

LIVING EXCITED...

BY: BRAD CULLEN

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PART ONE

Foreword...

Some of this short book is quite critical of traditional, organized Christianity. The key to understanding this book is asking the Spirit of God what He wants you to do with it. Some of it may startle you, but the intent is to have it build your faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

Therefore, my prayer is that everyone that reads these pages is renewed and uplifted by them... even if initially threatened by some of the content. The only reason some of what follows may be startling is that most people who believe in Jesus Christ have never been introduced to (nor taken seriously) the fact that he said that anyone who truly believed in him would be able to perform the very same miracles that he performed.

Jesus actually provided clear instructions for being able to get to the point of performing miracles in the same manner in which he performed them. That "anyone" is me. That "anyone" is YOU. Are you ready to begin?

CHAPTER ONE FULL OF THE PRESENCE AND POWER OF GOD'S OWN SPIRIT!

How do you get there? An amazingly different answer... and approach.

Basic to Evangelical Christian understanding is that a person "reborn," by inviting Jesus Christ to take over one's life as "Lord" and "Savior," brings a new and unseen dimension to that person's life. A duality of body -- with a freshly renewed spirit.

This book is aimed at stimulating the spiritual side of our lives toward control over everything in our lives... singular control. So that we can say, along with the writer that penned, "It is no longer 'I' who lives, but Christ lives in me."

The struggle for those who stay in the Biblical "race for the prize," is to keep Spirit in control - rather than the body bags we occupy.

How does one live a life controlled by God's own Spirit, rather than continually succumbing to the yearnings of the lower (or animal) nature of the body? The dichotomy is best phrased (again, with the Biblical), "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" and, "It is no longer 'I,' but Christ," as expressions of being firmly in the grip of God's own Spirit rather than the "body bags" our true identities occupy. On the other side of the experience of that writer is the lamentation, "Why do I always find myself doing the very things that I do not want to do?" That writer's answer to his own dilemma was, "I thank God there is a way out through Jesus Christ!"

How does one come to the place of finding that "way out" of living excited in Holy Spirit power through Jesus Christ?

This little book is intended to provide some rather startling answers to that question. The answers are based on some very real experiences, grounded primarily in the fact of what the Bible clearly says about WHO Jesus Christ was and is... and WHERE Jesus Christ can be found in the NOW... this moment. In the original

language the words translated into KJV English as “eternal LIFE,” do not mean “eternal life” in the way we have traditionally accepted it. The words mean, living in the realm where there is no beginning and no ending... the Kingdom of God... in this very moment, NOW!

Let’s not rush past the foregoing paragraph. Let’s allow redundancy to flood our minds and spirits. Eternal life means entering into the spiritual dimension of the Kingdom of God now... in this moment. Living life on an entirely different basis, where all things have become new... with the old life of meaningless focus on the physical dimension behind us. The word “saved” is translated from a word that literally means re-paired or joined together again with God. If we begin to see that being joined together again means that we were together once before as members of the family of God, but have been separated -- we begin to have our consciousness expanded. We can begin to ask our Father, who am I really? Jesus’ story about the “prodigal son” takes on a whole different and personal meaning as we begin walking in absolute renewal of this expanded consciousness.

CHAPTER TWO READY FOR THE RIDE?

Meditate on the following for a few moments... We are not bodies with spirits... we are spirit beings that have decided to occupy human bodies. The rebirth process Jesus spoke of, is bringing the spirit-being (which is occupying the body) back to the family of God to which we once belonged. Joined together again.

Let’s look for a moment at some traditional recommendations for feeding the spiritual side of our existence and see why they so often fail... and what to do in order to turn the failure into success.

The three practices most often given as the means by which one becomes “more spiritual” are:

- Bible Study.
- Church attendance.
- Prayer.

Let’s take these three, one at a time, and begin to understand, that while these can most certainly be aids to developing and maintaining the spiritual side of our lives... these practices alone can also have a tendency to move a person into self-righteousness, legalism, guilt, despair and even giving up the race altogether... sometimes even in a complete break into mental illness.

One of the most shocking statistics I ever heard -- came out of the mouth of a Christian Psychiatrist who was present and a participant in a Bible discussion group of which I was involved. The doctor was a supervising physician on the staff of a large, state mental hospital: Someone asked the question, “Doctor, of the 3,000 in-patients at the hospital, how many would you say are Christians?”

His answer changed the direction of my life! He prefaced his answer with, “That depends upon how you define the term ‘Christian.’” He quickly continued with, “If you mean a person that has been brought up in what we consider to be a Bible-believing home with an emphasis on having Jesus Christ as the center of your life – with church attendance as a cornerstone of the family... the answer is about ninety-five percent.”

“Wait a minute,” a woman, the Principal of a Christian elementary school in the local area, gasped... and then asked a question that was certainly forming in my own mind, “Are you telling us that ninety-five percent of the population of that hospital are professing Christians?”

He looked thoughtful for a moment, “Well, you have to understand that the majority of the hospital population are not functioning well enough to profess much of anything... I am talking about their background. The very things that we think contribute to the spiritual and emotional well being of Christians, most psychiatrists believe these same things affect these people in a pronounced and negative way. I am a minority of one, of the psychiatrists on staff, that has a personal relationship with Christ... and they think I am in denial of reality because of it.”

Can Bible study, church attendance and prayer cause self-righteousness, legalism, guilt, despair and even giving up the race altogether - resulting in depression and sometimes even in a psychotic break? Well, we’ve heard that some psychiatrists believe that.

I believe one contributing factor may be in practicing these things with the wrong focus. But let’s go beyond a relatively few people with a Christian upbringing that experience mental illness... to perhaps a majority that are

living out their Christian profession without joy, peace and a sense of purpose that comes with being in the overwhelming presence and power of God's own Spirit.

How can we become excited about the spiritual side of our lives? Can Bible study, church attendance and prayer contribute to that excitement? Absolutely... but let's change our focus and see something clearly.

CHAPTER THREE BIBLE STUDY -- A WHOLE NEW PERSPECTIVE

Let's first look at Bible Study. Jesus actually said something that might want to make us take a second look at how we approach studying the Scriptures... and how we may want to change our focus.

"You diligently study and handle the Scriptures because you think that in and by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life."

The KJV renders the first three words of the passage, "Search the Scriptures." I had heard this used and interpreted as a command all my life to read the Bible. But Jesus is clearly saying something else.

My bottom line to Jesus' words, is that if the Bible doesn't lead you to an intimate (meaningful) and in the NOW relationship with Jesus Christ... the Scriptures have little (and perhaps even negative) value. Does the mother who drowned her five children recently in Houston, Texas... ring any bells? She was an avid reader of the Bible... and if you recall, killed her children in order to save them from Hell!

Am I throwing out the baby with the bathwater? No, emphatically not. Please note... that all my arguments related to changing our focus are right out of the Bible. Reading the Bible has enormous spiritual value... but if you know, as I know, of Christians that are steeped in the study of "The Word" and experiencing less than joy, peace and excitement of living in the presence and power of God's own Spirit... can we not truthfully say that something else might be needed?

Let's examine our traditions based on, "The Word," and take a look at where we might have been misled.

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from

[HIS] sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of [HIM] to whom we must give account." [EMPHASIS MINE]

The Word of God is a person... a HIM! This "word" in the original language of this passage is the same as what is found elsewhere,

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."

It is absolutely clear in the context that the foregoing passage is referring to Jesus Christ... in his pre-existence as Creator of the universe and everything in it! And... that this Creator became a man...

Remember what Jesus said... **"You study the Scriptures for you think that in this you possess eternal life... when all the time they point to me... but you refuse to come to me so that you can receive that life."**

We have not only missed the import of his words of how we receive this LIFE each and every moment... but have supplanted his position of being [THE WORD] with the written word. In the original, the word translated as "word" here, means "the full, or complete, expression of God." "[HE] is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart... and there is no creature hidden from [HIS] sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of [HIM] to whom we must give account..." these all refer to Jesus Christ, the Creative part of the Godhead not the Bible. [AGAIN, THE EMPHASIS IS MINE]

Here's my statement and I am in no way afraid to make it... reading the Bible has little value unless it leads us directly to an intimate, meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ!

Who is Jesus Christ? Well, we see from the above passages that in his pre-existence (prior to becoming a man) he Created everything. This is so extremely important that we want to look elsewhere in the Scriptures to get confirmation... and a little additional insight.

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.”

Suggestion: Read the verses leading up to the foregoing passage (Colossians 1:15,16) to see and understand clearly – that this reference is to Jesus Christ.

Do we see who Jesus Christ is? Read it again... He is the visible expression of the God we cannot see. Jesus Christ is the Creative part of the Godhead... that made the universe and everything in it – including the spiritual powers operating behind the scenes... and later, this Creative part of the Godhead became a man!

Now let’s immediately look at another Biblical truth – This Creative part of the Godhead became the man Jesus Christ in order to become an example of what we are to become if we truly believe. But let’s not get ahead of ourselves here...

Ask the average person who professes an intellectual belief in Jesus Christ... Who is Jesus Christ? The predominantly usual answer is the “Son of God.” Well, that’s certainly a valid Biblical answer... but it underscores part of the problem. It is a term that is an attempt to explain an inexplicable truth... the stumbling block to the learned and intelligentsia of this planet – that is, the Creative part of the US in the first chapter of Genesis, “Then God said, ‘Let US make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;’” is none other than Jesus Christ – this is what John and Paul (both Jews, steeped in the Hebrew Scriptures saw and are relating here).

Note: throughout the first chapter of Genesis... all references to “God” are from the Hebrew word (in English) Elohyim ... literally the plurality -- or many facets of God. Some Bible scholars have difficulty with the tradition of limiting this word Elohyim to the Trinity... i.e., Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Remember what Jesus said... “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth.”

To anyone that wants an expansion of the foregoing I would be willing to give my limited ideas... which may or may not clear some of this up. Is it important? Perhaps...

The word translated as “Lord God” beginning in the 2nd chapter of Genesis is from the Hebrew (again, in English) Yahweh, or some prefer Jehovah – the argument engaged in by Jehovah’s Witnesses and their detractors about which “name” is the proper rendering of the name of the “Lord God” in this passage, is quite silly when you consider that both are based on a Hebrew symbol for God... a symbol that was actually intended to be unpronounceable due to the fact that it was too sacred to speak or write!

The point the writer of the Gospel of John is making in the first 3 verses... is that the “In the beginning” of Genesis 1:1... the reference is made to Jesus Christ. Both Paul (the writer of Colossians) and John are Jews... totally convinced not just of the messianic claims of Jesus Christ... but that the actual Creative force depicted as the “Spirit hovering over the waters” in the Creative process of Genesis 1-- was none other than the same Spirit, the one that became the man history refers to as Jesus Christ. An understanding of this is what John meant when he said, “As many as receive Him, to them He gives the authority or right to become joint heirs with Him.” Part of “receiving Jesus,” therefore, is receiving WHO Jesus Christ is.

Now that we are grounded on WHO Jesus Christ is, i.e., the Creator of the universe and everything in it – WHERE is he?

The standard answer is, “At the right hand of the Father.” Yes, that is a Biblically correct answer. But again... dimly inadequate to accomplish anything in our lives. Back to the first chapter of Colossians: the mystery which has been hidden from the ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in [YOU]...” [EMPHASIS MINE] The words in the original – translated as, “at the right hand of the Father,” literally mean the accessible part. Where is Jesus Christ? In YOU! The accessible part of the Father is in YOU.

I was going through the check out stand at a supermarket. The young lady cashier... greeted me with the standard, how are you, sir? To which I responded. “perfect, how are you?”

“Don’t ask.”

“Oh, and why not?” I responded. She glared at me and said, I thought with a bit of hostility:

“Well, I can tell you one thing, I am certainly not perfect!”

I said, “Who lives inside of you?” She immediately squared her shoulders and looked right into my eyes and said: “Jesus Christ.”

“Then, why don’t you let him do the talking.?”

“Oh, that’s what you meant. Oh... yes!”

“Isn’t it amazing,” I said to her, “we have the Perfect One living in us... and we insist upon letting the enemy control our minds, thoughts and words...”

“Oh, thank you so much, I really appreciate you sharing that. I won’t ever forget it.”

...And, neither have I.

Christ in YOU! The Bible says so... If we want to claim that Jesus Christ is in us -- let us start letting Jesus Christ do our talking for us.

Another thing in this same vein... “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”

Just as we begin bringing our words into obedience to him... by saying simple things like “I am perfect...” those of us that have problems with recurring thoughts that keep us in bondage... there is a way out through Jesus Christ. Instead of going through the constant vicious cycle of “entertaining” thoughts that have a damaging effect on us... let us use the thought to change our focus. I have known people who have been freed from all kinds of “negative” thoughts by letting them become “trigger points” to transfer their focus -- thoughts of anger, bitterness, fear of sickness and disease, fantasies, etc., etc., over onto Jesus Christ. Those trapped in temptation may want to remember a promise of Jesus... “He that comes to me I will in no wise cast out.!” Further, those that are mired in guilt because of continual falling into the same temptation need to understand Jesus’ response to Peter. Peter had just asked him,

“When somebody has treated me badly, how many times should I forgive him... seven?”

“No,” Jesus answered, “Seventy times seven...”

In other words, if Jesus’ command to us about forgiving a wrong perpetrated against us by another human being and repeating the same wrong... we are to forgive that same wrong seventy times seven... or 490 times... then what is our perfect, infinite Father’s attitude toward us for continually falling into sin? The answer is, of course, forgiveness into INFINITY!

It is fitting to digress for just a moment... The English word for “sin” was an archery term that originated back in the 1100s in the foggy bogs of what is now England. An archery meet official would stand behind a tree near the target to yell out the score relative to where the arrow hit the target since it was often difficult for the archer to see where his arrow had struck the target. If the arrow completely missed the target -- the official would yell SIN!

When the translators of the King James Version of the Bible – a translation ordered by the King that was first printed in 1611, that translation was intended to be understood by the common man of England in that day... they took the word in the Hebrew and the corresponding word in the Greek that meant to “miss God” and rendered it “sin” —because the common man would understand that it meant to “miss the target,” i.e., God.

If we can get our minds around this word, “sin,” and realize that the way out of sin is to come to our Father with it – we will have taken a giant leap toward complete victory.

CHAPTER FOUR A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

I remember a business partner and friend of mine who was totally defeated by his proclivity to jump into bed with women other than his wife.

He went through the same old thing that so many Christians go through. The roller coaster ride of perceived sin and perceived righteousness. He told me it was like climbing a ladder up to a slide in a playground. Getting on the first rung was, of course, his problem. I simply told him that when he became aware of what he was doing – whatever rung he happened to be on – to invite Jesus to go with him.

He responded in the same shocked way that keeps so many professing Christians in bondage... “No! I can’t do that... in the middle of adultery?!!”

I said, “Bill, your problem is that you think that adultery is the worst thing you do. Your self-righteousness in between times is an even worse sin... because you act and think you are so pure. You have spirits of bitterness and anger that also control you. Start taking Jesus to bed with you... and then you’ll begin taking him with you in all areas of your life – and you will know victory.”

About two weeks later he called me to invite me to lunch. Shortly after we had been seated and gotten past ordering and the fussing of the waiter, he said... “I did it!”

“You did what?” I asked.

He looked at me in that honest, direct way of his – with his eyes almost penetrating through me -- “I took Jesus with me. I jumped out of the bed almost as soon as I got in... I apologized to the girl and said that I couldn’t see her any more. That was over a week ago. I didn’t want to tell you... until I thought and prayed about it. But the real freedom is that instead of anger controlling me... I take him there too. And He has shown me the truth of what you said about self-righteousness. It is so simple. Jesus really is Lord and Savior over my life now. When I stumble – He picks me up.”

Just to see how powerful this understanding can be, I shared this simple concept with a man that was so caught up in pornography that he was to a point that the only way he could experience orgasm during masturbation was to entertain a fantasy of stabbing a young lady neighbor in the neck... and when the blood came gushing out (in his fantasy) was when he could “climax.” We discussed how and when the fantasy would begin... and he trained himself to use those thoughts as “triggers” to bring the thoughts into captivity to Jesus Christ. This was obviously a quite complex problem that needed a bit more than simple mental gymnastics... but learning to get into the habit of focusing on Jesus Christ rather than the thought that led him down the road he was going – including the fear (he was terrified that it was where he was heading) of actually carrying out the fantasy by murdering his neighbor. Learning that his way of escape was to refocus his thoughts on Jesus Christ was a huge part of his post “deliverance” from the problem.

Let’s put this in capsule form. We recognize a habitual problem in our lives that begins with a thought. We recognize that thought as an enemy... and cast it down by bringing it into captivity to Christ. If we also recognize Jesus’ promise to never leave us or forsake us and that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever – and that his own command to us to forgive everyone else for the same habitual sin... and keep on forgiving them no matter how many times they repeat it... we can understand that we are not only forgiven, but have been given a way out through Jesus Christ! We will refer to this in a different way in the next chapter relative to instructions about how to pray.

To end this chapter, let’s reflect on a passage of Scripture that was clearly mistranslated by the translators of the King James Version... and some scholars believe deliberately so! and almost all other versions cling to the traditions this mistranslated version spawned.

“And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when

the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:1-8)

This one passage can provide power and freedom in your life if you will openly receive the truth... First of all, Jesus told them not to depart from where they were until they received a baptism in (of, with, -all inclusive IN-) the Holy Spirit. Then, after a few questions and answers, Jesus told them what this baptism in the Holy Spirit would mean to them... verse eight

“...But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

If you will get a reliable Greek-English interlinear New Testament you will discover something amazing. The word power in the foregoing passage comes from the word in Greek from which we get dynamite. It means, literally, miracle-working ability. Think of this now... Jesus is saying to this group of people that when they were baptized in the Holy Spirit they would receive the ability to perform miracles! A fulfillment of his earlier promise recorded in John 14:12... which so clearly says in the original... that anyone that truly believes in him will perform the same miracles that he performed and even greater miracles.

One of the things that make this passage (in Acts) so interesting is the division in doctrine between two major groups in Christendom. The group largely defined as Pentecostal and/or “Full Gospel” and/or “Charismatic” believes and preaches that this Holy Spirit baptism produces, as its main consequence, the ability to speak in languages that one has not learned in the natural sense, but in the supernatural. Another group holds the view that the main effect of this Holy Spirit baptism is the ability to talk to others about Jesus Christ. A case can actually be made for both... but either emphasis is a watering down of the real impact of this passage.

To remove all suspense from what’s coming, I will show you how to prove the following statement... the words, “...and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” properly translated in today’s American English is, “**And you will lose your own identity and others, from now to the end of time, will see (witness) my (Jesus’) presence.**”

Here’s the promised proof... the word translated as “witnesses”... is a word pronounced mar-toose (in English rendered “martus”) – it is the root word of the English “martyr.” As we all know, “martyr” refers to somebody who is so committed to a cause, that person is willing to die for it. But that is not this word pronounced “martoose.” **Martus literally means losing one’s own identity and being taken over by another.** In other words, “When Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will have the ability to perform miracles and others will no longer see you, but will see Jesus Christ.”

One of the grave difficulties in receiving the truth of this passage is not only due to the mistranslation, but the religious traditions it has fostered. Additionally, the religious people of Jesus’ day could not accept him because he did not fit their preconceived ideas of what the Messiah was supposed to be like. Let’s look at Jesus for a moment and realize that when he walked on this planet in human form, he made scathing attacks on the religious leaders of his day. Going so far as to even calling them such things as thieves, painted over markers of death and the children of snakes! He told them that their worship was literally and totally without value... because they had supplanted the word of God with their many traditions. Hardly the meek and mild view of Jesus that so many religious of today hold.

What I am saying today... a bit more gently than Jesus, I might add, is that many professing Christians cannot see Jesus Christ in a Holy Spirit-baptized person because they think Jesus Christ is supposed to meet their preconceived idea that Jesus Christ was always polite and gentle. The Scriptures reveal that view is a palpable fraud! Of course the other reason that Christians cannot see Jesus Christ in a Holy Spirit-baptized person is because the person does not realize that he or she is no longer the same person – but has actually become Jesus Christ! Think about this. Jesus said that Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth. ASK NOW! Holy Spirit is this the truth? (or should I listen to traditions made by men?)

CHAPTER FIVE CHURCH ATTENDANCE

Some Christians I know are troubled because I don’t go to church. From 1957, at the time I first invited Jesus Christ to take over my life...until 1993 -- I attended and participated in church “faithfully.” In the early eighties I was ordained (by men) and went on to be a missionary with the largest independent missionary organization in the world.

In 1987 I was invited to be a co-pastor of a church in Alaska. After much prayer and fasting I accepted the position, with some written conditions that were accepted by the “senior” pastor and the church board. The two primary conditions were these:

One, since I had been invited as a co-pastor... it wasn't unreasonable to assume a joint ministry position. I did not want to be referred to as a “pastor” period. I explained that my gifting seemed to be in the role of evangelism and teaching. Teaching particularly about how to pray to get results according to Jesus' instructions and how to go where the gift of faith was stored and how to unwrap it. Two, that when I spoke, or taught I would have the authority of the board to speak and teach whatever I was given by the Holy Spirit.

I received a letter enthusiastically accepting and even endorsing my conditions.

I later resigned and subsequently wrote the following article that I reprint here in its entirety.

Rebellion? Against whom?

I am often called a rebel because I no longer participate in what is commonly called “church.” Christians that know me are quite often bothered because I spurn their invitations to go to “worship” with them. These same ones are usually surprised to find out that I share many of their basic beliefs with them... except as regards being part of an organized church.

Is it wrong for somebody to “go to church?”

“Wrong,” according to whose standards?

Whether it is right for others to go to church is between them and God. I am most in a position of spiritual clarity when I make no judgments about, or criticize what other people do.

The question I must ask, is it right for me to “attend church?” If I were to go to church I would be in rebellion against what I believe God has called me to do... and that is between my Father and me.

Jesus asked a rhetorical question at one point in his ministry... “What is the point of referring to me as, ‘Lord,’ unless you also do as I say?”

He went on, “Those who hear the things I say, but don't do them are like someone building a house without a foundation. The storms of life come crashing against them and they quickly collapse. Those who hear the things I say and do them are building their lives on a rock. The wind driven rain and waves from the sea can crash into them, but their house stands.”

The point he was making should be clear to anyone... there is no point in referring to the deity or sovereignty of Jesus Christ unless we also do what he tells us to do!

In the past I have been ordained by men... and taught, preached, baptized, married and other kinds of “normal” church things. I tried to believe that the fact that I was referred to as an “evangelist,” “teacher,” “pastor” and treated deferentially had no effect on my “ego.”

My “rebellion” began as a result of a reaction to a series of Wednesday night Bible studies I was teaching about corporate worship. I pointed out that the author of the 14th chapter of 1st Corinthians laid out the basic blueprint for corporate worship... and it was rare to find any group that followed that scriptural blueprint. We weren't following it in our own church. I posed the question, “If we say that we are “Bible believing” and yet don't follow something so basic and so clearly outlined in the Bible... are we being hypocritical?”

As we discussed this, several people in the congregation “caught on” and wanted to move toward change. Others defended the traditional “worship” that we practiced. I wondered what to do about the seeds of discontent that I had sown among those who wanted to worship according to what they had begun to see as the “Biblical way.”

In an effort to maintain unity... I urged these, for the good of the whole, to go along with the traditional format. A rather intense young man, and recognized leader among the group that wanted to move toward change, came to me privately and pointed out a verse to me -- the words of Jesus in the original language are quite clear in their

meaning... “Your worship is worthless because of your traditions. You have rendered the word of God to be meaningless.”

He wanted my “blessing” for that group – a majority in the Wednesday night group, but a small minority in the membership of the church as a whole – to start their own church. I chose my words carefully... and basically told him that if that was what God was calling him to do, then I could hardly tell him otherwise. I did make a feeble attempt to dissuade him, nonetheless. He then shocked me by saying that he believed I should go with them and be their pastor and that they would support me financially.

I refused because it obviously put me in an awkward position with the rest of the church... especially the leadership. No matter what I did at this point was not going to keep the pot from boiling over. By facilitating a discussion, based on an open look at a passage in the Bible -- I had precipitated a church split!

One of the largest contributors in the church, whom I knew to be a closet alcoholic... who hid it well from his wife and the rest of the church... went to the senior pastor... and petitioned him to get me to stop teaching and preaching on controversial subjects. I was invited by the senior pastor to go to lunch. He told me that there had been some complaints. I asked him what he wanted me to do. “Well,” he replied, “I know that you are anointed to teach... but the practical matter is that we certainly know it isn’t God’s will to cause division in the church.” About the time he finished his little speech the aforementioned large contributor just “happened” to stop by our table and was invited to sit with us.

I realized that the meeting was contrived. We had a pleasant discussion during which it was obvious that the senior pastor was trying to smooth things over.

After lunch, he and I went back to the church where I confronted him with the fact that the meeting had been contrived and again, he said... “well it isn’t God’s will to cause division.” I asked him how he could, out of one side of his mouth, say that I had an anointing to teach and preach... and the other that I was causing division? I told him that this was a direct violation of our written agreement and I had no choice but to resign.

He pleaded with me to reconsider... but I reminded him that when I took the position that I felt called to do missionary work elsewhere... and that I had agreed that I would help him build the church temporarily... and it looked like this was the time to go do what I was supposed to do. He talked about how God had called us together and what we had been able to accomplish in such a short time. I told him that I would fast and pray about the matter and let him know. Within two weeks I was gone and we parted friends.

During the time I was fasting and praying... I stumbled across Jesus’ words to some disciples, the meaning of which in the original language is quite clear...

“Look at how the religious leaders love to pray in public and have people defer to them in the market places... and have people call them Rabbi... and how they always sit in seats of honor at feasts and weddings.

“But I say to you, don’t be like that! Don’t you allow yourselves to be called by any title that implies spiritual superiority or authority. You have one Leader and Teacher, the Christ! And don’t you refer to anyone else as your spiritual superior... you have only one Father, God! No, you are all to be just as brothers to one another and minister to one another.”

The words stung – as I realized how I loved to have people call me “pastor” and refer to me as a great Bible teacher. How I loved to sit on the platform at meetings.

I then saw what the word “pastor” meant... shepherd. Jesus said that he was the only shepherd and all others were usurpers of the title.

In the mission field to which I was sent, I began to attempt to “minister” inside the organized church... but would refuse any title... and insisted that I have the freedom to speak whatever Holy Spirit was giving me to speak.

It didn’t work... I saw that God was calling me out... Scripture after Scripture was revealed that made it obvious to me that if it were true that the Roman Catholic church was the embodiment of the “Whore of Babylon,” as many scholars on the evangelical side of things insist... then the powers of darkness influencing the hierarchy of Protestant churches, by whatever other name, were the daughters of the Whore and far more seductive and far more deceptive.

I heeded Jesus' call to "come out of her" (Rev. 18:4). Yes, it is a bit lonely out here... but I prefer it to rebellion against Him.

Let's assume for a moment that what I have written here is truth, i.e., that the organized church with its hierarchy of leadership is not merely disobedient to Jesus' own words... but stands in opposition to what he said... (or is saying). If that isn't too far to reach... then shouldn't we begin to examine the word opposition in light of something else. The prefix anti... refers to opposition. If Jesus has said something clearly, and the church by its behavior, stands in opposition to HIM... could it be possible that it is run by the Anti-Christ?

Disturbing question, is it not? Oh well, just somebody speaking rebelliously... But against WHOM? [END]

The point of including the foregoing is to share where I have been... not to discourage anyone from going to church. I believe church can and should be a school room... for people to learn those things that will build their faith and maturity for their own personal gifting and ministry... but not to become dulled into being lifeless spectators.

Listen to what the writer of Hebrews had to say about a depth of truth he wanted to explain, but couldn't.

"... of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection [this word "perfection" is translated from a word in the original that means completion] not laying over and over again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. Let us move on, if God permits."

So, are we ready to move on? Again, not to leave church... unless that is what God calls you to do... but to get off your pew and stop being dull of hearing.

The following article will complete this chapter.

THE TEMPLATE OF "PERFECTION"

The example of how to live life on earth as a human being, but in the power and presence of God's own Spirit, was brought to us by a man named Jesus – who told us how to acquire the same kind of faith he had -- the same faith with which he performed countless miracles. He not only told us how to acquire this same God-faith, but also urged us to follow his instructions to acquire it. Jesus also said that those who believe will perform the very same miracles that he performed and even greater miracles. Greater miracles because of his own God-imposed limitations. An explanation of this later.

The emphasis on religion's message that "there was only one perfect man" (past tense) has caused most Christians to ignore what Jesus actually said, i.e., that anyone who believed could actually become what he was and do the very same things he did as a man, and more... and he provided instructions for getting there.

Jesus proclaimed the perfection of God... and referred to himself as the "son of man" and, in fact, stated very clearly that he was not to be called "good."

This is not a message of denigration of who and what Jesus is in the realm of the Spirit and what he was as a human being... it is a rebuke to the religion that calls him 'Lord,' but refuses to do what he so clearly said to do... the religion, for the most part, that also does the very things he said NOT to do. More about this also later.

I want to relate a story, a true story, that illustrates what we can each become if we believe... a story that also demonstrates the limitations imposed upon us by religion.

A phone-call from an acquaintance... asking if I would meet him for coffee. I told one of my business partners, that happened to be in the office with me at the time, about the call and who also knew the man who called, and asked him if he wanted to go along with me. On the way to the restaurant, I told him what I "saw" was about to happen. My associate, Dennis, merely nodded his understanding.

The man was waiting for us, seated at a table in a very busy restaurant. He stood as we approached and offered his hand to both Dennis and I.

Without preamble, he jumped right into his reason for wanting to see us.

He briefly referred to an exciting thing that happened the day before at a local hospital where we had been, and a 15-year-old girl had been healed. He had been present because her uncle, another acquaintance of all three of us, had invited him along...

"I feel," he continued, "like I am a spectator in a stadium watching everyone else play the game while I am just sitting there. I want to know why I cannot do what you, Dennis and Jim (the girl's uncle) are doing."

I assured him that he could... but he had a problem. "In fact," I said, "I told Dennis on the way over here that you were going to be bringing this subject up... and that I felt you were ready to hear what I have to say..." He looked from Dennis to me quizzically.

"Your biggest obstacle," I said, is that you refer to some man as your 'pastor' and that man does not believe in spiritual healing. You have made him your spiritual covering and he is like a wet blanket."

He began to defend 'Pastor John' as a wonderful man who had helped him to see many spiritual truths.

"I am not criticizing John," I quickly assured him, "I am telling you about a spiritual dynamic that, in my experience, always holds true." I opened the Bible I had brought with me... and had him read aloud from several passages and he began to see the truth of what we were talking about. That Jesus referred to himself as the only true shepherd (the meaning of the word 'pastor') and that men who took on that title for themselves were usurpers and thieves. Again, Jesus said this, not I.

"What can I do?" he asked.

"You can begin," I responded, "by telling Jesus that he is your only shepherd."

He immediately bowed his head and began praying loudly, "Jesus, I want you to be my only pastor. I no longer use that title for any man... only for you!" Dennis and I looked at each other with about the same degree of discomfort at the fact that people at other tables were staring at us.

He opened his eyes and exclaimed, "Wow! Did you hear that? It was like a big blanket going whoosh away from over my head."

I laughed and told him that I hadn't heard it, but I was absolutely sure he had. I told him that was exactly what I had told Dennis on the way to the restaurant was going to happen... and Dennis quietly nodded.

"What do I do now?" He asked.

"About what?" Dennis asked.

"What do I call John?" he asked, with that same quizzical look...

Dennis said, "Why don't you just call him John?"

Later that same day he called... and asked if both Dennis and I could get on the phone... we put him on 'speaker.'

"I just had the most amazing experience," he said with no little excitement, "one of my secretaries came in and told me that she felt very sick and was going home. I asked her if she would like to get better or did she just want to go home? She told me that she would really rather stay and work, but didn't feel she could... that she was coming down with the flu. I put my hand on her stomach and said, 'in the name of Jesus, get out of her.'"

"She asked me in a very stern voice... 'what did you do?' I have to admit that I was very afraid... you know how it is with sexual harassment stuff in business today and putting my hand on a young secretary's stomach would probably give my attorney a heart attack, but I just told her that I had authority to do what I did... and that Jesus had given it to me."

She said, "It is just that I feel so good. I don't remember ever feeling this good before."

"So I told her that she could do the same kinds of things if she believed... and asked her if she wanted to invite Jesus Christ to take over her life. She said yes... and I told her he was right there in the office and to just tell him... She immediately said, "Jesus, I want you to take over my life... "she's back at work. I just wanted to share that with you guys... that you were used by God today."

Dennis leaned toward the speaker and said, "So were you – great, isn't it?"

The next morning, Dennis came into my office and told me to push line two and he put our friend on the speaker again...

After a few pleasantries, he began... "I had breakfast with John this morning and told him everything. I couldn't remember the chapter and verse of all those scriptures you had me read yesterday... but I told him everything. About the blanket being removed from over my head... and about laying hands on my secretary and how that she had invited Jesus into her life. Do you know what he said to me?"

Before Dennis or I had the opportunity to respond, he went on... "He said, 'Praise the Lord!' and then told me he had some praying to do."

We could hear some background noise over the speaker... and he told us he had to go... thanked us again... and hung up with the words, "keep up the good work... many people need to be freed up like you did for me."

Dennis said, I'm going to call him back and leave a message on his voice mail if he can't come to the phone. He picked up the phone and dialed without explaining what was on his mind... Sure enough when he asked for him, he was put right through to voice mail: "This is Dennis, and I just wanted to give you some necessary correction," he said into the mouthpiece, "We didn't do anything... you talked directly to Jesus and he was the one that set you free. I just had a strong, but gentle pull to call you and tell you that. Keep sharing what happens to you. We all benefit that way. Thanks."

Our acquaintance and his new found brother, John, are still together, founding what they refer to as "home assemblies." Yes, they both felt led to leave the formal church... and fortunately were able to do so quietly without creating any division... to go start a ministry they felt called to.

One point of the foregoing is, if you feel a call to ministry... don't look to man for approval... look to God's own Spirit for empowerment... and just because I have heard Jesus' call to "come out of her," I am not suggesting that call is universal.

CHAPTER SIX PRAYER

What follows is a very different slant of what is normally referred to as "prayer." It is based strictly on Jesus' own instructions (in the original language), instructions that include how to pray in ways that will assure that you are more and more controlled By God's own Spirit... ever increasing! That promise is an anathema to the doctrine to which many Christians are in bondage, that is, once a person has invited Jesus Christ into his or her life... they have all of God's own Spirit they will ever get. Well, if we have ears to hear, ears that have not been dulled by hearing teachers lay over and over again the foundation truths... then we are perhaps ready to move on to what Jesus actually taught about this matter of "prayer" and that for receiving more of the same Spirit that was in him... are we ready to march forward, following our Commander in Chief?

We are going to focus on two things Jesus taught... first of all, we'll look at the so-called "model" prayer of Jesus, or more commonly referred to as "The Lord's Prayer."

This "prayer" is often chanted or sung, or otherwise solemnly spoken in unison by people assembled together for "worship." Missing the entire import of why Jesus was giving the instruction in the first place. He went off by himself daily... and sometimes several times a day to be alone with the Father. One day, one of his disciples said... "Hey, how come you don't teach us to pray like John teaches his followers?"

So He said to them, "When you pray, say..."

That bit of rendering has created no little problem. The words in the original language translated into today's American brand of English... "When you speak toward God, do so emphatically! The words are so emphatic that one rather widely known preacher in a huge church near Dallas, Texas – insists that they should actually be spoken while stamping one's foot on the ground. One fellow I know... after seeing the truth of this...shakes his fist in the air. One prayer "warrior" in the church in Alaska I mentioned earlier, actually pounds on the floor... and she gets results!

So let's underscore the first part of what Jesus is saying... the word translated as "say" is often translated as "command" depending on context. Apparently the King James translators couldn't handle such an impudent lack of awe directed toward God. But you will see in the following that this is exactly what Jesus was instructing.

The words in the original are quite clear and specific...

"Our one and only, perfect Father, in the unseen realm, what You have already declared to be your purposes and desires in that realm, I speak into existence on the physical plane. I say emphatically that this shall be! In order to do this, give me the same Spirit that became the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ. And as I release everyone from my blame for wrongs I perceive they have done to me and demand that all the feelings associated with that blame be sent away... I know that I can walk in the perfect release from all blame that You have already provided for me. Lead me away from all temptation of the focus on this physical realm so that the evil one cannot affect me."

Is the foregoing literally what he said? (taken from Luke 11:1-4). Other than, "Give me the same Spirit that became the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ..." Which is only a slight stretch, extrapolating from what he said elsewhere, the answer is an emphatic, yes!

The power that comes from understanding and applying this little passage aloud (with emphasis) and privately, just as Jesus did... will transform the life of anyone that does it on a continuum... several times a day! ...and this is only the beginning!

Verse five of the same passage (Luke 11:1-13) starts out like this: "And Jesus continued to tell them how to pray..."

A bit of digression is in order here... English syntax is unique. The old movie title "Throw Momma from the train a kiss" is amusing and was meant to be so -- to Americans. Most people that understand English as a second language miss the humor because, almost universally the way that title is expressed is the way of many common languages. Americans have to do mental linguistics... and thus it sounds comedic.

Now, let's think for a moment what a legalistic interpretation of, "Throw momma from the train a kiss" might create. We need to understand that this (I've been told) is from a Hungarian maxim that literally means when a son is leaving to travel a great distance, he should always leave his mother with a kiss goodbye.

Back to the legalistic American "literal" interpretation... It implies, to get off the train, drag your mother back onto the train and then throw her off the train... and rush over to kiss her bruised and bleeding body.

This is exactly what happens to people who read a word-for-word and-word-by-word translation from Greek to English. Jesus is actually saying how to demand to get an ever increasing amount of God's own Spirit to accomplish the point of his instruction... which is to emphatically speak God's will into existence on the physical plane. But, as with "throw your mother from the train a kiss" ... the object gets muddied... or perhaps bloodied. And folks wind up feeling marvelously and properly respectful toward God by singing the first four verses of the "Lord's Prayer!" That is most emphatically NOT what it's about. Are we ready to get what Jesus was actually saying... and then applying it?

"And He said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you'? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs."

Let's examine this carefully... and see what Jesus is actually saying here. The friend you go to at midnight... is a metaphor for God. Who in this instance has to be a very good friend... so good that you can wake him and his family up to get what you need. Need for what? The other friend that showed up unexpectedly is a problem... for which you have no answer in the natural.

At first, you don't get what you want... and you interpret it as your good friend, God, saying no... initially... and when it finally is given it is not because He is your friend. It is given because of your "persistence." It is interesting that in the King James Version the word "importunity" is used. In the 1600s the word meant impudence... In the original language, the word does mean lack of awe... so impudence or importunity... is a valid translation. But the usage of the verb in the Greek also clearly indicates persistence.

Don't forget to keep your eye on the object – Jesus finishes this bit of teaching on "Prayer" by using an analogy... "What fathers among you, being less than perfect, would give a child a rock when he clamored for bread, or give him a snake when he asked for fish, or a scorpion when he asked for an egg? How much more of your perfect Father's own Spirit will he give to those who ask him."

The object is more of our perfect Father's own Spirit. We get caught in all kinds of doctrinal belief systems relative to receiving more of God's own Holy Spirit. The entire object of what Jesus is teaching here is the way to give over more and more of one's life to the power and presence of God's own Spirit. Diluted greatly through translation from the original language to the quite different syntax of English... especially to today's American listeners! "Throw your mother from the train a kiss, remember?"

Also, keep in mind that Jesus "prayed" this way daily. If the "Son of God" had to do this in order to be able to do what he did... wouldn't it follow that we joint-heirs-with-Jesus sons of God would have to do likewise? Or never attain the destiny of his promise to us that, if we believe, we will be able to do what he did.

I hope we have seen clearly that Bible study, church attendance and prayer, as traditionally thought of and practiced, have produced little... I also hope that we have been able to see how to turn failure into success... if so – let's move on.

CHAPTER SEVEN GETTING AND USING THE FAITH JESUS HAD AND USED

Probably one of the most overlooked parts of Jesus' instructions to us is about praying to receive what he had – properly translated, faith of God, or God-faith. Overlooked, again, because of translation difficulties. According to some scholars, the following narrative contains an obvious and deliberate MIS-translation into English from the original.

Jesus and the twelve were walking down the short road from Bethany to Jerusalem. On the way, Jesus became hungry. In the distance he became aware of a fig tree. He walked over to it to see if there were any figs. Nothing...

He said something a bit amazing, considering the fact that the narrative clearly indicates that it wasn't the season for figs! "Nobody is ever going to eat from you again." His disciples heard what he said.

They proceeded onto Jerusalem where Jesus created quite a ruckus in the Temple. Later on the way back Peter saw the fig tree... and remembered what Jesus had said. "Look, the tree you cursed yesterday is dead. It is withered from the top all the way to the roots!"

The MIS-translation found in most modern versions... of Jesus' response to Peter goes like this... "Have faith in God."

In the original, what Jesus was actually saying was, "You too can have this same faith... get it!" Followed by instructions about how to acquire and use the same faith that they had seen him use the day before – in the killing of a fig tree (no less). Try this today and the environmentalists will have you severely punished!

First, if we can leave behind our religious tradition and see that Jesus is providing instruction about how to get to the point to do a simple thing such as kill a fig tree, stop a storm in its tracks; cast out demons, give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf... raise someone from the dead – etc. It takes the same kind of faith he had... "God-faith" and he is saying to get it! Here's how...

The following is an accurate translation from the original into today's American English:

"Whoever experiences obstacles to getting this kind of faith... if he lifts them up, over his head and emphatically commands, 'I cast you down into the sea.' If he is not divided in his thinking by allowing negative thoughts to sway him, but continues to command and gets an image in his mind of what it will be like to get this kind of faith... and doesn't quit until he gets it... he will have it! Therefore I tell you, whatever you demand when you

“speak toward God, you will have it if you don’t stop demanding and seeing it as something that already exists... you will have it! But if you are holding a grudge against anyone... release that person from all your judgment and criticism... so that you can walk in your Father’s perfect release from all judgment. If you don’t release others you will not be able to exercise this kind of faith.”

Is the foregoing a paraphrase? No. It is a correct translation. The KJV is a paraphrase and easily proven to be so... and it is easily proven that most modern translations carry forward the same mistranslation. Some commentators insist that the translators of the King James Version were literally afraid of decapitation if they translated anything contrary to the King’s wishes... and these same commentators insist that is the reason for some of the distortions. Why do modern versions (whose translators didn’t have King James’ guards standing over them with swords so sharp they could remove a human head with a single, swift swipe) carry the same error? I believe I know why... but it would sound like speculation... so we’ll just state the things that are easily proven...

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