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## **JOURNAL OF AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY**

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### **ADDRESSING CORPORATE SIN AS A MEANS TO RACIAL RECONCILIATION**

Captain Doug Burr

America is a house divided. Divisions are evident between rich and poor; male and female; young and old; republican and democrat; educated and uneducated and of course black and white. Jesus tells us in Mark 3:24-25: "If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand." While the above list is not an exhaustive record of America's lack of unity, one item stands out as perhaps the most divisive both today and throughout our history-- race.

Though Christians believe that we all make up one body in Christ, the church is not immune from the issue of race. Churches seem polarized around the issue of race. One can often find congregations of the same denomination mere blocks from each other whose only differentiation is race. Martin Luther King, Jr. reminded us that "Sunday morning at 11:00 is the most segregated hour in America." Why is something so fundamental to our Christianity so hard for us to accomplish?

If the church in America is to become a witness to unity and racial reconciliation, we need to do more than we have been doing. Whatever our actions have been, they are not working and we cannot expect to get different results while we continue doing the same thing.

I postulate that racial reconciliation will not happen on a large scale in our churches, neighborhoods or country without first recognizing and addressing corporate sin on each level.

## I. CORPORATE SIN.

### A. Corporate Sin as a Biblical Concept.

When first hearing on the phrase "corporate sin," one might be concerned with its validity. Is there such a thing? Can a group sin and can I be held responsible for something I have not directly participated in? Doesn't the Bible tell us that each person is responsible for his own sin? One might even proffer the verse from Jeremiah 31:30: "Everyone will die for his own sin; whoever eats sour grapes--his own teeth will be set on edge."

Yes, we have committed sins for which we alone are responsible, but that does not exclude the possibility of corporate sin. We must dig deeper into the scriptures to find other references and instances which will direct us to this possibly unfamiliar notion.

#### 1. Adam and Corporate Sin.

Paul spends some time in Romans dealing with the concept of sin and how it came to mankind. "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned--" (Romans 5:12). Because Adam sinned, we have all sinned and are therefore responsible for its penalties. In other words, I stand condemned under the sin of mankind, because I am a member of mankind. I have participated in the sin of my group by just being a member of that group. In fact, it has become my nature to sin and I am not only responsible for the group's sin, I now add to it and compound it! Praise God, Jesus came to deal with this problem! Yet would He have had to, if we were not all held in the bondage of sin's grip and the responsibility was not a

corporate one? Consequently, I think we should look at sin and our responsibility for it, in a little different light!

Nevertheless, we cannot stop here, for if corporate sin is biblical, then there must be examples available for us to review.

## 2. The Sins of Our Fathers (Generational Sin).

The Old Testament is replete with references of God holding the sins of the fathers against the children. Let's look at just a few examples:

"Great is the Lord's anger that is poured out on us because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written in this book" (2 Chronicles 34:21).

"Our fathers were unfaithful; they did evil in the eyes of the Lord our God and forsook him. . .Therefore, the anger of the Lord has fallen on Judah and Jerusalem;" (2 Chronicles 29:6-8).

"What wrong have we done? What sin have we committed against the Lord our God?' then say to them, 'It is because your fathers forsook me,' declares the Lord" (Jeremiah 16:10-11).

"Our sins and the iniquities of our fathers have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us" (Daniel 9:16).

So, we discover that corporate sin is not a new idea, but one whose foundation is evidenced in the history of our Christian faith. We cannot stop here either. It is important that we continue to expand our understanding of corporate sin.

When sin is committed, a penalty must be paid. It may not be exacted immediately, but God will see closure. Either we will pay the price or we will ask God's Son to cover it with His blood. Until one of the above happens, God's books are not balanced. God is gracious and slow to wrath and gives us every opportunity to repent. However, if sin goes on without correction, it will be passed down through the generations and those who were not directly involved will be held accountable.

With a little effort, we can look closer at our communities and discover prevailing issues that our ancestors have caused. The problem is, the connections are not always blatantly obvious. What are the kinds of things that develop into corporate and generational sins?

#### B. Historical Causes of Corporate Sin.

Many individual sins, if left unchecked, can develop into corporate sins. Perhaps we can include every conceivable sin. For this paper, we will group them all into three categories.

##### 1. Atrocities and Injustice.

God is particularly concerned with justice and fair treatment. Even more so with those less fortunate. Deuteronomy 24:17 is one such scriptural example: "Do not deprive the alien or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge." When an atrocity or injustice takes place, it severely grieves God. If it continues or is propagated among the people of an area, it rises to the level of corporate sin.

Perhaps an Indian massacre took place in the early history of a community.

Usually, the community never addressed these situations and they eventually drove the Indians out of the area and off their own land. The general Indian practice was to curse those who committed such atrocities and those curses are real, long-standing and now deep-rooted. These situations are causes of corporate sin.

Perhaps in the 60's, a racial injustice happened connected with the black community. An event of this nature is a stench in God's nostrils and causes His anger to flare up against a community or area. This can be seen in Red Bank, New Jersey (a previous appointment) with a visible dividing line through the middle of the city. Railroad tracks physically divide the black community from the white community. Again, corporate sin grows out of these circumstances.

## 2. Idol Worship.

The first two of the ten commandments deal with God's concern about putting other things ahead of Him. He wants no other Gods before Him and he wants no idols worshiped. In some ways these two commandments are similar, in that idols are often physical images of demonic spirits. Real spirits are hiding behind these things! They want to usurp the role of God in our lives and communities.

When Jesus speaks about not being able to serve both God and Mammon, we usually understand Him to be speaking about money. Yet the Greek word means "wealth, personified." In other words, a demon either named "Wealth," or one that takes on the characteristics of wealth in our lives.

We cannot serve two masters. If we make a choice to serve God, we will have nothing to do with others. If we choose to worship another master, be it wealth (Wealth), Satan, education, Shiva, Buddha, et al, we also choose not to serve God. This choice pushes God out of our lives. If enough people follow this

pattern, the corporate sin of idol worship moves people away from what God has planned for a community. Eventually, the community may be seen as a "spiritual" place, but one that is very intolerant of the true God and Christianity.

The city of Red Bank, New Jersey is known for its tolerance of new age beliefs and practices. Shops are all around the area and we are considered a very spiritual place where one can come for your fortune, holistic healing, etc. This is idol worship at its worst and the Christian church of the area is struggling to keep its head above water. The community at large does not welcome the one true God.

### 3. Allowing a Particular Sin to Prevail.

As we can see with the above two examples, any sin that is allowed predominance in an area can develop into a corporate sin. Some have often noticed how particular sins seem to aggregate in certain areas. One place is known for many sexual sins against children; one is known for its violence; another for a particular criminal activity. The list goes on and on.

When the authorities, the church or the general public overlooks these kinds of things (or don't fully deal with them), they will grow into a kind of demonic feeding frenzy. The longer these sins go without repentance, the greater the stronghold that develops over the people living in the area. The stronger the hold, the harder it is to resist getting swept up in the specific sin.

With this information as a background, we are now able to move into the process to uncover corporate sins.

## II. EXEGETING A COMMUNITY.



To understand what is going on in a community, one must begin a procedure of looking critically at that community. In his book, "Empowering the Poor," Robert C. Linthicum helps us see that too often the church comes into a neighborhood deciding what is best for them and then embarking on a project to fix things. This is usually done with very little study or deep understanding of what factors have made this community what it is. How we can come to the conclusion that we have all the answers without even looking for specific problems is beyond me!

In this section, we will develop a process that can be used in any community to understand what is really going on and open our eyes to see the true picture.

#### A. Study the Present.

To some extent, this is what any church or social change group does as it enters a community. However, I believe this is a more important step than just going through the neighborhood with a survey sheet, developed with a conclusion already in mind or with the purpose of proving your particular ministry is necessary. There is much more to it than that.

##### 1. Observation.

Observation entails getting an accurate image of what the community currently is. While many ways are available to observe what is going on in a community, we must include these three important components.

##### a. Walk Around.

This is a good place to start. Get a map, get familiar with it, then spend time (lots of it!) walking around your community. One cannot get to know a community from a distance. We must get our information first-hand. An authenticity comes with

being there in person that we cannot glean from any other source. Take notice of anything that catches your attention and take notes.

b. Look for Opposites.

Look for things that are happening that are opposites of Godly characteristics and desires. If Satan is in control, one of the things he does is direct a community (or person, for that matter) away from God's purpose and desires for that community to the opposite. Often it is obvious, when we are looking for it. For instance, if we find much brokenness and hurt in a community, perhaps God's design is for it to be a place of healing.

This is based on the concept that God has a redemptive gift(s) for every city. Like spiritual gifts for individuals, redemptive gifts reveal God's plan and purpose for a city. Knowing God's specific design for a city is important in directing our prayers to be in line with God's will.

c. Prayer-walk.

While some praying can be done while walking around, I recommend prayer-walking be done as a separate step. Prayer-walking is defined as "praying on site, with insight" and we need to have good information about the area before we begin to pray seriously. Prayer-walking allows God to speak to us about specifics relating to places or people and can even develop into a vital evangelistic effort.

Still, these things alone are not enough to fully learn what is going on in a community. Once we familiarize ourselves with the physical area, we then need to dig deeper in other ways.

2. Research.

This step is where we put some of our walking experience to work combining it with what we can get from other resources and people.

a. Talk to People.

You're not the only one who has learned something about your community. Talk to others about their insights. Glean from their experience and knowledge. Include people who have any kind of connection with your community. The more varied the people we talk with, the wider the useful information we will gather. One should keep a notebook of contacts and conversations.

b. Listen.

While talking with people, really listen to what they have to say. Keep your "ear to the ground" and pick up as much information as possible from as many sources as can be found. We may deem much of what we hear gossip or useless, but we can weed it out later.

c. Read Current Area Papers and Publications.

Finally, get your hands on all the community newsletters, social action group publications, political brochures and newspapers available. These are loaded with a wide variety of information that will possibly prove invaluable to your research.

Now that we've armed ourselves with all the current information we can possibly find relating to the community, it's time to begin looking at what has gone on before.

B. Study the History.

Since this paper addresses corporate sin and corporate sin develops in the past, we must look back to discover the things that have happened that caused the current situation of our community. There are at least three ways to do this.

### 1. Formal, Written History.

Go to the library. Look over the selection of books about the history of your community. I am sure there will be many. Perhaps you can find a local historical society that can provide help also. As you read, remember that history is always colored by the author and his purpose for writing. Therefore you may need to read between the lines. I find it rare that you will find references to instances of social injustice or mistreatment of immigrants. Of course, you will find the large events that made the headlines, but smaller incidents were usually kept quiet. These things

will be harder to find and yet they can be the very things that should be addressed.

### 2. Informal, Oral History.

Now we move back to talking with people. Look for people who have been around for a long time. The elderly often have many great stories and are only too willing to share them with anyone! What a great way to incorporate friendly visitation with their need to share the past. Let them know how beneficial their input will be for your project.

Their information will be invaluable. They will remember the things that didn't get printed in the books and papers. Their stories will fill the gaps that developed in your historical reading.

### 3. Revelation by the Holy Spirit.

With all your research, you will still not be able to find everything. Quite possibly you will not even be able to find the very things which need addressing the most. The advantage of the Christian, is that you have the resource of the Holy Spirit to guide and direct you to very specific information that you cannot conceivably find anywhere else.

Spend time in prayer alone and in groups asking God to show you what He wants you to know. Always taking the time to listen carefully for His leading. Look for confirmation from others so that you don't end up chasing your own imaginations.

In Red Bank, we have received much special information from the Holy Spirit. In interdenominational prayer groups we have placed these findings before the group for discernment before we act on them. Nevertheless, always wait for God's timing and leading before stepping out in any action.

### C. Spiritual Mapping.

Spiritual mapping is one of the most important things you will do before racial reconciliation can effectively take place. You have already begun collecting data and information about what is (and has been) physically happening in your community. This should continue, but on a different front-- the spiritual dimension.

What is Spiritual Mapping? George Otis, Jr. defines spiritual mapping in this way:

"The discipline of diagnosing the obstacles to revival in a given community. Through fervent prayer and diligent research, practitioners are able to measure the landscape of the spiritual dimension and discern moral gateways between it and the material world."

Since this is not really a treatise on spiritual mapping, I will keep this section brief. I have listed some reference books in the bibliography which will give further information if and when God sends you in this direction. For this paper, my two main points are:

#### 1. Discerning What God is Doing.

The assumption in spiritual mapping, is that we "go around looking for the evil the devil is doing" in a community. While this is partially true, the first step is to "go around looking for the good God is doing" in a community. All spiritual warfare must begin with God's design and plan.

Unfortunately, many churches in any given community are woefully unaware of what God is doing outside their own doors and inward-looking self-interests. While God's work in any particular church is important, it is only a small piece of His work in the greater community. There needs to be a connection to the larger body of Christ in a community. God's plan is bigger than any single church. His plan always includes His entire body. This problem has grown so large in the church today that it usually develops into a generational sin of the church against the community.

The solution takes the form of united meetings of various kind. Prayer meetings, praise meetings, worship meetings, dinner meetings-- any way to get the larger body of Christ to share in the greater picture. In these ways, individual churches can stop "navel-gazing" and focus on God's greater plan. Focusing on the forest instead of the trees makes for a totally different kind of picture.

Connectivity and unity in the church bring about the reality of God's purpose and plan for a community. Christians begin to truly discern what good God is doing in

a community. But, whether we like it or not, the other half of this process, is in fact:

## 2. Discerning What Satan is Doing.

Spiritual mapping (or spiritual warfare, for that matter) is not about glorifying the devil's work. Ignoring Satan is usually just what he wants!

The Scriptures tell us to be wise and discerning of the enemy's tactics against us. How can we fight in any battle if we are unaware of what the enemy is doing or planning?

Looking at information already gathered, you can begin putting together the puzzle of the devil's work in your community. You will find that current situations are direct results of past activities and events. You will also find that Satan works hard to direct the entire area to the very opposite of what God wants. Racial issues and divisions do not just happen. The master of evil has planned and orchestrated them. He has much patience and is willing to wait long periods (even over generations) to see his desires accomplished.

## III. RACIAL RECONCILIATION.

The purpose of all the previous information is to lead us to racial reconciliation. The final section of this paper will hopefully put that material into the perspective of bringing racial groups into Christian harmony within a community.

### A. Racial Reconciliation as a Mercy Ministry.

"True mercy ministry connects solid Biblical theology with the needs of people" (Howard Olver). With this understanding in mind, we can readily fit racial

reconciliation within the boundaries of mercy ministry. People need to be reconciled and God has given His people the ministry of reconciliation.

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). We not only need to be reconciled to God, but also to each other.

Within the framework of reconciliation, I believe three points stand out.

#### 1. Commitment & Tenacity.

Reconciliation of any kind takes a serious commitment. So many wounds have been caused between different races that there is very little trust on which to build any kind of relationship. Any attempt to reconcile racial issues that has not counted the cost or seriously dedicated itself to sticking with it through repeated breakdowns is doomed to fail. Since the issues that have caused the problems are long standing and deep-seated, there is no such thing as a quick fix. There will be false starts. There will be times when you have actually moved backward, away from your goal. There will be times when it will be easiest to cut your losses and go away to lick your fresh wounds. Misunderstanding and poor communication are two of the devil's most effective tactics. He is good at creating them and he also uses them often!

Spencer Perkins and Chris Rice speak of the "no-quit" policy in their church's pastoral relationship: "In order to maintain unity among ourselves as co-pastors,



each of us must be confident that the other two will not decide on their own to walk away. This confidence is essential for survival."

To effectively begin the process of racial reconciliation, each person involved must be able to make a lasting commitment to the long haul.

## 2. Spending Time Together.

There is no other way to get to know someone than to spend time with them.

Any person can seem uninterested or non cooperative if we never spend time with them. Your mind begins to run away with thoughts that eventually have nothing to do with the actual person or situation at all. Spending time together breaks down those walls of separation and allows us to get to know each other as we really are. Satan can't keep us apart, if we keep spending time together.

It is much the same as a marriage relationship. With little or no time together, the relationship deteriorates until it seems it cannot be managed at all. We are all aware of marriages that have ended in divorce because the couple has just not spent much time together.

## 3. Addressing Felt Needs and Political Needs.

There are needs that are real and there are needs that people just think are real. However, to them, the difference is negligible. These are called felt needs. If we are to make any inroads in our relationships with other races, we need to take time and seriously deal with any needs that the other group sees as important.

Often, these felt needs are a direct result of a lack of communication or misunderstanding. Either way, our idea of what is important must take a back seat

to the concerns of the other group. In addressing felt needs, it becomes obvious that there is a serious commitment to making reconciliation work.

Some of these felt needs will show up in the political arena. We must address these issues as well. All too often, minorities take the brunt of political forces in a community. Usually, that white community (Christian or not) is oblivious to these situations. Robert Linthicum's book, *Empowering the Poor*, is a great resource for further information about the political needs of a community and its people.

## B. The Church's Role.

The Christian church has other unique areas of input into racial reconciliation that we should mention. While many of the items above can sometimes include those outside the Christian community, these next two are "Christian-specific."

### 1. Christian Unity.

Jesus prayed to His Father in John 17:23 that the world would have a witness to the true unity of mankind within His body of believers. "May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

It is God's created intent that all mankind be united in brotherhood and love. We are to be an example to the rest of the world. Unity within the church is God's special illustration to those who have yet to find His great love and acceptance for them. Outreach to our communities cannot effectively begin before we are truly united within.

Unfortunately, this is an area in which we are sadly lacking. Until we can agree to place racial, doctrinal, national, cultural and many other issues behind our

brotherhood in Christ, we have no witness to the world and we are better off not even trying to preach to them. We must clean house first and remove the log in our own eyes before we can see clearly to work with the world's mote. In fact, we should practice the ideas and suggestions above within the church first before we move outside our doors into our neighborhoods.

## 2. Spiritual Warfare.

This is war! And the Christian is no stranger to the battle. Ephesians 6:12 reminds us: "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." In all our attempts to claim reconciliation, we must remember that we are not fighting against people-- we are fighting against the one who has set himself up against God and all mankind.

It is the Christian's place to do battle in the heavenlies for his community. We should make great effort to gather interdenominational prayer groups for this express purpose. Prayer works and it is our greatest weapon against any plans Satan has laid for our communities. Make no mistake. Racial reconciliation is not a party. The struggle will be great, but victory is assured, if we pray and stand our ground.

Many books deal in detail with spiritual warfare. Some are included in my bibliography.

## C. Identificational Repentance.

While John Dawson is perhaps one of the most known writers in Identificational Repentance, George Otis, Jr. has given us a very precise definition:

"A two-stage intercessory action that involves: (1) an acknowledgment that one's affinity group (clan, city, nation or organization) has been guilty of specific corporate sin before God and man, and (2) a prayerful petition that God will use personal repudiation of this sin as a redemptive beachhead from which to move into the larger community." Let's briefly look at each of these two sections.

### 1. Acknowledgment that One's Group has been Guilty of Sin.

Scripture tells us that the first step we need to take in our salvation process is that of acknowledging our sin. "All have sinned..." and I am no exception because I am a part of the human race. My sin is what has caused God grief and I need to take ownership of it and repent. This is true in the larger corporate sense too.

I've heard it said recently: "I've never done any of those things to blacks. I Can't repent for things I've never done!" Unfortunately, this person doesn't realize that when a black person looks at them, what they see is a white person-- and white people are the ones who have sinned against them.

I take ownership in being a member of the white race. Because I am white, I have an ownership in white sin against blacks. I must come to grips with my group's articulation and take proper ownership. This is the "corporate" in corporate sin.

### 2. The Petition God Uses to Forgive the Sin.

When we repent of our sin, God is ready, able and willing to forgive it. This is true in both the private sense and the corporate sense. Instances where God used the repentance of the group to forgive sin are numerous in the Bible. Here are a few:

" 'But if they will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers--their treachery against me and their hostility toward me, which made me hostile toward them so

that I sent them into the land of their enemies--then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their sin, I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land"

(Leviticus 26:40-42).

"On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth and having dust on their heads. Those of Israelite descent had separated themselves from all foreigners. They stood in their places and confessed their sins and the wickedness of their fathers. They stood where they were and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for a quarter of the day, and spent another quarter in confession and in worshipping the Lord their God" (Nehemiah 9:1-3).

"Let us lie down in our shame, and let our disgrace cover us. We have sinned against the Lord our God, both we and our fathers; from our youth till this day we have not obeyed the Lord our God" (Jeremiah 3:25).

"O Lord, we acknowledge our wickedness and the guilt of our fathers; we have indeed sinned against you" (Jeremiah 14:20).

When we identify with our group and corporately repent of our group's sin, God brings healing and forgiveness. What better way to realize racial reconciliation, than through forgiveness of the sin(s) that caused the division in the first place?

#### IV. CONCLUSION.

Yes, America is a house divided, but America has the opportunity to correct this division. By taking ownership in our corporate role of sin against various races and repenting, we can finally clear the slate and reconcile generations of

differences. However, it cannot start in the larger community. The church needs to recognize and deal with our own sins against our own and return to the way God designed things to be--reconciled brother to brother. Addressing corporate sin is a means to racial reconciliation.

Second Chronicles 7:14 says it best: "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."

May we be the example God has called us to be in the world He has placed us to live in harmony!

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## **JOURNAL OF AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY**

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### **Structures Must Be Functional**

by Commissioner Wesley Harris

IT SEEMS unfair! Our bands and songster brigades can repeat their pieces again and again without any adverse comment. but I have found that if I as a preacher have dared to repeat an illustration I have been liable to be taken to task, at least by my family. 'Dad, not that one again!' has been the lunch time comment!

However I have taken comfort in the fact that our Lord probably repeated good illustrations and Paul certainly did. More than once the good apostle likened the church to a human body with its different parts having various functions to fulfil. He said, in effect, that it takes all sorts to make a Church.

Now I think we might extrapolate from his illustration something which Paul certainly worked out in practice.

In the human body the skeleton is of great importance. Without it we would be in poor shape! We would be all over the place in fact. And very early in the piece it was realised that the Church also needed structures to give it form and enable it to be effective. Without them it might not even have survived.

Paul helped to put many of those structures in place and stressed the importance of having the right people and procedures in place so that the Church could fulfil its God-given mission.

Let those who will disparage order and organization but history is not on their side. George Whitfield may have been a more eloquent preacher than John Wesley bur

the latter's influence was probably more lasting because of his ability to organise class meetings and societies for those who came under his ministry.

William Booth was a visionary and a fiery preacher but many of the permanent results of his work were secured by the organising genius of his son Bramwell, our second general who put structures in place.

William Booth was a pragmatist who said that in building the structures of the Army he and his helpers learnt more from the military than from the historic churches. The important thing was to find what worked. Structures had to facilitate the mission and not the other way around.

In the human body bones can become worn. Joints may stiffen and we may get twinges in the hinges! Sometimes there may even be the need for an operation to replace a joint in order to ensure effective movement. So too the ancient structures of the Church (including The Salvation Army) may sometimes need surgery although it may be good to bear in mind the old adage, 'If it 'aint broke don't fix it'. Not all that is old is outworn any more than all that is new is necessarily an improvement.

Paul used his favourite illustration in addressing the Christians in the sinful, seaport city of Corinth. Some of them were inclined to do their own thing and needed control. Paul saw them not only in a local church but as part of the Church Universal, the Body of Christ in the world. Diversity shouldn't mean fragmentation. The Apostle said that there were some rules which applied to ALL the churches.

It is the same with some of our structures today. We often gain great community acceptance because of the good work done by the Army at large and, of course, we draw strength from the wider Church. But by the sake token we have



obligations which go beyond our own centre or congregation. No church lives to itself and certain no Army corps or centre.

For a period I was a member of the Advisory Council to the General and from time to time we were asked to review Orders and Regulations to ensure that worldwide Army structures were kept up to date. Drafts of proposed changes were sent to territories and commands around the world so that local implications could be assessed. Then there was further consideration by the Council before proposals were presented for the General's approval. In other words, many leaders sought consensus in the Spirit to ensure that changes to structures would maintain the unity of the Movement while recognising its diversity.

Our structures must facilitate and not hinder our mission. Under the Spirit's guidance they must maintain cohesion and effectiveness and keep the Movement moving! But what is our mission?

It is to glorify God. The first recorded words of a Salvationist in Australia were those of John Gore at a meeting in Adelaide in 1880. He shouted, 'Glory to God!' The vibes were picked up by Edward Saunders and the two men started the Army. The first aim of our Movement must still be to honour God.

Then we are called to reach out to others. Every corps exists for those who don't belong to it as well as those who do. In some cases there is need to turn more of our mirrors into windows, to look out on a needy world. Salvationists should be people with a passion and our passion should be people - all kinds of people who need serving and saving.

Finally, our mission is to promote the holiness of God's people. To make a difference we need to be different and by the grace of God we can be.

Our structures are important but they must serve the true purpose of the living Body of Christ.

## **JOURNAL OF AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY**

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### **Bridge Builders**

By Geir Engoy

Whatever forever...

Thousands of young Salvationists had gathered in London's Trafalgar Square for the nation wide Corps Cadet rally. The media was in place with cameras and microphones. One journalist randomly chose a 15-year-old-girl out of the crowd to represent them all on her program. "So, what do you believe?" asked the inquiring reporter. "I haven't the foggiest," replied the smiling youngster, "but we have a great time!"

Is there any contradiction between knowing what one believes and having a great time? Do you feel better for being affirmed in the following: When William Booth penned "O, Boundless Salvation", there were 17 more verses, but Bandmaster Charles Fry objected; "Not on my nelly can we play that heavy tune that many times, cut it down, I beg you please, Gen'rl Sir!"

Let us never forget those trailblazing words spoken by the Coachmaker's Daughter from the bleachers of the New Methodist Connexion Camp Meeting; "Give me that barrel in front of the Lame Beggar for a pulpit and watch me preach!" To which the Rev. William Booth so swiftly replied; "Come on down, babe, we're outta here!"

It is shocking that modern Salvationists are so ignorant of the Founder's objections to organized religion. Anymore, you can't find anyone in our corps to list even five of the 95 theses he had George Scott Railton nail to Archbishop's door upon arrival with his wife and her three sisters at John F. Kennedy Airport.

A practically forgotten fact is that before California became the state of California and part of the United States, the Salvationists in the area called their corps "missions" which was in line with the Spanish costumbre in the New World. It was only when the Manifest Destiny politics of Washington changed the country on them that the Salvation Army's work in California became "cross-cultural" - in an effort to accommodate the darkly uniformed white intruders under the rally cry "Remember Clapton Congress Hall!" Many missions may still be found throughout the old West, but they bear little resemblance to modern Army buildings, though the architectural--championed by Ensign Frank Lloyd Wright, Sergeant Major of Special Projects-- is currently seeing a revival.

It was only by a slim margin in the St. Augustine, Fla., Corps Council that the walls of the Castillo de San Marcos were erected. Mr. Mark "Marcos" Flagler, the Army's great benefactor at this, our longest continually operated corps in North America, felt it was more in line with the evangelistic philosophy of The Salvation Army not to erect walls to keep out the seekers (mostly French soldiers and Cuban immigrants), but he bowed to the demands of democracy.

Contrary to outside-of-the-Army popular opinion, Goodwill stores were not started in order to give Army Thrift Stores competition to increase the quality of their service. This unfounded rumor also falsely claims what any amateur sleuth would reject; "Goodwill" is not a play on the Founder's name.

OK, so I made up, reshuffled facts and fiction and exaggerated (most of) what you just read. And today you may get by without "having the foggiest" about other languages, ethnicities and cultures, and still have a good time. But when Jesus met with Nicodemus, who was "Israel's teacher and did not understand these things" (John 3:10), He expressed surprise at Nicodemus' ignorance. His concern was not Nicodemus flunking a pop quiz on naming Jacob's sons or the

spelling of Habakkuk. His failure was to understand how a person gains eternal redemption.

Let's permit ourselves to be ooh'ed and aah'ed by the things we have started to take for granted. Fundamentally, this deals with what God has done in the world and personally in our lives. It calls for us to get the facts straight, to be students and practitioners of the Word; somewhat along the lines of the new Christian who was "wowing" his way through early morning personal devotions. His friend asked him what he was reading. "Genesis." came the reply. "What's so great about that?" "God just created the world, man!"

Believe, and have a great time!

## **JOURNAL OF AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY**

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### **CONFRONTING THE SPIRIT OF LEVIATHAN**

Todd Bentley

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In the last few weeks in prayer, I have come up against a spirit called Leviathan. I have recently heard other ministries talk about this spirit. One pastor recently in a vision saw this serpent crawling into the church basement. I believe this demonic power works hand in hand with the spirit of Jezebel. Some have even had a vision of them both hand in hand. When we get victory over Jezebel we need to watch out for this Leviathan spirit. There are only a few direct references to this spirit in the scripture, but as I have studied out these passages I have received some revelation on how this spirit attacks. Who is Leviathan? How do you expose and counter attack his assaults?

We have in the book of Job 41 and the first 6 verses of Job 42 a large portion of scripture on this spirit. The first thing I want to establish in this article is, who is Leviathan? I believe that this spirit is a principality not just a demon and primarily attacks ministries.

#### DEFINITION OF LEVIATHAN

The transliterated Hebrew word for Leviathan (livyathan) means, "twisted," and "coiled." In Job 3:8, (Revised Version, and marg, of Authorized Version), it denotes the dragon which, according to Eastern tradition, is an enemy of light.

In Job 41:1 the crocodile is meant; in Psalms 104:26 it denotes "any large animal that moves by writhing or wriggling the body, the whale, the monsters of the deep." This word is also used figuratively for a cruel enemy, as some think "the Egyptian host, crushed by the divine power, and cast on the shores of the Red Sea" (Psalms 74:14) As used in Isaiah 27:1 "leviathan the piercing [RSV 'swift'] serpent, even leviathan that crooked [RSV marg, 'winding'] serpent."

#### LEVIATHAN IS NOT A DEMON BUT A PRINCIPALITY

When we read Job 41 and other passages that we will look at in this teaching, it will be clear that unlike popular belief, that maybe this Leviathan was a dinosaur, or as the scripture describes in Ps 74:14 and in Job 41:1: "as a large sea monster of unknown identity". I believe that this creature is more than Ogo Pogo or some Lock Ness monster.

Leviathan is a demon principality not just a demon spirit. Lets look at a few verses;

Job 41:1 "Can you draw Leviathan out with a hook?"

Job 41:10 "No one is so fierce that they would dare stir him up."

Job 41:26-32 "If one lay at him with the sword, it cannot avail; nor the spear, the dart, nor the pointed shaft. He counteth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee; sling stones are turned with him to rubble. Clubs are counted as stubble; he laugheth at the rushing of the javelin. His under parts are like sharp potsherds; he spreadeth as it were a threshing wain upon the mire. He maketh the deep to boil like a pot; he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment. He maketh a path to shine after him.

It is clear that natural weapons cannot destroy him. Isaiah 27:1 “In that day the Lord with his severe sword, great and strong, will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisted serpent, and he will slay the reptile that is in the sea.”

It will take the sword of the Lord to overcome this Leviathan; it is more than just a natural large sea mammal.

I believe that the primary purpose of the spirit is to attack ministries.

PS 104:25-26 “This great and wide sea, in which are innumerable teeming things, living things both small and great. There the ships sail about; there is the Leviathan which you have made to play there.”

When the scripture speaks about the Leviathan, it is always in the sea or in the rivers. The Egyptians both feared and worshiped this creature. They feared him in ancient Greek mythology as the “God of Chaos” and also worshiped him as the great serpent in their rivers responsible for prosperity and good business. The Egyptians believed they had created the rivers just because they learned to use it. This pride was one of Egypt’s greatest sins.

I asked God about this verse in Psalm 104 and He showed me the sea is a picture of the

“Sea of humanity” the world. In Isaiah 27:1 it is clear that when God is speaking about Leviathan in the sea He is speaking about the enemy nations of Israel in the world. This serpent like creature or as some believe crocodile that lived in the Nile, is seen along side of the ships.



Psalm 104:26 “There the ships sail about; there is the Leviathan. Ships are prophetic of merchants and business.”

I believe ships are ministries those who are at labor in the “sea of humanity”. This spirit wants to destroy ministries, especially those at labor in the harvest. This spirit wants to destroy and bring down ministries and as we will see he will do it with his greatest weapon, his tongue.

#### WHO IS LEVIATHAN?

It is clear in the bible that Leviathan is a serpent snake like creature. Isaiah 27:1 “In that day the Lord with his severe sword, great and strong, will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisted serpent, and he will slay the reptile that is in the sea.”

Psalm 74:13-14 “You broke the heads of the sea serpents in the waters. You broke the heads of Leviathan in pieces.”

I also believe that Leviathan was like or even was a crocodile (Job 41:2) “because of his crashings they are beside themselves,” (Job 41:14-15) “who can open the doors of his face, with his terrible teeth all around? His rows of scales are his pride.”

It is interesting that not only did Egypt worship this Leviathan but also that Pharaohs crown had the emblem of a large serpent with a ruby in it. There is a connection in Ezekiel to this principality, Egypt and Pharaoh.

Ezekiel 29:3-5 “Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great monster that lieth in the midst of his rivers, that hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself. And I will put hooks in thy

jaws, and I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy scales; and I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers, with all the fish of thy rivers which stick unto thy scales. And I will cast thee forth into the wilderness, thee and all the fish of thy rivers; thou shalt fall upon the open field; thou shalt not be brought together, nor gathered; I have given thee for food to the beasts of the earth and to the birds of the heavens.”

In Job 41: 2 the scripture speaks about hooking the jaw of Leviathan. In Ps 74:14 it speaks about Leviathan being food for the people and the inhabitants of the wilderness. In Ps 104:26 it is clear that Leviathan is living in the sea and rivers.

I believe that this principality worked through Egypt and Pharaoh and even helped to make Egypt what it was. What is clear in Ezekiel 29: 3-5 is the connection between Pharaoh and Leviathan. We will look a little bit later at the connection between Egypt and Leviathan in helping us understand how the spirit gains access, attacks and what we can do to overcome him.

#### LEVIATHAN'S SEVEN HEADS

Ps 74:13-14 “You broke the heads of the sea serpents in the waters. You broke the heads of Leviathan in pieces. You broke the heads of Leviathan in pieces.”

It was recently pointed out to me in my studies on Leviathan that the seven heads of Leviathan are found in Proverbs 6:16-19 “There are six things which Jehovah hateth; Yea, seven which are an abomination unto him; haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood; a heart that deviseth wicked purposes, feet that are swift in running to mischief, a false witness that uttereth lies and he that soweth discord among brethren.”

I have seen the way Leviathan attacks and how this spirit works, but I found the seven heads to be great revelation. As I studied this out further on my own I found the connection between Leviathan and the dragon in Rev 12:3 “A great red fiery dragon having seven heads and 10 horns.”

Like Jezebel this spirit is anti-Christ and against the anointing on ministries.

It is interesting to note in the Hebrew and Greek translations of the word Leviathan, we will see clearly as it is and will be established in this article that Leviathan is translated: serpent, crocodile and even more clear that the dragon, satan himself is all these in one. I believe that Leviathan is either or definitely carries the very nature and works of the accuser of the brethren.

## CONFRONTING THE SPIRIT OF LEVIATHAN

### 1. The First Way That This Spirit Will Attack Is With His Tongue

Job 41:1 “Can you draw out Leviathan with a hook, or snare his tongue with a line?”

The lying tongue: This spirit attacks out of his mouth with lies, gossip, accusation, criticism, faultfinding and slander. Job 41:19 “Out of his mouth go burning lights, sparks of fire shoot out.”

I asked the Lord about this and He showed me Rev 12:15 “So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away with the flood.”

This Leviathan wants you to be destroyed and carried away with the lies, gossip, slander and accusations he will bring against you and if he can he will carry your

friends and those who labor with you in the ministry away in the lie and deception. He wants people to believe the lie and accusation against you. Number one, he wants to slander your character and bring reproach on your name.

I believe that Leviathan is behind lies and deception. One time early in my marriage the devil was looking for a way to accuse me and stir up mistrust in my new marriage. Shonnah, my wife, knew that before I was saved that I had been involved in many immoral relationships and had many girlfriends. A young woman who had a crush on me before I was married, unknown to me, starting spreading a rumor that I asked her to have an immoral relationship, of course this never happened, but it stirred up a lot of mistrust and fears in a new marriage. It was my word against hers. My wife and I saw it as the work of the accuser of the brethren and we had a great victory. In the future I wanted to be sure that every area of life was covered and accountable, so today years later and now in the ministry I rarely if ever travel alone, I will not find myself alone with another woman or in a compromising situation.

If the devil cannot get you in sin, he will accuse you or even make up a lie against you when you are innocent. Proverbs 6:19 "A false witness that uttereth lies." is one of his heads. We need to be sure to respond to these demonically inspired attacks that even can come from those closest to you, being used by the devil's purpose, that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. We must also remember to respond in a right spirit. We cannot afford to allow Leviathan to operate in us, as we can become offended at the lie and accusations, criticisms or judgments spoken of us and strike back. To strike back or lash out is what Leviathan wants. It is with his tail in Rev 12:4 "that he withdrew a third of the angels in heaven."

Leviathan is working today through the body of Christ and we see many churches, ministers and organizations bringing accusation against one another. There is a critical, faultfinding spirit at work in church today judging and speaking against

moves of God, ministries and denominations different from one another. We do not need faultfinders and those who feel to be the watchdogs of Christianity. We do need those who will restore the body of Christ. Galatians 6:1 "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted."

Let us not forget how many have been quick to judge harshly and criticize the body of Christ, find fault and publicly publish Christian dirt. Lets not let Leviathan work through us but lets operate in the anointing of Galatians 6:1.

Another way we can counter attack this demonic assault of the tongue and lies, gossip and slander is by claiming Gods promise. "The mouth of the lies shall be stopped and

Isaiah 54:17 "No weapon formed against you shall prosper and every tongue that rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord."

We need to start speaking this verse out and acting on it in prayer.

We also want to be sure this spirit has no truth in what it says. We don't want to give him a foothold by living in a lie in our lives. We can only effectively counter attack this spirit by living in truth in every area of our lives.

## 2. Miscommunication

Job 42:3 "Who is this that hideth counsel without knowledge?" Or in the amplified: "Who is this who darkens or obscures counsel without knowledge?" Or as in another translation; "Who is this who seals up counsel?"

In Job 42:3 Job also declares, "Therefore have I uttered that which I understood not, I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee."

Job is trying to understand why what is happening to him is happening? God has this lengthy discussion with Job in Job 41 and reveals this principality Leviathan. Job repents in Job 42 and confesses that counsel and true understanding were kept from him.

This spirit wants to get between you and the revelation of God and distort the word of the Lord.

Leviathan will seek to hide from you true revelation and confuse the true meaning of things.

This Leviathan spirit will hide the meaning behind what is said and cause there to be miscommunication and misunderstanding. That's how this spirit can sow discord among brethren. Have you ever been at the office or maybe in your marriage and something you say is taken the wrong way, someone will say, "you said this" and you say no "I said this" and you both think your right, or you say one thing and they hear it as another i.e.: you said it is black and they hear blue. Leviathan wants to get in between your conversation and hearing and distort or murther what one is really saying. This can happen between friends, ministry and even children and parents.

When you become aware of this attack on your ministry or in your relationships it is important to simply say "Leviathan I bind you in Jesus name".

Recently we had a small misunderstanding in our ministry. A woman had given a large donation to our ministry. We sent a thank you letter to the donor but we were unable to specifically mention the amount given. The enemy worked on this

woman's mind and the accuser that he is, told this woman that maybe we could not be trusted as a ministry or that because we did not specifically mention the size of her donation in the thank you letter that maybe the church only gave me a honorarium and not the full amount which I said would be entirely used for missions.

This individual who was previously working in another church had seen the church hold back on offerings. Leviathan works in suspicion and mistrust. This woman contacted our ministry and inquired about the gift she gave. The woman also believed I said I would use the entire missions offering specifically for Sudan. The devil in his lie nearly had this woman convinced that maybe I was truly not up front with my word and cast doubt, mistrust and questions on our ministry.

I never said that I was using any money for Sudan and the tapes and transcript of that night's service also verified we had never said that. The seeds of mistrust, lies of the enemy, and misunderstanding nearly cost me a dear partner. I met with the lady later and we prayed together and cut the devil out of our business. I knew when I was in India and I received this bad report that this was the work of Leviathan and we began to pray immediately. There was opportunity for us and this lady to be offended and accuse one another and the devil nearly cost me money for souls and a crusade but the Lord showed me in the midst of this attack the spirit of Leviathan and his accusation.

Leviathan will attack a prophetic word

In Gen 3:1-5 the serpent (leviathan) is wanting to distort and hide the true word of the Lord from Eve. Leviathan wants to cast doubt, mistrust and suspicion on God's word.

”Now the serpent was subtler than any beast of the field, which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, you shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, we may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die; for God does know that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

The famous Has God said? Or is that really what he meant? Leviathan wants to twist God’s truth and rob us of our promise. When this happens just simply bind this spirit from your prophetic promises.

I believe it was the spirit of Leviathan that was keeping Job from the true counsel of the Lord and hiding from Job his own small areas of pride and self-righteousness in his life. When God brings Job to chapter 42 he is no longer the one who justifies himself but confesses that he had not really known God by revelation. Lets be sure to give all these areas of any pride or self-righteousness to the Lord and ask for the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in our life and ministry.

### 3. Sons of pride

Job 41: 34 “He beholds every high thing; He is king over all the children of pride.”

This spirit carries an attitude of superiority, haughtiness, boasting and arrogance. He not only works in this kind of environment but also attacks ministries and individuals with the temptations of pride. Can you hear this spirit smooth and deceptive whispering in your ear? Who do they think they are? They do not move in the power like you do. Who gives them the right to speak into my life? The bible says not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to. This spirit promotes



self and self-serving agendas. We need to watch out for a false confidence, and keep a humble trust in the Lord. When God is using you mightily there is a constant temptation to play the name game or measure yourself with another and feel like we are more successful because of how much money we raise or how many come to our church or how many miracles we see. How big are your meetings? Power, numbers and what looks like God's favor based on power, miracles or healing and success in casting out demons do not always mean we are always right with God. We need to guard ourselves from the "well I am to good for that attitude." "I will only do this or that." This spirit wants to set you up with a false confidence and getting your identity out of what you do, rather than who you are.

### Egypt and Leviathan

Lets look at Egypt for some insight on how Leviathan operates and what he did in that nation. In Ezekiel chapter 29-32 we have a series of prophetic utterances against Egypt and pharaoh. One of the first sins of Egypt was its pride and boasting out of a false confidence in things rather than intimacy with God. Egypt puts its trust and confidence in its wealth, how many horses and chariots it had and the numbers of its people. This Leviathan spirit wants to promote you ahead of the Lords leading, and move you into a place, where you no longer totally depend on the Holy Spirit but on your gifting, charisma, finances, or denomination, traditions or programs. There can come a place in ministry where we can get it done with out Him; email lists, mail outs, websites, who you know, or monthly partners, lets go to the investors. We can begin to lose sight of Jesus and hearing His voice and getting our inspirations, visions, initiative or new ideas from His presence. Sometimes the devil will give you a ministry machine if he knows it will move you out where it all started in the secret place, if he can distract you and keep you busy and feeling like all is well because the marketing tools and infrastructures are in place, God is blessing me, the machine is running well.

There is nothing wrong with all these things that God uses, our ministry is a large ministry with all the tools, many staff, partners, huge infrastructure and we are growing more every day. All these are vehicles to help fulfill the blessing of God, but I need to keep my eyes on Jesus and remain broken daily before Him. There can be a place where we put our trust in the wrong things and this spirit will be your best cheerleader. In Rev 12:4 it was with his tail that he withdrew a third of the stars, the angelic hosts who cast their lot with the devil we need to watch for the tail of leviathan.”

#### Pride attitudes

Here is a small list of attitudes we can ask the Lord to show us any of these in our lives.

Condescending Attitudes towards Others in the Body: We are to esteem others as higher than ourselves. If we catch ourselves thinking of another as less than ourselves in any way, especially in regards to spiritual gifting, understanding, etc. we must repent quickly.

Independent Attitude: We are to be united in heart as one, although we may all have different functions. If we ever feel "out there like we are just wanting to do our own thing" while maybe we are forgetting the fuller purpose of the Kingdom which is to embrace the whole body of Christ.

Self-Glory: Although it is good for one to enjoy the workings, dealings, gifting and blessings that the hand of the Lord brings to us, we must be careful not to think that it is because of our own greatness. All things are given to us as a gift of grace (undeserved, unmerited favor) and all the worship and delight in these blessings must be returned to Him who authored them. Remembering our helpless and

humble estate without Him. We can never glory in our own righteousness; it is as filthy rags.

Self-Confidence: When we begin to feel a confidence in our own abilities to produce the anointing and the fruit of the Kingdom, we must be alert to the tempter.

Lack of Time in His Presence: Often times this is a sign that a temptation to pride has come. It indicates a possibility that we have become self sufficient and self ruled and no longer need all that we have and all that we are to flow from His Presence and Counsel. This is dangerous in that it can produce a mindset of "self rule" that subsequently asks God to bless and serve what man has initiated.

Critical and Condemning Attitudes and Thoughts: The heart of a "critic or accuser" is postured above others. The heart of a savior is postured in servant hood.

Boasting Over Achievements and Revelation: Often times this is not an outward action but an inward attitude. (Note: this is of the sin nature, not the "boasting in the Lord" as Scripture speaks of.)

Dishonor of Authority: We are to esteem and honor those in authority (even if they are NOT under Holy Spirit control, i.e. David's attitude towards Saul). Attitudes of dishonor towards leaders often indicate pride in the heart.

Desiring to be served: Jesus did not come to be served but to serve. This is the posture of humility.

Desire for Reputation: Jesus was a man of no reputation in heart. He emptied Himself. If we have inner desires to be esteemed by others, we need to be watchful. Pride could be lurking.

Desiring to Control Others: Use of a Position of Authority or Gift to Fulfill Selfish Ambition and Vision.

The only way we can effectively counter attack this assault is to live in humility.

Jam 4:10 "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he will lift you up."

Do you notice it says, "humble yourselves", this is something we chose to do daily and in every moment we feel the attack of Leviathan in pride. Choose to go low, take the position of (Phil 4).

## JOURNAL OF AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY

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### Persecution Interview

conducted by John Norton

*Last issue dealt with social justice and included some mention of persecution. Here is an interview of Georgian Salvation Army worker David Chinchinadze by JAC editor John Norton. Chinchinadze was recently released from a lengthy kidnapping.*

Dato:

Hello from Canada.

I am very happy to know that you have been released. I cannot imagine how difficult it must have been for you.

Can you answer the following questions?

1. What happened? (who, what, how long time?)

From October 1, 2001 I took paid vacation from the program I was manager to. October 5th, 2001 my relatives and I went to the place where hunting was allowed and it WAS Samegrelo-Zemosavaneti administrative territory. We spent 2-3 days in the mountains and on 10/10/2001 at about 10:30 AM a bomb explosion and machine gun shooting occurred and we tried to take cover and then we gave up without shooting back. They were Abkhazians. Four of them shooting us but after we saw a guy nearby with radio (in case they would need help to ask for some from the base). So we gave up we met them and they without any explanation ordered us to go (run, hurry) toward the Abkhazian territory. So we had to do. We got to the base where they were located. On the way they tied up our eyes when we neared the base. after a while we were forced to follow the path to Tkvarcheli (a town in Abkhazian Autonomous republic). After we got there (10 hours of walking) we were questioned and the other day sent to Sukhumi in a van.

There we spent a month or so before we we were accused in "trespassing the boarder illegally". I ruined there accusation on the court but they unofficially said that they could not let out Georgian without sentencing them because our case was too noisy (as a lot of goverment people were involved in helping us).

They knew we did not cross the administrative boarder but WE WERE GEORGIANS and they were keeping us unlawfully for almost three months. They needed to make our captivity legal so they accused us in crossing the boarder. After there was the judgment but without witnesses, no one just judge, prosecutor, lawyers and us. We have been accused and sentenced breaking all the existing principles of jurisprudence. We were sentenced 1 yaer of usual regime in a closed up fasilitywhere 1 day was counted for 2 days so we were kept there for 6 month total.

2. Was this related to Salvation Army work or activity?

No. It no way was related to TSA work. It was just "Georgian-Abkhazian war" consequences.

3. How were you treated?

At first days they thought we were "American CIA and Georgian spies", but after treatment was as in any prison and I'd say much better for us than for any other Abkhazian detainee in the facility. Their treatment was normal. The facility boss had perfect possible relationship with us. He'd come and encourage us to bear some more and he was there all the time to support us. During the captivity I tried to learn some Abkhazian and I did. They were impressed and this and our conversations warmed our relations. He tried to learn Georgian. All this show how important is public diplomacy. We, people just need to know listen to each other

and be more heartfelt and concerned because of each other. Forgive each other. That is what I tried to do and it resulted.

#### 4. Were you threatened or injured?

As I mentioned just first days. No injuries. No beating just threatening to "break us down" as they thought we were CIA agents (because I spoke English and was from Tbilisi, had mobile phone with me. It has become so usual that I could call from mountains to my family to ensure we were OK while hunting. In Abkhazia the selfphones are so rare that many of them thought it was new generation military radio !?!?!?!). They took away all our belongings (rifles, photo camera, films, sleeping bags, clothing, etc.).

#### 5. What were the living conditions like for you during your captivity?

More or less normal. we were kept in a room for 6 month without putting foot on the earth. Closed up for 24 hours a day. We would come out of cell for 10 to 20 minutes a day for walking (it was a little bit bigger room in the same facility). We had 250gr of bread daily (you see it's quite small portion for Georgians), cereals and soup afternoon.

#### 6. What was the worst moment for you?

I did not know whether my family knew anything of us or not. I found out they thought one of us was shot and dead. Imagine their condition. not knowing anything who was shot, why, they were unable to do anything. I was praying every night for my family and my Georgia. God saved us. Worst was probably that I could not feel the warmth of my wife and my children. But I would like mention that after first month I was able to have some contact with them through some relatives who lived in Sukhumi and the facility boss was very human in that aspect.

7. Were there any good moments for you in captivity?

I met Abkhazians after civil war and tried to understand their point of view concerning the relations with Georgians. Good and calming is that they (many of whom I met) feel we should live together. We need to help each other clarify the situation and live on together. And that God saved us and returned us home without any major problem.

8. Was God there for you?

I am sure He was there for me and my relatives. He saw everything we went through. God never sends the tribulation we can not stand. I knew that and it was great comfort for first days.

9. Is there anything you need now? Anything we can pray for?

Now everything is getting back to normal. Yes, Let's pray for Georgian guys that are there and for Georgia to overcome its hard times. Amen. Thank you for your prayers.

Sincerely,

David Chichinadze



## **JOURNAL OF AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY**

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### **Praying the Bible – The Pathway to Spirituality**

Wesley Campbell

*This is an excerpt from THE BOOK OF PRAYERS, available at revivalnow.com*

"Wesley . . . WESLEY . . . , you know what's coming, don't you, WESLEY?" Boldly, my wife stood in front of me and prophesied the word of the Lord. God had visited our church in an unexpected move of the Holy Spirit and, in the space of three months, there were at least seventy people who would shake under the power of God and prophesy. Now, here in this leaders' meeting, God was speaking to me! And yes, I did know what was coming. The prophecy continued, "I called you. . . and you did not come, I demanded to see you, and you did not show up!" Suddenly, another pastor rushed across the room and bellowed, " Wesley, if you do not pray, your ministry will be taken from you like this piece of paper from your hand and thrown to the ground!"

This was a serious rebuke from the Lord and I was determined to do something about it. The next day, I got every thing ready to pray. I had my favorite chair positioned just right. I gathered my various Bibles and a note pad and pen. I even had an egg timer to time my prayers. If I would have been a woman, no doubt I would have set up candles and incense! I was determined to be God's man of prayer and power for the hour. I was ready to meet with God!

Eagerly, I stood up and cried, "Oh God! Here I am, in obedience to your word! And Lord . . . I thank you. I thank you for saving me . . . . Thank-you that I'm going to heaven and not hell. And God, thank-you for Stacey and the children . . . and for my health, oh God! In fact, I bless you for everything. (Awkward silence, nervous shuffling. . . .) Africa! Bless all the missionaries in Africa!

Anxiously, I looked at the egg timer. There was no movement at all. My cheeks flushed with embarrassment, but those menacing prophecies still rang in my ears. Like Elijah, I girded up myself up for another run.

“Lord, . . . I’m still here – calling on Your name. Again, I thank-you for my salvation . . . . For Stacey, the boys, . . . my health, . . . arms and legs, fingers and toes, oh my God! . . . ( long pause) China! God, bless China.” I looked at the egg timer. No noticeable change. Pathetically, I looked up towards the ceiling and said, “You can not be enjoying this?” Rightly or wrongly, I had the distinct feeling that I was boring God. I was crushed. I could not go on. I had no integrity at all.

Shifting gears, I thought to myself, “I will engage in mental prayer.” Mental prayer is where one tries to think of God and say things in your head to Him. I began. . . , ummhumm, . . . umhum, . . . ummmm. Suddenly a butterfly thought flew through my mind. Funnily these thoughts usually take one from a cold country to a warm beach somewhere. Without realizing it, I was now daydreaming about sand, surf, and sun. In frustration, I left my “place of prayer” with the sinking feeling that this was going to be harder than I thought.

In time, I heard about this guy called Mike Bickle who I heard prayed three to five hours a day. Not only that, he made his pastoral staff pray three to five hours a day as well! This was the most outrageous thing I had ever heard. I said to myself, “this I have to see.” Soon I was on plane to Kansas City to view this phenomenon for myself. I was surprised to see they could actually do it. And what’s more - they liked it!

Going directly to the bookstore, I said, “ Give me everything he’s written on the subject.” “Written?” said the clerk with incredulity. “He hasn’t written anything, he just prays all the time.” “Then how am I going to learn this,” I asked anxiously? “Well,” she said, “they do have a lot of tapes on the subject. Maybe these will

help?” “Good, give me all you’ve got!” Happily, I flew home with over a hundred tapes. I was going to learn this thing called prayer!

Over the next few months, I learned the simple, timeless practice of the art of prayer, but it wasn’t until later that I discovered that Mike’s prayer model was actually based on a historical model used by men and women of God for thousands of years. As I looked deeper into the topic of prayer, I found that modern day evangelicals are the only ones to not pray in the time-honored method of the Hebrews, the Early Church, the Desert Fathers, and the saints. In fact, modern day evangelical/charismatic Christianity may be the first sector of the Church in over three thousand years to ‘not do prayer right!’

#### Set A Time, Set A Place!

As I processed Bickle’s teaching on prayer, he said that there are four main reasons why people don’t pray. Two spiritual, and two practical:

1. They don’t believe in it!
2. There is sin in their life!
3. They don’t know how!
4. They don’t set a time!

For the zealous, it’s the last two that are fundamental. Learning to pray means first and foremost that we have to show up. We don’t learn because we don’t set a time where we struggle through the process. For most of us it has been prayerlessness by default.

#### How Did Jesus Pray?

A most interesting question is how did Jesus pray? Did Jesus have a structure? Did he use written prayers? Did He pray every day? Did he sit, stand, walk, or lay down? Can we know what Jesus said?

One thing we do know is that Jesus was Jewish and was brought up “according to the custom” (Lk. 2:22; 2:42; 4:16). And the Jewish custom of prayer was very defined and pervasive in Jesus’ day. It had its origin in the first books of the OT. By Jesus’ time, there was a distinct practice of prayer, based on their understanding of the Scriptures.

The first major commandment on prayer is found in the greatest of all Jewish commandments, the Shemah.

Deut. 6:4-13

4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. . .” (NIV)

The Jews clearly understood this command as a “call to prayer.” The sages said that the premiere expression of love to God was prayer – the service of the heart. The rabbis said prayer became at once the means and proof of loving God. God told Joshua that he was to lead the nation into daily prayer – meditating on the Law (vocal recitation of the scriptures), day and night -so that he and the nation of Israel would be able to do all that God commanded in order to be blessed and successful (Josh. 1:8).

Of course, the obvious question is whether God is really serious about seeing his people show up “day and night?” What does “day and night” really mean? Is it just religious cliché? How Israel understood Deut. 6:4-13 and Josh. 1:8 is evidenced by how they lived it out. David said, “But I call to God and the LORD saves me. Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice (Ps 55:16-17).” Daniel carried this practice to the point of obsession as a captive in Babylon where, under threat of death, he refused to break his habit of praying three times daily. “Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before (Dan 6:10).”

Historians tell us that sometime after the seventy years of captivity in Babylon (520 BC), Ezra determined that Israel would never again provoke God to such wrath. Ezra and prophets mandated daily prayers, accompanied with readings from the Torah. As result, it became the custom for Jews to pray the eighteen “Benedictions,” coupled with readings from the Torah, over three set ‘hours’ of prayer at the temple, synagogue, or home. This custom was firmly in place long before the birth of Jesus. Jesus, and every righteous Jew, would have observed this daily. It is interesting to think that Jesus, and his father Joseph, and Joseph’s father, all prayed this way; that Peter, James, and John all grew up praying set prayers every day; that Paul was steeped and in the model of Jewish prayer. The early church accepted the Jewish model of prayer as a matter of course.

It is evident from the NT that ‘night and day’ prayer was practiced by the entire early church, as well as by the God-fearers who had attached themselves to Judaism. Luke records that “Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth {hour,} the hour of prayer.” Cornelius is called a devout man who prayed continually. The next verse explains continual prayer – “About the ninth hour of the day [the hour of prayer] he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God who had {just}

come to him, and said to him, ‘Cornelius!’ . . . ‘Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God.’ (Acts 10:2-4).”

These passages show that the afternoon (three o’clock) hour of prayer was already established as a practice for first century Christians. Hourly prayer is further implied when Peter goes up to his housetop to pray: “it was about the sixth hour” – the noon time of prayer (Acts 9:9). Pentecost occurs at a time of prayer – the ninth hour (Acts 2:15). It says of the first believers, “that those who believed were daily (and continually) in the temple courts as well as meeting from house to house (Lk. 24:53; Acts 2:26).” What did they do ‘daily in the temple courts?’ Jesus said they prayed. He said: “My house (the temple) shall be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Mk. 11:17), and then described how “two men went up to the temple to pray” (Lk. 18:10).

Regardless of the exact times, both the Jews and the early church all prayed a minimum of three set times of prayer. The first hour ranged from 6:00 AM. to 9:00 am, the second was at noon, and the third was between 3:00 PM. and 6:00 PM. Whether we feel like it or not, whether we know how to do it or not, whether we feel inspired or not, as worshippers of God we are just called to show up. Set a time and make a place to get face to face with God.

### Pray To God

Working backwards in the command that was given to Joshua, it is implied that the meditation is ‘to God.’ That is, you meditate or recite the law to God! Of course, people of every religion pray and they all think they are praying to God. But who is right? Which God is the true God? Who is He? Where is He? What is He like? What is He doing? These are questions that any worshipper will consider when he sets aside time to talk God.

Often, when I am speaking on prayer around the world, I ask the whole congregation to stand up so that I can give them a test. I say, “If you are in the regular practice of praying the theophanies – that is the ‘God sightings’, and you can generally recount at least four of the many God sightings in the Bible, then stay standing.” First people begin to look around dumbfounded, and then slowly they almost all begin to sit down. Rarely is even three percent of the audience left standing.

When we think about this spiritual omission it becomes quite absurd. Imagine seven of the most holy, prophetically inspired men and women of your church or movement going up to a mountain to fast and pray for seven days for a breakthrough with God. Imagine that God actually comes down in a full blown visible display. They are overwhelmed, and laid low before his glory. As soon as they are able, they call down to say that they’ve seen God with their eyes and they will be down to tell everyone about it the following Sunday. Who wouldn’t want to be there? Who wouldn’t want to read the detailed account?

And yet we have the greatest holy men of history – men like Moses (Ex. 24 & 33), Isaiah (Isa. 6), Daniel (Dan. 7 & 8), Ezekiel (Ez. 1 & 10) , Peter (Matt. 17) and John (Rev. 1, 4, 19, 21) – all of whom say they saw God (or the glorified Christ) with their eyes. Not only that, they wrote it down for us to read. And yet, believers who have given their whole lives to love God don’t even know where the accounts are found! Much less are they able to recite them in their minds and spirit.

I tell people everywhere that if men and women, and especially children, are ever going to pray effectively, they must first start by being able to see God. We must pray the theophanies until we can see heaven as clearly as we see our own houses. Our children must be able to close their eyes and see God sitting on the throne, the movement, the color, the sea of glass, and the living creatures. Imagine if we were able mentally walk through the surroundings of heaven and

have them be as familiar our earthly surroundings. My advice is always the same, “both you and your children should begin to pray Revelation 4 at least one hundred times out loud to God – ten times a day for ten days. Then after that do the same to Ezekiel 1.” This is praying to God!

#### The Bible Says “Pray The Bible!”

After developing the habit of showing up, and then becoming familiar with the biblical vision of God, now what do we say? Men and children are notorious for not holding up their end of the communication exchange. What do you in those long pauses. “Thank-you for arms and legs”, and “God Bless China!” does get a bit old. And the children’s prayer of “help us to have a good day” only takes them so far.

Thankfully, God knows how we are wired and gave us the structure from the beginning. Joshua was told specifically to “. . . meditate on the Book of the Law day and night.” David did just that, and we got the Psalms (Ps. 1:2). The prophets did this, and we got the prophetic books. This expansion of the Law, and all the prophets make up the composite that Jesus called the Scriptures (Lk. 24:27).” It is these words that we pray. Paul put it this way: “This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words ( 1 Cor. 2:13).” The whole Bible is God-breathed and is the language of the Spirit – the language of prayer.

Throughout history, the Church has taught the faithful to pray by praying the Bible. In fact, virtually the only ones to ever depart from this presupposition have been the modern day evangelicals/charismatics. No other section of the Church has ever questioned this method. As far back as our Judaistic roots on into the NT, the Desert Fathers, and on throughout Church history and the saints, all believers were taught to “pray the Bible.” Virtually every famous Christian and saint through the ages preached and practiced “praying the Bible.”



Many people do not realize that from the early church Fathers onward, all monks and nuns prayed the whole book of Psalms every week, spread throughout three to five public prayer times a day. St. Patrick, the famous missionary evangelist to Ireland, was said to recite at least a hundred Psalms a day out loud to God. Spiritual iron-men, following in the tradition of St. Patrick, began to pray “the three fifties” daily, that is the entire book of Psalms every day. In 555 AD, Saint Comgal began a house of prayer in Bangor, Ireland that prayed and sang the Psalms and other Scriptures, twenty-four hours a day for over two hundred and fifty years. Even the non-Catholic revivalists such George Whitefield, Martin Luther, George Muller, and the modern day House of Prayer movement – all prayed the Bible!

The categories of biblical prayer are many, but a simple layout would be:

- The Theophanies
- The Psalms (all)
- The Apostolic Prayers of Paul
- The Prayers of Jesus
- The Hymns of Revelations
- The Song of Songs
- The Songs of the Prophets

Praying these will keep even the most ardent prayer warrior busy for a very long time.

#### IV. Pray the Bible Out Loud!

I often ask people, “Do you know why God wants you to pray the Bible out loud?” The blank stares tell me that they don’t. “So you know when you’ve stopped!” It usually takes a few seconds for them to get it and start chuckling at the simple

wisdom of this statement. The problem of the “wandering mind” is not a new one. St. Cassian, one of the Desert Fathers said, “The man who prays only when on his knees, prays little. The man who kneels to pray and then lets his mind wander, prays not at all.” Focus is essential to effectual prayer.

Interestingly enough, Joshua was told to “mediate” on the Law. Wrongly, most of us have interpreted the phrase ‘to meditate’ as something we do silently as an exercise of the mind. Even worse, some understand it in the Eastern religion context of emptying oneself to achieve nirvana (or nothingness). All this is a gross misunderstanding of the word. Broadly speaking, Strong’s definition the Hebrew word for “meditate – hagah” means, “to imagine, meditate, mourn, mutter, roar, speak, study, talk, utter.” The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, interprets it as “to murmur,” “to have a deep tone”; to “sigh,” “moan”; or higgayon, “the murmur” or dull sound of the harp. This is meditation.

The biblical equivalents of hagah are as follows: the lion roars or growls (hagah) over his prey (Isa. 31:4); we moan (hagah) like doves (Isa. 59:11); mediums and spiritists whisper and mutter (hagah) (Isa. 8:19). From this we discern that hagah, or meditate, meant “to say over and over again, to speak, to mutter, to recite, to expel air out loud.” There was to be physical involvement in this activity. And in the case of Joshua, he was to hagah – say over and over again out loud the Book of the Law to God.

What is obvious when we think about it is that there were scarcely any writings in ancient Israel. It was not like the average Israelite family had their own personalized copy or scroll of the Book of the Law. No, they learned by oral recitation and they meditated out loud from memory in a type of musical cantor. It was like an ancient form of Hebrew rap, if you will. This is how they passed the commandments onto to their children and how they had power to do it themselves. Even today, when the Jews go to the Wailing Wall to pray, they bob, and rock, and

mutter. The whole body becomes involved in this meditation. It is not mental prayer, nor is it just sitting and contemplating. It is the recitation of a specific text, which uses the mouth to lasso the mind to affect the spirit.

So what have I learned over the many years of trying to get closer to God through prayer? I have learned that the pathway to spirituality is found in praying the Bible. Every family needs to focus and be intent on “Praying the Bible – out loud – to God – everyday!” It will change your life.

## **JOURNAL OF AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY**

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### **A Radical Narrative**

Edward Read, March 2000

*This is the result of an interview with Commissioner Ed Read (PtG) soon before he left the earth to go to heaven. Read is the author of several helpful books, many of which focus on holiness.*

Influential thinkers today are trying to persuade us that there is no ultimate truth, and hence no universal authority. Post-modernism holds that ideas of right and wrong vary with changing times; 'radical historicism' the academics call it. But finding ourselves in need of a sense of purpose, we are forced to create our own 'narrative', constructing ideals and prescribing rules of conduct. In essence, it is inevitable, they say, that we will make a god shaped by the current culture.

But a homemade god is never anything more than a mask for the devil. Clearly, then, for many people, conversion must mean the abandonment of old gods. For others, like the Athenians to whom Paul preached, it may involve discovering the truth about the 'unknown god'. For me, none of this was necessary: my awareness of the true God, God of Abraham and Father of Jesus was informed by the Bible mother and grandmother encouraged me to become religious.

So far, good. But what if one becomes conceited about this religiosity? I had read the New Testament twice before I was 12, the entire Bible before 14 - keeping careful count of my progress, and if I did not boast, I certainly gloried inwardly.

AM I right in seeing in that background some similarity to Saul of Tarsus? The man who became Paul the apostle had been a sinner, but a religious sinner.

No hypocrite, he was utterly consistent with what he thought the God of his fathers expected of him- the relentless suppression of heresy.

Satanic deception was at work there, and a good measure of carnal arrogance. That pride in one's religion is where I think I identify with the great man. I confessed to it in a sermon preached after twenty years of reflection; here is what I told my patient congregation: I remember the bewilderment of my teenage years. That is why I am so grateful that a kindly hand was laid on my shoulder and a spiritual advisor in the person of a Salvation Army officer took an interest in me. It could not have been timed better. Critical as I was, and rebellious against accepted customs, I almost lost my way even then. When I heard people testify that they were saved, I said to myself, 'This is a wonderful thing.' But then I began to inspect their lives, and decided that most of them did not live any better than I did. Just to be sure, I tried to polish up my morals, quitting anything- such as the use of dubious language- which might be objectionable. Then I said, 'There; I guess if they are saved, so am I.' But still I knew I did not have what the Captain had. There was radiance, and joy, and something more; the gospel looked wonderfully attractive, dressed in that flesh-and-blood embodiment of it.

It was through the Captain's life that I met God personally. I felt the power of Christ. I became the recipient of divine life. And I went on under that good guidance to enter the Training College, spend two years there, and then go out to command a Corps, commissioned as a Captain before I was 20 years of age. Anyone that young is bound to be incapable in many ways, and I do not holdup my experience as an ideal. But I do see the evidence of reality which the New Testament calls birthmarks. Chief among them, perhaps, was the total repudiation of any trust in my own good works; I realised I had none.

I was delivered, as was Paul, from the snare of self-righteousness. There I met the Man whose name is Jesus Christ, whose 'narrative' is imbued with the

transcendence even post-modernists crave. It is the old, old story; I was justified by grace alone, through faith alone, and that has made all the difference.

## JOURNAL OF AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY

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### Revival praying

Captain Phil Garnham

*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. 2 Chronicles 7: 14*

What a fantastic verse, but we need to remember that a text without a context can be a pretext. If you read the proceeding chapters of 2 Chronicles you will see that Solomon had completed the temple and in Chapter 6 and 7 he has dedicated the temple. Chapter 7: 14 was then a response from God to Solomon's amazing prayer in Chapter 6 pleading with passion for the restoration of the people of Israel. We cannot look at this verse in a legalistic way and say God must heal our land because He said He would heal Solomon's in 2 Chronicles! This was a specific and conditional answer to a specific prayer from Solomon. We can however discern certain principles in this verse that will help us to understand that God longs to bring forgiveness and healing to us, not out of some legalistic obligation but because in the words of the missiologist David Bosch ' He is a fountain of sending love.'

2 Chronicles 7:14 would suggest that humility is a prerequisite for the moving of God amongst us. This may be a puzzle to some but as C.S. Lewis once wrote,

*"We must not think pride is something God forbids because He is offended at it, or that humility is something He demands as due to His own dignity - as if God Himself was proud. He is not in the least worried about His dignity. The point is, He wants you to know Him; wants to give you Himself. And He and you are two things of such a kind that if you really get into any kind of touch with Him you will, in fact, be humble, feeling the infinite relief of having for once got rid of all the silly*

*nonsense about your own dignity which has made you restless and unhappy all your life. He is trying to make you humble in order to make this possible."*

So we can see that pride is like a roadblock which prevents us from reaching the intimacy with God for which we were made. We are frantically seeking other ways to achieve satisfaction rather than seeking His face which is our true home. Sadly consumerism, which is totally absorbed in self-satisfaction, has permeated our society so thoroughly that even the Christian community can be subtly influenced by it. Our times with the Lord become times when our 'batteries are recharged' so that we have the strength to continue to chase our own agenda rather than times when we can be changed by being in the presence of God. 2 Chronicles 7:14 is a healthy antidote to consumerist Christianity in that it encourages us, not only to seek God's face, but to repent which means changing the direction of our lives. Repentance then is about changing our minds about anything that keeps us from drawing closer to God. Consumerist Christianity is delighted to ask God for strength but less willing to ask for redirection. When by the grace of God we are freed from this all pervasive and idolatrous consumerism, we are forgiven, healed and refreshed.

*"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord," Acts 3: 19*

The truth is that God longs to hear us, forgive us and heal our land and there is much evidence in history that when God's people begin to seek His face with earnest and humble prayer and are willing to give up any agenda other than His then individuals, local congregations, denominations and even whole nations are changed. This is exactly what happened in the Hebrides in 1949. A small group of people were so troubled about the state of their churches and their communities that they began praying, After several months of fervant intercessory prayer this is what happened:



*They went to a nearby cottage and about thirty knelt in prayer and began to travail before the Lord. About 3 am God swept in and a dozen or so were laid out prostrate on the floor, and lay there speechless. Something had happened - God had moved into action as He had promised. Revival had come. Revival had come and men and women were about to find deliverance. As they left the cottage they found men and women seeking God. Lights were burning in the homes along the road - no one seemed to be thinking about sleep. Three men were found laying by the roadside in a torrent of conviction, crying out for God to have mercy on them! On the second night buses came from the four corners of the island, crowding into the church. Seven men were being driven to the meeting in a butchers truck when suddenly the Spirit of God fell on them in great conviction and all were saved before they reached the church building!*

*As the preacher preached his message, tremendous conviction swept down. Tears rolled down the faces of the people and men and women cried out for mercy from every corner of the church. So deep was their distress that some of their cries could be heard outside in the road. As the meeting was closing someone excitedly hurried to the preacher, "Come with me! There's a crowd of people outside the police station; they are weeping and in great distress. We don't know what's wrong with them but they are calling for someone to come and pray with them." The minister described the scene outside the police station; "I saw a sight I never thought possible-. Something I shall never forget. Under a starlit sky, men and women were kneeling everywhere, by the roadside, outside the cottages, even behind the peat stacks, crying for God to have mercy on them." Nearly 600 people, making their way to the church, suddenly experienced the power of God falling upon them in great conviction, and like Paul on the road to Damascus, fell to their knees in repentance. Revival had come in power! (Taken from [/www.goodnews.netministries.org/hrevival.htm](http://www.goodnews.netministries.org/hrevival.htm))*

In verse 1 of 2 Chronicles chapter 7 it says 'when Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven.' The same thing happened to the people of the Hebrides in 1949 and to a small mission team in London in the middle of the 19th Century who adopted 'blood and fire' as their motto. As intercessory prayer in the UK territory becomes a higher and higher priority and more and more of us humble ourselves and pray and seek God's face and allow Him to change us, He will hear us and then who knows what will happen. I believe that the year of prayer and seeking God's face that is planned under the 24/7 SA initiative, could be very interesting!

*'In His body and blood is the wildness of God. With a passion of love He comes to bring fire to the earth.'* Philip Newell

## **JOURNAL OF AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY**

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### **TO STAY ON PLAN A: A note to our younger readers.**

Stephen Court

What would have happened if Moses had missed the burning bush? I mean, what if he'd just found his lost lamb and carried on, and had never had that historic encounter with God in the burning bush? Or worse yet, what if one of those pathetic excuses he offered up to God against leaving his puny little life and going to rescue the millions-strong Israelite slave nation from Egypt actually carried the day?

Do you think his life would have been ruined? Or do you imagine that God could still have used him, albeit in a tremendously limited way, serving as a righteous husband and father, witnessing to his Midianite relatives about the one true God?

I suspect history would have been radically transformed. I suspect we'd have no stories of Red Sea Crossing, of two tablets and Ten Commandments, of the sonorous (remember, I am imagining) Charleton Heston voice demanding of Pharaoh, "Let my people go!" But I do think that Moses could have been a light in the community in which he stayed.

Yippee!

You see, I'm convinced that God has a plan for your life. This is not some new doctrine. If you are a Christian, some older Christian has already saddled up to you during some serious moment, maybe at the Mercy Seat or maybe over prayer, and in somewhat less sonorous tones, assured you, "God has a plan for your life."

What might be new for you to consider is this: God has plans for your life. That's right. He's got more than one plan. Obviously He wants to stick with the original. Sometimes our life decisions make it necessary for Him to go to plan B, plan C, and through the alphabet.

Does this sound scandalous, maybe heretical? Don't worry- you can always close the magazine and return to your blind gaze of an excuse for faith. Here's the deal- fatalism is not Christian. What I mean by that is "If God wants it to happen, it'll happen" is not Christian belief. THAT statement is heretical. God made it clear that He wants us to be perfect as He is perfect. That means every time anybody on the planet sins, God does not have it His way- what He wants to happen (sin-free existence) does not happen. Intrigued, but not convinced? The Bible says that God wants none to perish (die hell-bound). So every time anybody in the world dies hell-bound (which, tragically, is thousands of times every day), what God wants to happen does not happen.

So, you're thinking, I'm on to him- he's just off on a free will argument.

That's just the lift-off point. My thing is, if God's plan for you to live without sinning, or for Hitler to die saved, can be frustrated, so can His plan for your life.

The implications for this are prodigious.

Remember Jonah? God sent him to preach to the Ninevites. Most of us know that he ran away and hid and got tossed overboard and swallowed by a big fish. But all of this is not even the most interesting part of the story. Jonah probably didn't want to go because the Ninevites were such an awful people. They were notorious for their treatment of the Jews and other enemy peoples. Forget about the Geneva Convention! I mean, these guys skinned you alive and then chopped

off your head! They were bad guys. You can understand Jonah not wanting to preach to them- he probably was scared to experience their hospitality!

But, like I said, this is not the climax. Jonah goes and preaches to these evil people that God is going to destroy them in 40 days. Period. This was not like you hear on Sunday morning, some bad stuff like that, followed by the Big Gospel BUT (which goes something like this- BUT Jesus died for you and if you repent of your sins and rely on Jesus He will save you from all that bad stuff). The Ninevites were so bad that God gave them no BUT.

BUT...

The King responded in classic manner. You probably didn't expect it. This mean old tyrant didn't pooh pooh the Hebrew preacher, he didn't even carve him up. Instead, the King repented. And he did it in style (the cool thing about being a dictator is that you definitely are a trend-setter, everyone feverishly copying your wardrobe, lingo, and dancesteps as if you are the latest boy band or teenygirl sensation), having every single person in the kingdom slavishly ape him in ripping up his clothes, putting on sackcloth, splashing ashes over him, and fasting from food. In fact, even the apes, and other pets and work animals were forced to join him.

And believe it or not, the Big Gospel BUT kicked in for the King and his people. God pardoned them. Now, what if the King didn't repent? The Ninevites would have been wiped out like Sodom and Gomorrah.

What would have happened with King Manasseh? Remember him? He is the King who filled Jerusalem with innocent blood. This was a bad man. He lived a worthless life. But right at the end of it, he repented and got right with God. What would have happened if he'd repented when he was a kid in Sunday School?

How many lives would have been changed for the better? How many people would have been spared his evil? Might Israel have even bypassed their Babylonian exile? Whew!

Watch this- it is a little like a board game.

So here's the thing. You're young. You probably haven't screwed up too much yet. That is good. The idea is to learn the alphabet, not experience it zipping through alternate plans. You probably haven't gotten married yet. This will be a life-changer. If you marry a sinner, you automatically go to Plan B.

If you get pregnant before you get married. Automatically go to Plan B.

If you decidedly disobey God's hopes for your vocation (e.g. He wants you to be a teacher and you become a lumberjack), automatically go to Plan B.

You get the idea. Now don't go losing your salvation over these examples. Of course there is grace. God will not leave you high and dry. But that is an article I'll have to write for older people- people who's sins have already dropped them to Plan LLL. What I am saying to you is, don't screw up now. You are in an enviable position. You can choose to obey God and to stay on Plan A.

Don't let your life decisions limit your impact for God and eternity. Don't let your sins limit the blessing in your life. This is emergency 'battle stations' stuff. The devil is already mobilized and fighting to steal A from your life. Don't get pregnant outside of marriage. Don't marry some slacker who is going to drag you back from selling out to God. Don't settle for cash over souls when it comes to your profession or job. Don't listen to the media when it comes to lifestyle. Don't settle for smaller life than the one God is dreaming for you. Do whatever it takes to stay on Plan A.

