjoining sides are [1] ‘sons of God,’ [2] ‘faith in Christ Jesus,’ and [3] ‘being led by the Spirit’.

Surely, *surely*, we MUST come to a place where we are constantly being led by the Spirit, and unquestioningly following Him.

We need to follow the Spirit’s clear leading regardless of cost or consequence and regardless of misunderstanding or rejection. As I have

learned where we now live, even if following the Spirit's lead means being 'despised and rejected of men' it is still abundantly worthwhile. Such things are not worth comparing with seasons of deep blessing, the realisation of God doing through us what only God can do, and the wonder of the oneness with Christ in a sweet, clear awareness of His presence in love. As John Wesley said, 'Best of all, God is with us.' That is glory! The Lord's 'amen' in one's heart is more than sufficient. His inner 'well done' is too wonderful for words.

'So, I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. **But if you are led by**

the Spirit you are not under law. **Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.**' Gal 5:16-18,25

Did you underline that in your mind and heart?

Let us keep in step with the Spirit!

We ought to say one big YES to God that lasts for a lifetime. When we first take that momentous step, which should happen in a thorough going conversion, we may be sure that God will give a specific challenge to test our total sincerity.

Those who are led by the Spirit are likely to be considered 'holy fools,' especially by other 'Christians'. Who said, 'It's fun to be different?'

Evan Roberts asked a young woman if she was obeying the Holy Spirit in everything. She replied

that she was, except that when prompted to speak in a gathering she had not done so, not wanting anyone to notice her or to consider her ‘forward’. Evan said that he considered this was sufficient to grieve or quench the Spirit. Does God also have a problem with those who ignore the Holy Spirit’s prompting NOT to speak? May God grant us ever increasing sensitivity and prompt total responsiveness to the Holy Spirit, with no exceptions whatever.

If we do not have ‘one-ear’ hearing, [Revelation chapters 2 & 3] and are not being constantly led by the Holy Spirit [Romans 8:4], then, regardless of having moved into a different and ‘free’ church life-style, we are still probably caught up in empty repetitiveness. In all probability we are also still ruled by natural reason and the sameness of beliefs and norms as previously – and far too

earth-bound as well. Do we then have a fairly pleasant but mostly powerless lifestyle that is not glorifying Father as He deserves and provides for?

GOD'S WILL VERSUS SELF WILL

When first seeking the Saviour, we repent of the bad, nasty and ugly things which are sinful in our lives, and so we should. **Perhaps it takes a long time to learn that doing good things can also be wrong, if they are an expression of our controlling our own lives.** Even in church leadership we risk the same folly. This is self-will, and self-will is at the root of sin. Think of that!! What was the Prodigal son's most grievous action? Was it not in saying, 'Father, give me?' wanting to take control of his own life? Was he not like Adam and Eve in wanting to go his own

way, judging what was best for himself, and using his own nous to set his path?

At the beginning of our Christian life our love response is usually total, and we easily and readily yield our all to Christ. We will do anything for Him. Is it partly because of the norm we see about us that later we re-establish our own control of our lives and the control of 90% of our income? Or is it simply because of carnality and self-will and unbelief?

In my youth we mingled with other young people who were 'sold out' for God. We were willing to go anywhere and do anything for Jesus. Living for Him was high adventure, and deeply challenging. Those were blessed, wonderful and fruitful years. However, with lack of discernment some of us also did what we saw other believers do, and

whatever we were told to do by leaders we respected. Sometimes this was right and proper, other times wrong.

In those days we often told each other ‘If Christ is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all.? Faith should mean depend on completely, rely on utterly, commit to irrevocably and trust in, on and to, without any reservation whatever. Do you recall ‘The Jetty and the Raft’ in ‘God in my Dreams?’

Have you read the pages about India in ‘A God-Filled Nobody?’ I went there at 22 years of age, returning home 2 years later. The things the Holy Spirit accomplished were not because of some kind of group dynamic. At a natural level I felt very much alone more often than not. It was simply and solely a God of infinite grace and

mercy choosing to use a misfit nobody! That way He could be sure of receiving all the credit and glory.

Most of those I remember from my young days in New Zealand, and have heard of more recently, would still be considered ‘good Christians,’ evangelicals or charismatics, involved in church life and seeking to live for God. However, I fear deeply that some may now be living by reason, custom, church acceptability, past experience and the like, more than in the freshness of a love walk with Jesus.

When I was a minister, a church leader told me, ‘When I tell other men to jump, they are already in the air. When I say it to you, you look around to see where you are going to land.’ I replied that

I would gladly jump whenever the Holy Spirit told me to do so.

It seems apparent to me that the world, the flesh, the devil *and the church* [organised, controlled and structured by men] are all totally opposed to a person being constantly led by the Holy Spirit!!!

Sometimes a false understanding of the Bible's place in our life can be a pitfall. Let me make this plain: The bible didn't instruct me to say and write what is in this paper, nor bring me here today? the Holy Spirit did! However, I am so glad that He impressed on me this verse? The bolts of your gates will be iron and bronze, and your strength will be equal to your days.? -Deut 33:25.

Consider John 10:27 'My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow *Me*.' Wuest: **'The sheep which are mine are in the habit of**

listening to my voice, and I know them by experience, and they take the same road that I take with me, and I give to them eternal life.’ *That is*, they follow Christ, NOT the Scriptures, NOT church leaders, NOT a customary Christian life, BUT HIM, the One who speaks and leads!!

To be being led by the Holy Spirit is a higher and more challenging way to walk than simply to be following whatever we understand the Bible to teach, even though, of course, He will never lead us contrary to the will of God revealed in Scripture.

THE PLACE OF SCRIPTURE

Before I needlessly ‘set your teeth on edge’ let me comment on the place of the Scriptures in our lives, and some of its key values:

The Scriptures paint an amazing picture of the splendour and glory of the eternal Lord God Almighty, and of His abounding grace. We learn of Him in the Book.

The Bible tells of God's uniquely wonderful plan for salvation from sin and explains salvation life.

The Scriptures set out clearly the ethical and moral standards that God requires of us all. In Acts 15:28-29 the early church leaders set out requirements for believers to [1] unequivocally and openly acknowledge Christ as Lord of all; [2] to place high value on life typified in the word 'blood' and [3] God's absolute standards of sexual morality.

The Bible places a healthy and necessary emphasis on what is spiritual and eternal.

There is clear instruction that in every aspect of life each and every believer is to be filled, led and controlled by the Holy Spirit of God.

Our spiritual equivalent of a global positioning device should not be the traditionally orthodox teachings of the church, the usage of ‘proof texts’ nor even whatever appeals to our natural mind and normal way of life. We cannot rely on our conscience either, since it may be either somewhat deadened or, on the other hand, falsely sensitised. First of all, and above all else, it must be the inner voice of the Holy Spirit, who provides specific direction that is always in harmony with the Scriptures.

The Christchurch Press newspaper told of a businessman driving to an appointment in a location in Cass Bay, which is not far from the

city. He used his global positioning device even though he thought he knew just about where the street was. Well past Cass Bay, he glanced at the device. It was directing him back to where he had come from. He was 20 or 30 minutes late for his meeting!

Ignore your spiritual GPD at your peril!

To say and do what the Holy Spirit prompts is shown in the words of Jesus: ‘Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.’ – Mark 13:11

IN THE EARLY CHURCH

I believe that the following scriptures indicate that being led by the Holy Spirit was the norm in the early church.

Ac 1:1 In my former book, *Theophilus*, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach 2 until the day he was taken up to heaven, after **giving instructions through the Holy Spirit** to the apostles he had chosen.

8: 29 **The Spirit told Philip**, ‘Go to that chariot and stay near it.’

Ac 10:19 While Peter was still thinking about the vision, **the Spirit said to him**, ‘Simon, three men are looking for you. 20 So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.’

Ac 11:11 ‘Right then three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea stopped at the house where I was staying. 12 **The Spirit told me** to have no hesitation about going with them’

Ac 13: 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, **the Holy Spirit said**, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’

3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. Ac 13:4 The two of them, **sent on their way by the Holy Spirit**, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.

Ac 15: 28 **It seemed good to the Holy Spirit** and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements:

Ac 16:6 Paul and his companions travelled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been **kept by the Holy Spirit from** preaching the word in the province of Asia. 7 When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but **the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them** to.

Ac 20:22 ‘And now, **compelled by the Spirit**, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. 23 I only know that in every city **the Holy Spirit warns me** that prison and hardships are facing me.

Ac 21:10 After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 Coming over to us, he took Paul’s belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, **The Holy Spirit says**, ‘In this way the Jews of

Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.’

2Co 13:14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, **and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit** be with you all. *‘Fellowship’ is koinonia, joint participation, things held in common, shared life.*

THE DISCIPLES WERE SENT

The disciples had been led by Jesus during the three stupendous years of His earthly ministry. They went wherever He led them and wherever He sent them. For example, He sent them into the city while He waited by the well to speak with the woman of Samaria; He took three of them with Him up the ‘mount of transfiguration;’ the others stayed back at His request. On one occasion He sent them out with no change of clothing – and

that is how they went. They walked with Him, wherever He led them.

The disciples had been led by Jesus, and when He returned to heaven they continued to be led – but now by the Holy Spirit. Because being led by the Spirit was just a continuation of being led by Jesus as far as the disciples were concerned, they would have looked askance at anyone asking? How did the Spirit lead you.? It was the norm for every believer!

I recall reading many years ago of someone describing the Holy Spirit as Jesus' 'Other Self.' 'Isn't that what Jesus indicates in John 14:16,17? He said that He would ask the Father and He would give them the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit. Then He said, 'You know Him, for He lives with

you and will be in you.’ After that Jesus said, ‘I will come to you.’

These men had walked with the Lord, and been led by Him, while He was with them. They continued to walk and be led by Him who said, ‘I will come to you,’ and He did, in the person of the Holy Spirit, his other self. The difference now was that in the person of the Holy Spirit God not only dwelt among them but also within them.

All of this depicts the way we should be walking now, led by the Holy Spirit rather than by natural understanding and reason, human direction, fear of man and the like. Only thus can we experience a quality of New Testament living in which God is truly glorified as He lives His life through each one of us. This walk guarantees that at times we will be filled with surprise, amazement, spiritual

abundance, and almost overwhelming gratitude to God for His life-flow through us. A firm commitment to ‘Lean not to your own understanding’ is vital to a walk in the Spirit.

Thus far I have emphasised that *God needs a people who are constantly hearing Him*. I have also stressed strongly that *God needs people who are being constantly led by the Holy Spirit*. Why are these basic things so important?

A MISSING INGREDIENT

Did Jesus die in vain; did He rise in vain? Was, and is, the Holy Spirit given in vain? Is God here now, in vain?

What have been the missing ingredients in our present situation? **Have we been brought here for our sake, or for His sake?** Surely, first of all,

and above all, it is for His glory . . .and for his glory in the church.

Perhaps the major missing ingredient in this and in recent generations has been our need to discover how to bring people to Jesus our Lord and Saviour without the falsity that man-made church systems have brought about. Can we discover a way to plead with God for them; beseech them in Christ's name, and love them into the Kingdom? God loves a lost world – passionately? and wants to reach it through us without all the slick salesmanship and psychological pseudo-faith ways of modern multimedia churchmanship. This ingredient of reaching people is vital for God's glory, for the world's need, and for our own spiritual well-being.

I have been deeply stirred by a line sung at a 1973 Billy Graham Crusade in Texas. It is: ‘ABOVE ALL ELSE, THE WORLD NEEDS JESUS.’ Perhaps we need to repeat this a thousand times over, and more, in every circumstance and situation we face. *Above all else!!* Consider the implications of that with regard to things that you enjoy and things you value and desire.

Can heart-warming love and intense desire be intertwined in each of us with our own particular God-given gifts and talents and with Holy Spirit intervention and enduement, resulting in unbelievers finding life in Christ? Why not? *If God is God, why not?*

When Jesus says, ‘Follow Me’ what does He mean? . . . follow Him into a lovely, heart-warming fellowship of believers? NO! He wants

to lead us into a deep and beautiful fellowship with Himself and, very importantly, to become **fishers of men** as stated in Matthew 4:19.

Isn't it true that in the New Testament the love of God, the power of the Holy Spirit, the exercise of faith, and the life of the early church were all centred in sharing the good news of a crucified, buried, resurrected and glorified Christ?

Is Jesus really and truly not willing that any should perish, and yet are we largely indifferent about it?

Do you remember the poem I quoted in 'A God-Filled Nobody?' Here it is again:

O for a passionate passion for souls,

O for a pity that yearns,

O for a love that loves unto death,

O for a fire that burns.

O for a pure prayer power that prevails

That pours itself out for the lost,

Victorious prayer in the conqueror's name,

O for a Pentecost.

My very dear friends, where is the fire? Where is the passion? Where is the grieving? Where is there a triumphant certainty of faith? Where is overflowing joy? Where is the reckless abandonment of 'holy fools'?

We must each personally accept the challenge to diligently 'fan the flame' or we will

inevitably quench the Spirit!!! *‘We are all in this alone.’*

Forgive me from quoting from my youth again.
Back there we sometimes declared:

‘Some want to live within the sound of church or chapel bell;

I want to run a rescue house within a yard of hell.’

Among Scriptures precious to myself and others in those days were Ezekiel 3:20?21 and Ezekiel 33:7?9. We well understood that if we did not warn the wicked from their way, we were certainly not guiltless. **The Holy Spirit also seared Joel 3:14 into my heart ‘Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision, for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.’**

Then, there was the repeated challenge of 2 Chronicles 7:14 ‘If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.’ Note that three times our mighty God declares, ‘I will’ He says categorically, ‘If you will . . . I will.’

Isa 6:8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’ This is another Scripture used by the Holy Spirit to challenge us many years ago, and in more recent times as well. Reader, friend, can you hear Him speak to you like this? **Someone has to hear this today!**

Do we need to be crying out to God for a spiritual Tsunami??? Irresistible, overflowing love, intense conviction, fear of God? As was seen on 26 December 2004, a natural tsunami brings crushing waves that shatter and destroy. Surely a spiritual tsunami resulting from an immense love-quake in glory would bring a huge flood of love, grace and salvation. Worth earnestly seeking God for, do you think?

Is there a tendency towards a sense of comparative powerlessness and hopelessness regarding the church on one hand and the unredeemed world on the other? Might we as well shrug our shoulders, since there is nothing, we can do about it?

Is there a cry in your heart for the lost? Should there not be a conviction, hunger, earnestness,

crying out to God . . . in believers and unbelievers alike? How earnestly do we desire God's glory manifest in the earth? Don't we need a revelation and impartation to each of us of Heaven's values, priorities and sublime wonders?

READILY AVAILABLE

Ex 4:2 Then the LORD said to him [Moses],
'What is that in your hand?'

2 Kings 4:2 Elisha replied to her, 'How can I help you' Tell me, *what do you have in your house?'*

Good questions! What do we have readily available that can become a miracle in God's hands, especially with the thought of lost people all around us?

You have your homes, your families, your interests and skills, your fields or other outside areas, your musical talents, your entertainment abilities, your work associates and other contacts, plus I don't know how many other things you have readily available. You have the move to this place. We have all been given a God given capacity to love as Christ loves. We can freely and freshly give Him our lives for His present holy purpose!

Years ago, we were in a home meeting in New Zealand, with probably 25 or 30 folks involved. During the meeting a youngster piped up and said, 'Let's lift up all the chairs.' This was followed by some titters and the inevitable starting of a chorus. I slipped across to the lad and asked him to explain to me why we were to lift up all the chairs.

After he had clarified it to me, I spoke on his behalf. He had heard from the Lord.

Since we had some heavy lounge furniture, we wouldn't try to lift it. Instead, we should all cup our hands together and hold them up. Then, in our minds and hearts, we should place in our hands not only whatever furniture we had, but our homes and families, our money and other valuables, our dreams and desires, and in fact, everything we had as well as our own beings. In symbolic form we were offering to the Lord of our lives all that we had and held dear, for Him to use or not use, just however and whenever He chose. What a fragrant and significant time!

Why cannot our cry for lost people, and our recognition of the little we have in our hands be

linked by the Holy Spirit to become a conduit for the waters of life? Grant it, Jesus!

O for a startlingly new and fresh revelation, recognition and reception of life in the Spirit – New Testament style!

I yearn for days when again deep, deep Holy Spirit conviction will grip hearts when God speaks! The world needs this very desperately, and, God knows, so does His church!

If, out of an all-pervading and all-consuming love for Christ, we are not Acts 1:8 witnesses [martyrs], then we are almost certainly bound to experience periods of dryness, shallowness and inner frustration.

What has God brought us to? Why has He led us out of the ‘city’? Does John 3:16 have the answer: ‘For God so loved the world.’

THE FRAGRANT GOSPEL

2Co 2:14 **But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ *and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.*** Grant it in this day, Lord Jesus!

2Co 2:15 -16 **For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task?**

I like to add the word ‘first’ to this Scripture, thus: ‘To the [first] one we are the aroma of death . . .

Thus, we are the smell of death? the self-crucified life? to those who are being saved. Believers need to see that! On the other hand, we are the aroma of life, resurrection, Christ-filled life, to those who are perishing.’

1Co 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 1Co 1:19 For it is written: I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.? 1Co 1:20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 1Co 1:21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

Last year I received a phone call from a man who had been a deacon in a church I pastored. He was sobbing for quite a while before he could speak to me. He had just read ‘A God-Filled Nobody’ and said, ‘I want to tell you why you were the best minister, best pastor, we ever had.’ Who would guess what he would say next? Apparently, this dear brother had come into a room back of the church building and found his pastor on his face weeping for lost folk in our prime area of responsibility. Before too long the Holy Spirit gave us the key to reaching at least some of them for Christ.

Didn't I die for them?

My brothers and sisters, with an inner eye I have repeatedly gazed at streets of houses, crowded malls, car loads, bus loads, train loads, plane

loads, boat loads of people, hustling, bustling people everywhere; everywhere, people, people, people, all kinds of people, schools full, hospitals full, retirement homes full sports stadiums full. . . television pictures from around the world . . . multitudes and multitudes . . . And a voice has been ringing in my ears, It is the Lord Jesus asking with deep pathos in His voice, ‘Didn’t I die for them? Didn’t I die for them?’

Yes, He died for each and every one of them, didn’t He? May I ask a solemn and challenging question ‘WHO CARES?’ In God’s name, ‘WHO CARES?’ How much do *you* care? God have mercy on me, and may God have mercy on us all!

Let us not get side-tracked on issues like styles of meetings and all the other things that Christians

can so easily fight about. We dare not forget that ‘Above all else the world needs Jesus.’ Who will let these things burn within them? In God’s hands, even one such person in all of Ireland may make an eternal difference for who knows how many precious, precious lost people for whom Christ died. O grant it Jesus!

Surely. Surely, God needs persons who are really and truly totally committed to Him every hour of every day, enjoying an intimate love walk with Him. He needs persons who, as a habit of life, are both listening to Him and being constantly led by the Holy Spirit, living a totally self-crucified life, regardless of cost and consequence. God send the fire!

I pray that in all of our hearts there will be a deep cry to God for an amazing out-pouring of the

Holy Spirit in our cities, towns and country areas, touching friends, neighbours and fellow countrymen. I pray for triumphant faith to grip the people of God and a fear of God to come upon the populace so that ever so many individuals will turn to Christ for mercy and salvation.

There is an Indian cricket commentator with a philosophical frame of mind. I mentioned somewhere that I heard him say, ‘Some drink deeply from the fountain of life. Others just gargle.’

Here is another very thought-provoking statement he made: **‘A fallen lighthouse is more dangerous than a reef.’** Think deeply on that! God save me and you from being just that!

Let me leave you with a poem. I wrote the first two stanzas about 50 years ago. The rest has been written recently and you will see that it expresses some of what I have sought to share in this paper.

Please, Lord!

Your problems are pathways with Christ by your side;

Your trials are triumphs when He is your guide.

For He is almighty His love's without end

And He will watch o'er you, this wonderful friend.

If you serve the Saviour the Christ of the Cross,

If you trust Him truly and count all else loss,

A new joy He'll give you and peace will he send,

If He's yours as He's mine this wonderful friend.

Lost folk need the fullness of life in the Lord;

The sure hope of heaven that faith can afford.

Our need is for fire that comes from above,

For tears and for travail – hearts burning with
love.

The church needs the newness of heaven's fresh
air,

The fruit and the fragrance of Jesus so fair.

Away with the structures of dominant men,

Taste New Test'ment simplicity over again.

I lay down my life now, fill all that I lack.

The need is too urgent to hold something back.

God, please send the fire my all to consume,

That out of the ashes your glory shall bloom.

Lord save from the self-life, Lord please hear my
call

And flood all my being, Christ, be all in all.

O God rend the heavens and let the fire fall.

Prepare now your bride, Lord, and reign over all.

[by John Beaumont]

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