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Editorial Introduction

by Major Stephen Court

Greetings in Jesus' name. Mercy and peace to you from God our Father. I trust the battle progresses well on your front.

Welcome to the 82nd issue of Journal of Aggressive Christianity – JAC82.

We have a great mix again this edition of JAC including some new names as well as some veteran contributors.

Here's a JAC scoop to the world. Lieut-Colonel Eddie Hobgood is organising the 150th anniversary international congress in London in 2015. This presentation - Boundless - introduces the theme to the world.

Major Ron Millar (DC in Canada and two-time Training Principal) has a lengthy piece that looks into Wesley's Wholistic Holiness and Its Social Implications.

Captain Michael Ramsay (CO in Canada) continues on one of his favourite subjects – covenant – with Women, Men, and the Rock Climber's Rope.

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Soldier Morten Andersen (Denmark) wrote a reflection On Incarnation at the end of his experience at The War College in Vancouver. Here it is.

Five years later the questioner gets questioned as the interview schedule used in JAC46 gets applied to the editor of JAC in Soldier Interview.

Commissioner Wesley Harris comments on General Bond's ONE ARMY emphasis in Each For All And All For Each.

May God use the contents to edify and stimulate and challenge and prod. Share them widely and generously. Apply them liberally.

God bless The Salvation Army.

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Wesley's Wholistic Salvation And Its Implications For Personal and Social Holiness

by Major Ron Millar

John Wesley understood salvation in holistic terms. It was all-inclusive. In its fullest sense, it was neither insular nor individualistic. Therefore, doctrine could never be perceived in isolation from the reality of human life, and theology could never be divorced from the human condition. Amidst the theological climate of Wesley's era, he understood the danger of theology becoming a sterile, insular academic exercise reserved for the intellectual or spiritual elite. Theology in and of itself could become aloof and distant from the realities of common every-day human existence, and by extension, so could religion. It could fall into the fruitless pursuit of pandering to questions that secular culture was simply not asking, and be cast aside by the very society it was meant to serve. It could become irrelevant simply because it had lost touch with reality. It could become an end in itself.

To avoid this tendency, Wesley took a holistic approach to the study of theological truth. He established certain criteria against which any statement or action of Christian faith would be measured. These he identified as Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience – what Albert Outler later labeled as the 'Wesleyan quadrilateral'. The Bible was always the foundational authority for Christian faith and practice. Tradition helped bring light and insight as the church's 'memory', but always within the context of Scripture. God's gift of reason helped uphold reasonable interpretation and sensible application of God's revelation. Experience served to verify Biblical concepts within the human spirit, but always consistent with scriptural scrutiny. Except for the primacy of Scripture, none of these were taken in isolation from each other. Each was complimentary to the other. These elements became the standards of doctrine for determining whether a particular specific claim was authentically and credibly Christian.

This holistic approach to theology and doctrine meant that Wesley became established as an intensely practical theologian. Reverend Garry Haller suggests that "a lot of theology in 18th century had a top line: was it spiritual and aesthetically pleasing? Much of it had a middle line: was it intellectually correct? Wesley's theology had a bottom line: does it work?"¹ As Wesley understood and practiced theological discovery and debate, the defining task of the theologian was not so much to formulate elaborate systems, but to help every-day Christians discover, shape, and live out a worldview consistent with their faith claims. "The quintessential practitioner of theology was not the detached academic theologian; it was the pastor/theologian who was actively shepherding Christian disciples in the world."² Theology was indeed a social matter.

Theology done in this holistic way inevitably spawned significant implications for the church, and for society, because neither could remain unaffected by it. Individual

¹ Haller, Gary. "Xtreme Wesley: "No Holiness But Social Holiness!": Available from <http://www.grandrapidsfumc.org/Sermons/2000326.htm>; Internet accessed July 3, 2002.

² Maddox, Randy L. 1994. *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*. Nashville, Tennessee: Kingswood Books, 17.

Christians could no longer hide behind the safety and sanctity of a personal pursuit for piety. The church could no longer retreat to the security of cathedrals and catechisms, unaware and unmoved by the needs of the world surrounding it. Isolation and blissful detachment from issues and conditions affecting humankind could no longer sustain ecclesiastical credibility. Passive private piety became inconsistent with true obedience to divine purpose. Religion could not be isolated from reality. Theology thus taken seriously required change in people, in organizations, and in society itself. "Wesley believed that theology was intimately related to Christian living aimed to transform personal life and social conditions. The message of the gospel is located in the context of people's lives."³

This holistic view of doctrine was imbued with what Ralph C. Wood calls "three indispensable qualities of Methodism: orthodoxy (right belief), orthopraxy (right practice), and orthopathy (true feeling)."⁴ Runyon coined these terms, and defines them beautifully. "Orthodoxy refers to ... ideas and opinions that conform to those doctrines that are considered normative for the Christian tradition."⁵ Orthopraxy refers to "'right practice' that puts belief into action."⁶ Orthopathy is "from the Greek *ortho* (right) plus *pathos* (feelings, affections, and in the larger sense, *experience*), the new sensitivity to and participation in spiritual reality that mark genuine faith."⁷

Clarity and conviction about the foundational beliefs of Christian faith and practice were essential to the Methodist movement. Lying at the heart of Wesley's orthodoxy was the doctrine of the universal atonement. Some protestant reformers had become convinced that the atonement was limited to an elect who were predestined to salvation. But Wesley persisted vehemently that the salvation wrought on the Cross was available for every living human soul. There was no limit to salvation, and no soul beyond redemption. This universal redemption had significant implications for evangelism because it meant that no Christian could legitimately ignore the spiritually lost. No true believer could abdicate responsibility to witness. Wesley himself spent his life on a torrid pace of preaching and evangelizing.

But orthodoxy to be real and relevant needed an outlet. Faith without works is dead, and Wesley recognized that orthodoxy alone is not sufficient. Orthopraxy is required both in personal piety and in social action. "If orthodoxy is the root of the Wesleyan witness, then orthopraxy is its fruit. The Wesleys taught that right doctrine issues in right practice. It is impossible to believe that we have been justified by Christ's atoning

³ Tangunan, Wilfredo. "John Wesley." *Dictionary of Modern Western Theology I* (1998-1999). Available from

http://people.bu.edu/wildman/WierdWildWeb/courses/mwt/dictionary/mwt_themes_430_wesley.htm: Internet accessed July 4, 2002, 14.

⁴ Wood, Ralph C. "Lost In Wonder, Love, and Praise: The Witness Of The Wesleys." *Christian Ethics Today* (June 2002 Issue Online). Available from

<http://www.christianethicstoday.com/Issue/028/028%May-June-200.htm>: Internet accessed July 3, 2002.

⁵ Runyon, Theodore. 1998. *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today*. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 147.

⁶ Ibid, 147.

⁷ Ibid, 149.

death, they insisted, without living a sanctified life."⁸ For the Methodists, the ultimate solution to the human condition was sanctification, because without holiness, no one will see the Lord. Although justification and regeneration are distinct, they are inseparable in terms of complete salvation, just as justification and sanctification are distinct but inseparable. Wesley asserted: "... at the same time a man is justified, sanctification properly begins. For when he is justified, he is 'born again,' 'born from above,' 'born of the Spirit;' which although it is not (as some suppose) the whole process of sanctification, is doubtless the gate of it."⁹ For Wesley, justification and regeneration are prerequisites, assumed, and presupposed in sanctification.

Wesley's concern to consistently maintain this holistic understanding of salvation is unmistakable and foundational to his orthopraxy. Randy L. Maddox points out: "This concern is evident in the way he weaves together the juridical emphasis of salvation as forgiveness (justification) with the therapeutic emphasis of salvation as healing the various faculties or dimensions of the human soul (sanctification)"¹⁰ When salvation is viewed in these holistic terms, ministry to the physical needs of people is not seen only as a key to offering them salvation, but as truly a vital and integral part of Christ's saving work. There is a clear connection between holiness of life and works of love.

For Wesley, these are the necessary elements for sanctification: "First of all piety... Secondly, all works of mercy ... feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, entertaining the stranger, visiting those that are in prison or sick ... This is the repentances which are necessary to full sanctification."¹¹ It is striking how consistently Wesley connects engagements in ministry to and with the poor ('works of mercy') to the existence of an authentic sanctified life. Therefore, social involvement was an inseparable component of Wesley's keystone doctrine of sanctification. "In all this we see that one central aspect of Wesley's rationale for connecting the reality of sanctification (or Christlikeness) in our lives to our active ministry to and with the poor was his conviction of the wholistic nature of salvation – as modeled by Christ."¹²

But there is one more aspect of this holistic salvation that has social implications. Orthodoxy alone was not the complete answer any more than orthopraxy alone was sufficient. "Believing the right things, plus doing the right things, still does not add up to what Wesley considers essential."¹³ There must be a third factor. For Wesley, orthodoxy (the universal atonement), and orthopraxy (works of mercy driven by a holy life) were maintained and sustained by what Wood calls orthopathy, "a true feeling of God's presence."¹⁴ Acknowledgement of the emotive aspect of holistic salvation finds its source in John Wesley's own conversion. While reading Luther's commentary on Romans, Wesley felt his heart 'strangely warmed'. That radical transformation of

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Wesley, John. "On God's Vineyard" (107). Available from: [wysiwyg://14/http://gbmg-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/serm-107.stm](http://www.gbmg-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/serm-107.stm): Internet accessed July 15, 2002.

¹⁰ Maddox, Randy L. "Visit The Poor." *TF Views*, January 2001, 42.

¹¹ Wesley, John. "Social Involvement"

¹² Maddox. "Visit The Poor", 43.

¹³ Runyon, 149.

¹⁴ Wood, 6.

personal, inward spiritual renewal is what stoked the fires of revival that raged through a nation and eventually gave birth to a global Methodist movement. There was no denying the force and effect of it any more than one can deny one's own conversion.

However, there was inherent danger in this emphasis on feeling. People do need to truly experience God to the very depth of their emotions, and really know in their heart that they are born again. But 'feeling' alone can fool us and lead us into all kinds of emotional and spiritual pitfalls. In Wesley's arsenal of argument, there were three ways to keep this wonderful praiseworthy feeling from getting out of kilter. First, orthopathy was always viewed in light of orthodoxy and orthopraxy, as an aspect of accurate and authentic Christian faith and practice, and not as separate from it. This holistic outlook kept all three in check. Secondly, Wesley knew and understood the importance of the internal disciplines of prayer, Scripture, fasting, meditation, and corporate worship if the initial feeling experienced at conversion was to grow into a full-blown profound love and adoration for God and humanity. Thirdly, there was a strong social element to orthopathy. As Wood suggests, "Wesley's orthopathy was profoundly sacramental."¹⁵ Sacraments were designed with the full intention of being celebrated in community with other believers. "*Orthopathic* experience is *social*. If Christian faith is brought into existence by receiving divine mercy and love, it cannot be contained within the isolated individual. What is received demands further expression; that is its nature."¹⁶ It was clearly a social spiritual exercise.

In addition to Wesley's doctrine, the Wesleyan 'quadrilateral, and the 'indispensable' qualities, there were three other ways in which this holistic salvation espoused by Wesley with their accompanying social implications can be described. First, this holistic salvation includes all of creation. "Wesley understood God's goal as the transformation of this present age, restoring health and holiness to God's creation. God therefore enters into the life of the world to renew the creature after the divine image and the creation after the divine will."¹⁷ God is Lord over all creation, and He is concerned with the redemption of a fallen world, just as He is concerned with the redemption of a fallen humanity. For Wesley, knowing that God highly values and deeply cherishes creation means that humankind must take its responsibility for its ordained leadership and management of it seriously. In his sermon "On the Education of Children", Wesley counsels parents to teach children to respect creation:

*"[Parents] will not allow [their children] to hurt or give pain to anything that has life. They will not permit them to rob birds' nests, much less to kill anything without necessity; not even snakes, which are as innocent as worms, or toads, which, notwithstanding their ugliness, and the ill name they lie under, have been proved over and over to be as harmless as flies."*¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Runyon, 163.

¹⁷ Runyon, 169.

¹⁸ Wesley, John. "On the Education Of Children". Available from: [wysiwyg://3/http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/serm-095.stm](http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/serm-095.stm): Internet accessed July 15, 2002.

As for children, so for adults. Christians cannot be concerned with redemption in such a way that their Christianity means that they withdraw from God's creation. For Wesley, then, sanctifying faith cannot be divorced from responsible treatment and care for the environment. He describes human misuse of the earth – seeing it apart from its existence in God and God's life in it, as 'practical atheism'. Holiness means caring for God's world. This has enormous ecological implications for the church today.

Secondly, this holistic salvation includes all of humanity, and is grounded in the twin doctrines of creation and redemption. "This means that all people are made in the *imago Dei* and through Christ, act for the salvation of others – no human person falls outside the ambit of Christian concern and responsibility (grace)."¹⁹ Wesley illustrates his understanding of the complementary nature of the relationship between the order of creation and the order of redemption through grace as forming the basis for Christian concern for all people (no matter how depraved, disreputable, or degraded) by declaring this testimony: "A poor wretch cries to me for alms: I look, and see him covered with dirt and rags. But through these I see one that he has an immortal spirit made to know, and love, and dwell with God to eternity. I honour him for his Creator's sake."²⁰ If God is God, and humankind is made in His image – natural, political, and moral image – then each person is significant. Every individual has value. Every human being has a soul to be saved and a life to be restored to that image. To live as a holy, sanctified Christian, then, meant taking into account the fact that our neighbours – including the poor, the slaves, the sick, the unlearned, the unemployed, the addicted, the elderly, those in prison – all are made in the image of God. True holy living required that they be treated as such. This has enormous social implications for the church today.

Thirdly, this holistic salvation includes the entire person – body, mind, and will. One way in which Wesley defined this notion was in terms of the necessity for the Christian to experience and evidence both inward and outward holiness. Inward holiness involved a total commitment to God by centering one's life completely on Him. It meant a genuine experience of regeneration that drove the Christian to personal devotion deepened by prayer and spiritual discipline that was profound and dynamic. It meant transformation of the heart. Outward holiness demanded that the daily life of the Christian would generate clear evidence of the inward change. It meant not only a life of personal piety, but of generous giving, sacrificial service, and continual obedience to God's will. Wesley believed that inward and outward holiness were inseparable. They were two aspects of one holiness. Inward holiness without outward holiness turns the life internally to an existence of empty piety. Outward holiness without inward holiness can result in good works being done for purely humanistic motives.

Another way in which Wesley defines this notion is in terms of 'Christian perfection' or 'perfect love'. Dr. Victor Shepherd states: "Love to God and neighbour was, however,

¹⁹ Nix, Echol Lee Jr. "Themes In Wesley's Theological Understanding." *Dictionary of Modern Western Theology*. Available from: http://pepeople.bu.edu/wwildman/WierdWildWeb/courses/mwt/dictionary/mwt_themes_430_wesley.htm: Internet accessed July 4, 2002, 11.

²⁰ Wesley, John. "On Pleasing Men". *Works*, VII, 145.

the essence of Christian perfection. Any notion of inner sanctity which undervalued human fellowship Wesley regarded as a contradiction of God's work."²¹ It could be said with some level of accuracy that one word summarizes the theology of Wesley – he defined what true religion was in terms of love. But sincere love for God by its very nature issued forth a sincere love for humanity. Wesley was well aware of the pietists, who claimed to love God, but felt no obligation to express that love to their brother. He was equally conscious of the deists who claimed to love their brother, but made no confession of love for God. For Wesley, both of these options were not only unthinkable, but unbiblical – even unchristian. He insisted that Scripture describes a God who demands both. One of Wesley's favorite verses was Galatians 5:6: "The one thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." Shepherd concludes: "While love for God was logically prior, love for God always implied love for the neighbour who was alike the beneficiary of God's love."²²

In fact, it was this love for God and love for your neighbour that was the defining mark of a Methodist. John Wesley himself outlines this with clarity and power in his sermon entitled "The Character Of A Methodist":

"Who is a Methodist, according to your own account? I answer: A Methodist is one who has "the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him;" one who "loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength. God is the joy of his heart, and the desire of his soul; ... His heart is ever lifted up to God, at all times and in all places. In this he is never hindered, much less interrupted, by any person or thing. In retirement or company, in leisure, business, or conversation, his heart is ever with the Lord. ... "

"And while he thus always exercises his love to God, by praying without ceasing, rejoicing evermore, and in everything giving thanks, this commandment is written in his heart, 'That he who loveth God, loveth his brother also.' ... His heart is full of love to all mankind. ... As he has time, he "does good unto all men;" unto neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies: And that in every possible kind; not only to their bodies, by "feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting those that are sick or in prison;" but much more does he labour to do good to their souls."

"These are the principles and practices of our sect; these are the marks of a true Methodist."²³

In that same article he clarifies that though these qualities were to be found in every Methodist, they were not unique to Methodism, but were indeed characteristics that should be apparent in every Christian. This has enormous lifestyle implications for the church today.

²¹ Shepherd, Victor. "John Wesley and Sanctification". Available from: <http://www.victoshepherd.on.ca/Wesley/john.htm>: Internet accessed July 3, 2002.

²² Ibid.

²³ Wesley, John. "The Character of a Methodist". Available from: <http://qbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/caharmeth.stm>: Internet accessed July 6, 2002.

For Wesley, the fulfillment of these principles demanded two things. First, it required the spiritual renewal of the individual through personal holiness expressed through life within the Christian community of faith. Secondly, it insisted upon the renewal of society through social holiness expressed through Christian social service to society.

Perhaps it was Wesley's pre-conversion experience with the Holy Club at Oxford that sparked this notion, but he knew that personal growth was a corporate matter. He was concerned that new converts would not be endangered in their faith by being isolated from the strength of the community of faith. He wanted to ensure that they were protected from incorrect doctrine, and were properly and intentionally nurtured. He understood that spiritual development was not automatic, but that it required training, instruction, discipline, accountability, and plenty of support. One simply could not go it alone as a Christian, and grow. Perhaps this is what prompted him to write so emphatically on this issue. "Christianity is essentially a social religion", says Wesley, "and to turn it into a solitary religion is indeed to destroy it. ... When I say this is essentially a social religion, I mean not only that it cannot subsist so well, but that it cannot subsist at all without society, without living and conversing with other men."²⁴

Historical evidence of the profound truth of those words can be seen by comparing the development of the ministries initiated by Wesley and George Whitfield. Whitfield was a contemporary of Wesley, and was a powerful preacher whose voice thundered out the Gospel to multitudes of eager hearts who responded in droves to his preaching. He preceded his revival campaigns with an aggressive and prolific letter-writing ministry, and hundreds came to his meetings as a result. Wesley was also a remarkably effective preacher who traveled probably a half million miles on horseback as an itinerant evangelist. Both founded Christian movements. Both made remarkable contributions to the development of the Christian church. Yet despite accomplishing much good for the Kingdom, and although a residue of influence encouraged some important ministries, the movement founded by Whitfield faded out. The Wesleyan revival, on the other hand, experienced explosive growth and gave rise to the global Methodist movement and numerous holiness denominations. What was the reason? Perhaps it was because Wesley understood the social dimension of spiritual growth. Personal piety and spiritual growth simply could not be left to chance. By organizing converts and converted alike into groups designed to move its members on to spiritual maturity, it minimized the risk that followers of Christ would drift from their new found faith, and maximized their potential of moving on to a life of personal holiness.

Using his genius for organization, Wesley established a series of fellowship groups that provided instruction, correction, accountability, and a means of spiritual support and direction. This strategy restored the close fellowship and intimate sense of community that had been lost when rural villages were victimized by the mass migration of country populations to the city in the wave of the urbanization that was part of eighteenth

²⁴ Wesley, John. "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount – Discourse IV". *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*. Ed. Albert C. Outler & Richard P. Heitzenrater. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1991, 195.

century industrialization in Britain. In the turmoil of this transition, Wesley lashed out at church leaders who criticized him for his efforts, with a caustic condemnation of his own, exposing what he perceived to be a blatant lack of care and concern within the community of faith:

"Which of those Christians had any such fellowship with these? Who watched over them in love: Who marked their growth in grace? Who advised and exhorted them from time to time? Who prayed with them and for them, as they had need? This and this alone is Christian fellowship: But, alas! Where is it to be found? Look east or west, north or south; name what parish you please: Is this Christian fellowship there? Rather, are not the bulk of the parishioners a mere rope of sand? What Christian connexion is there between them? What intercourse in spiritual things? What watching over each other's souls? What bearing of one another's burdens?"²⁵

In taking this strong stand, Wesley claimed that he was basing his action on the spirit of and example of early Christianity "where catechumens were advised to "watch over each other" and where more experienced Christians "took account of their names ... that they might instruct, rebuke, exhort, and pray with them, according to their necessities."²⁶

The fellowship groups took three main forms. The first is the class meeting which was comprised of a group of ten to twelve persons guided by an assigned leader, whose responsibility was not only to lead the group, but to visit each member of the class weekly. Although these weekly meetings were compulsory, a member needed only to demonstrate a desire for salvation. No other spiritual prerequisite was required for membership. Groups were widely divergent in their makeup. They were a place where rich and poor, educated and illiterate, employee and employer gathered to discuss spiritual matters as peers and as equals. Members even included people from other denominations.

The second fellowship group was the Band. These were smaller groups of four to six people, and because of the intimate level of the discussions, these were usually gender-specific gatherings. Although every Methodist was a member of a class, participation in a band was voluntary and in fact it is estimated that about one in five Methodists chose to be part of a band. No leader was assigned, and there was mutual accountability, and a high level of trust. It was expected that band members witnessed to a confession of faith and an assurance of salvation. Often, it was in the bands where class leaders had opportunity to be held accountable and to be upheld spiritually. Wesley's intent was that the band's purpose be based on James 5:16: "Confess you faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." A brutal honesty often prevailed in the discussions as spiritual issues were unwrapped. At each meeting, each member was required to submit to the spiritual scrutiny of the band by responding in complete honesty to the following four questions: "1. What known sins have you committed since

²⁵ Wesley, John. "Extracts from Wesley's, A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists". Available from: <http://www.wesleyanforum.org/afws/regionalevents/people.htm>: Internet accessed July 6, 2002, 2.

²⁶ Runyon, 122-23.

our last meeting? 2. What temptations have you met with? 3. How were you delivered? 4. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?"²⁷

The third main group was the select society. This was a smaller group of about three or four people and was designed for those who were most committed to pursuing after entire sanctification. In addition to the accountability experienced in the bands, members of these select societies also engaged in financial support for the poor and needy through rigorous self-denial and self-sacrifice, and there was a strong disciplinary element.

For Wesley, Christianity was anything but a 'solitary religion'. Holistic salvation, pursuit of personal piety, and growth in the life of holiness was very much a community effort in early Methodism. And how well did it work? Just ask Wesley himself. "We introduced Christian fellowship where it was utterly destroyed. And the fruits of it have been peace, joy, love, and zeal for every good word and work."²⁸

However, just as Christianity was not a solitary religion, and had social implications through the classes, bands, and societies, holiness and personal piety was not a solitary pursuit, and had social implications through good works and social service. Wesley felt that holiness that did not make a difference was not holiness at all. Sanctity of life that did nothing to transform society was empty pietism. In 1739, the year after his conversion, John Wesley wrote these prophetic words in the Preface to "Hymns and Sacred Poems":

*"The gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness. "Faith working by love" is the length and breadth and depth and height of Christian perfection. "This commandment have we from Christ, that he who loves God, love his brother also;" and we manifest our love "by doing good unto all men..."*²⁹

For Wesley, true holiness results in social action. The Wesleyan message is one of perfect love, a love that is not only made perfect toward God, but toward others also. Just as holiness will manifest itself by purity of thought and behaviour, so it is legitimized and recognized through genuine concern for the spiritual and social well being. Armed with this life transforming conviction, Wesley employed the same gifts he used to establish the system of classes, bands, and societies, and set them to work to change the world.

Certainly, conditions in England during the time of Wesley needed help. Dr. Brook Thelander records Wes Tracy's graphic account of what life was like for many unfortunate people:

"When the storm that was the industrial revolution howled through the winter of England's world in the eighteenth century, it blew humanity into the cities like maple

²⁷ Wesley, John. "The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies (Extracts)". Available from: <http://www.wesleyanforum.org/afws/regionalevents/rules.htm>: Internet accessed July 6, 2002, 2.

²⁸ Wesley, John. "Extracts from Wesley's, A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists", 2.

²⁹ Adams, Mark. "Wesley and the Social Gospel". Available from: <http://www.antchurch.com/sermon/WesleysSocialGospel.html>: Internet accessed July 4, 2002, 1.

leaves before a cold November wind. And it left them, like leaves, piled in random heaps. Housing conditions were such that ten persons per unfurnished room was common. Diseases like typhoid, smallpox, dysentery, and cholera went nearly unchecked. Horse manure was sometimes piled fourteen feet high on both sides of London's streets. In the larger cities, graveyard operators maintained "poor holes" – large common graves left open until the daily flow of corpses finally filled them. Every sixth building in London was an alehouse. Gambling and gin drinking became national pastimes. Sporting events included cockfighting, bullbaiting, and hangings. Children had a choice of either entering the sweatshops or living on the streets. Only one child in twenty-five attended school of any kind. ("John Wesley: Friend of the Poor," Herald of Holiness 80:2 [1991])³⁰

One main point of attack was to alleviate the suffering of the poor. Wesley challenged his followers to put their personal holiness to work and get personally involved with helping the poor. One way to do that was to visit them. "One great reason why the rich, in general have so little sympathy for the poor, is because they so seldom visit them. Hence it is, that, according to the common observation, one part of the world does not know what the other suffers. Many of them do not know, because they do not care to know: they keep out of the way of the knowing it; and then plead their voluntary ignorances as an excuse for their hardness of heart."³¹ His message was clear. Holiness demanded that Christians not be satisfied to help at a distance – that they do not 'pass on the other side'.

Another way to put holiness to work in order to help the poor was for Christians to live a life of self-denial. Wesley believed that where your treasure is, there your heart is also. Therefore, for genuine holiness to mean anything at all, it had to invade the pocket book. This concept had enormous implications on how Wesley instructed Methodists to make and spend their money. He outlines his teaching in a wonderful sermon on the topic entitled simply, "The Use of Money". His first instruction was to 'gain all you can'. He says: "Here we may speak like the children of the world: We meet them on their ground. And it is our bounden duty to do this: We ought to gain all we can gain."³² Wesley cautioned that this 'gaining' was to be done without compromising holiness of life – 'without buying gold too dear', 'without hurting our mind any more than our body', 'without hurting our neighbour', and 'without hurting our neighbour in his body'. "Gain all you can, by common sense, by using in your business all the understanding which God has given you."³³ His second instruction was to "Save all you can. Do not throw

³⁰ Thelander, Brook. "Invitation To A Journey". Available from: <http://www.epworthchapelonthegreen.org/wesleystudies/journey/invitation12.html>: Internet accessed July 2, 2002.

³¹ Wesley, John. "On Visiting The Sick." Available from: <http://www.godrules.net/library/wsermons/wsormons098.htm>: Internet accessed July 15, 2002.

³² Wesley, John. "The Use Of Money.". Available from: <http://www.ccel.org/w/wesley/sermons/sermons-html/serm-050.html>: Internet accessed July 7, 2002, 2.

³³ Ibid, 4.

the precious talent into the sea: Leave that folly to heathen philosophers."³⁴ Spending habits needed to reflect a holy life. Money was not to be wasted on gratifying the 'desires of the flesh', 'the desire of the eye', 'the pride of life', or by giving it as an inheritance for others to throw it away.

It seems that the Methodists were quite effective in fulfilling these first two instructions. Many of them became quite wealthy and well to do. But it was the third instruction that truly tested the mettle of the depth of holiness in the heart of the Methodist. "Give all you can."³⁵, says Wesley. Here again, he provided instructions on how to do it.

"First, provide things needful for yourself; food to eat, raiment to put on, whatever nature moderately requires for preserving the body in health and strength. Secondly, provide these for your wife, your children, your servants, or any others who pertain to your household. If when this is done there be an overplus left, then "do good to them that are in the household of faith." If there be an overplus still, "as you have opportunity, do good unto all men ... For all that is laid out in this manner is really given to God. You "render unto God the things that are God's" not only by what you give to the poor, but also by that which you expend in providing things needful for yourself and your household."³⁶

To further put the spending of money into the context of a holy life expended for the benefit of the poor through a life of self-denial, Wesley challenged Methodists to ask these four probing question as a test as to their attitude toward their wealth and how they were using it:

"(1.) In expending this, am I acting according to my character? Am I acting herein, not as a proprietor, but as a steward of my Lord's goods? (2.) Am I doing this in obedience to his word? In what Scripture does he require me so to do? (3.) Can I offer up this action, this expense, as a sacrifice to God through Jesus Christ? (4.) Have I reason to believe that for this very work I shall have a reward at the resurrection of the just?"³⁷

So seriously did Wesley take this principle to heart that he applied it to his own life in a remarkable way. At the height of his popularity and fame, Wesley could have become an enormously wealthy man. Instead he applied his own teaching to his own life and lived on a stipend of twenty-eight pounds a year and gave the rest away to the poor and needy. So seriously did Wesley believe in this concept that he was convinced of its power to really impact society and change the lot of so many unfortunate souls. It is the way Christianity could really make a difference. So seriously was Wesley convinced that this life of holiness and self-denial was an expression of holistic salvation, that he had little patience for those who would enjoy the benefits of the first two aspects of his injunctions (Make all you can, and save all you can) but failed to observe the third one (Give all you can). In a scathing indictment on Methodists who were getting rich without contributing to social needs, he blames the fact that Christianity was making such a

³⁴ Ibid, 5.

³⁵ Ibid, 6.

³⁶ Ibid, 7

³⁷ Ibid7

small impact on society in large measure on the lack of self-denial as an expression of holy living he had observed in some of his followers. He says in his sermon entitled "Causes of the Inefficacy of Chistianity": "O that God would enable me once more, before I go hence and am no more see, to lift up my voice like a trumpet to those who gain and save all they can, but do not give all they can!"³⁸ To do so, Wesley declares, is to "impiously, unjustly, and cruelly detain from [the poor] what your master and theirs lodges in your hands on purpose to supply their wants."³⁹ He continues his rampage: "In the name of God, what are you doing? Do you neither fear God, nor regard man: Why do you not deal your bread to the hungry, and cover the naked with a garment? Have you laid out in your own costly apparel what would have answered both these intentions? Did God command you so to do? Does he commend you for so doing? Did he entrust you with his (not your) goods to this end? And does he now say, "Servant of God, well done?" You well know he does not. This idle expense has no approbation, either from God, or your own conscience. ... Whoever does this ought to be excluded from a Christian society."⁴⁰

"Do you gain all you can, and save all you can? Then you must, in the nature of things, grow rich. Then if you have any desire to escape the damnation of hell, give all you can; otherwise I can have not more hope of your salvation, than that of Judas Iscariot."⁴¹

What more graphic comment could there be to describe Wesley's holistic salvation and its implications for personal and social holiness?

For Wesley, holiness was a verb, and had its greatest manifestation when holy people, gripped by the Holy Spirit, entered the world with a spirit of self-denial and made a difference for God. The impact of his work was remarkable. To help the poor, he not only provided the basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter, but he organized a means to help people find jobs to alleviate their poverty, and established lending centers where people could borrow money to get themselves back on their feet.

To help the illiterate, he provided schooling for children who could not afford to be educated. He set up boarding schools, vocational training centers, schools in the slums, and adult literacy centers. This was in addition to the Sunday schools and weekly classes related to church life.

To address the needs of the sick, he organized the Sick Visitors Corporation. He divided London into sections and appointed forty-six people to visit the sick in assigned areas three times a week, dispensing needed supplies and providing spiritual comfort. He instituted the first free medical clinic in English history out of which came a free

³⁸ Wesley, John. "Causes Of The Inefficacy Of Chistianity". *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*. Ed. Albert C. Outler & Richard P Heitzenrater. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1991, 553

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid, 556

dispensary in 1746 to help alleviate the miseries resulting from a woefully inadequate public health system that particularly victimized the poor. He published a widely distributed and highly accessible book – "Primitive Physick: Or An Easy and Natural Method For Curing Most Diseases" – in which he outlined home remedies for simple illnesses to help people who could not afford to see a doctor. He even designed a machine that was used in a primitive form of electric shock treatment.

Wesley and his army of Methodists also got involved in the penal system and prison reform. Conditions were appalling beyond description. Wesley commented that, after having paid a visit to the Bristol prison, he could not imagine that 'there could be anything like it on this side of hell'. He set about to aggressively and actively recruit people to help him with his work in the prisons, and as early as 1743, visiting of prisoners was incorporated into the rules of the societies that managed Methodist religious activity and social ministry. In fact in 1778, prison ministry became obligatory for Methodist preachers. This had a huge impact on the well being of prisoners and their families. Marquardt describes the wide-ranging sphere of the ministry of the Methodists to prisoners: "They visited the prisoners to read the Bible and pray with them. They submitted petitions for them, provided ties to their kinfolk and the outside world, comforted and encouraged them, and accompanied condemned prisoners to the scaffold amid the hooting of crowds eager for a spectacle."⁴² Wesley also entered the political realm and began to fight for prison reform. So effective were his efforts that he eventually took over the Newgate Prison in Bristol, and established it as a model facility.

Wesley's efforts to engage in social justice is well illustrated in the influence he had in changing the laws of Britain to abolish slavery. In 1774, he wrote what Marquardt calls Wesley's 'theological manifesto' concerning his stance on slavery. "Thoughts on Slavery" was a brief, but frequently used and widely distributed publication that argued for the abolition of slavery. The first section of this pamphlet set out to correct the prejudicial pre-conceived negative notions about the blacks and their land of origin. The second section exposed the oppressive way in which the slaves were procured, the indignities they suffered in the process of being bought and sold, the cruelties they suffered in being captured and transported, and the sheer inhumanity to which they were subjected by the slave owners. He reminded his readers that these people were more than beasts of burden, and that the Creator never intended them to be abused for such a purpose because they were made in the image of God. In the third section, Wesley uttered a passionate plea, using typically colourful and descriptive language, urging the sea captain and slave owners to stop this cruelty, and he held them responsible under God for their actions.

This article had a profound affect on Methodist policy and practice. The first Methodist conference in the United States declared that "slavery was contrary to the laws of God, of man, and of nature, and injurious to the society", and that "it contradicts the instructions of conscience and of pure religion and does that which we would not wish

⁴² Marquardt, Manfred. 1992. *John Wesley's Social Ethics: Praxis and Principle*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 82.

others to do to us or to our folk."⁴³ In 1784, the conference took decisive action in its opposition to slavery by requiring all Methodists to forsake any connection they had with the slave trade, and to free the slaves they had in their possession, which some had already done.

Although the "Thoughts on Slavery" had a huge impact on Methodism, its effect was largely lost on those who profited by the slave trade, as well as on the lawmakers. "No longer content with public statements of position and sermons, calling for prayer and fasting for the emancipation of slaves, Wesley became more and more involved in supporting the anti-slavery leaders, particularly Granville Sharp, Thomas Clarkson, and William Wilberforce."⁴⁴ Although Wesley did not live to see the day when the English Parliament finally outlawed England's participation in the slave trade, his final deathbed letter was an urgent plea written to Wilburforce to keep fighting against slavery until victory was won. "O be not weary of well doing! Go on, in the name of God and in the power of his might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it."⁴⁵

For some, it may seem a long distant connection between holistic salvation and the abolition of slavery, but for Wesley, they were inextricably linked. He believed that if Christianity meant anything at all, it meant making a difference in people's lives, both in their spiritual condition, and in their lot in life on earth. Inactive holiness was a contradiction in terms. Silence was no option for sanctity. Religion that left social injustice unchecked, society's needs unmet, and cultural ills ignored was religion that 'walked on the other side'. And for Wesley, it was no religion at all. Wesley's holistic salvation held enormous implications for both the individual Christian and the corporate church. I think he was right!

⁴³ Ibid, 72

⁴⁴ Ibid, 75

⁴⁵ Wesley, John. "Letter To William Wilburforce". Available from:
<http://gbgm.umc.org/umw/wesley/wilbur.stm>: Internet accessed July 2, 2002

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Women, Men, and the Rock Climber's Rope

Numbers 30

by Captain Michael Ramsay

There was a time when this proverb applied to our culture: a man's word is his bond.

Here we are going to look a little bit here at oaths, vows, and covenants. (For more on this I will quickly plug my book, [Praise The Lord For Covenants](#).)⁴⁶ Specifically we are looking at Numbers 30.⁴⁷ Ronald B. Allen reminds us that, "This chapter is a significant Old Testament text on the subject of the vows."⁴⁸ And Numbers 30:1-2 tells us, "Moses said to the heads of the tribes of Israel: "This is what the Lord commands: When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said." This is important. You will notice this statement does not say, "When a man takes an oath or makes a vow to the Lord, he must not break his word unless..." It simply says that when a man makes a vow to the Lord he must not break his vow (cf. Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:2-3, and Deuteronomy 5:11; 6:3; 23:21-23). We have more than a couple of examples in the scriptures of people faithfully following through on seemingly very difficult vows (cf. for ex. Genesis 28:20–22; Numbers 21:2; Judges 11:30ff.; 1 Samuel 1:11; 14:24; Jonah 1:16; 2:9; Acts 18:18; 21:23; 23:12ff.): One is Hanna. Do you remember the story of Hanna? 1 Samuel 1: Hanna doesn't have any children. Her husband then winds up taking another wife at the same time and has children with this other wife and Hanna then suffers much because of her apparent barrenness so she calls on the Lord, "And she made a vow, saying, 'O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life... (1 Samuel 1:11)." Her husband agrees with her and she obeys her vow. God gives her a son and they give her son right back to God to be raised by the High Priest. This son grows up to be the prophet Samuel.⁴⁹ God rewards their obedience as they follow through on this very difficult vow.

⁴⁶ Captain Michael Ramsay, *Praise The Lord For Covenants: Old Testament wisdom for our world today*, Vancouver, BC: Credo Press, 2010. (c) The Salvation Army. Available on-line:

<http://www.sheepspeak.com/ptl4covenants.htm>

⁴⁷ Gordon J. Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*. Downers Grove, IL : InterVarsity Press, 1981 (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 4), S. 231: The law mentions two kinds of vow: *vows* (*neder*) and *pledges* (*'issār*). The former term is the more common, and here at least means a vow to do something positive such as offering a sacrifice, whereas *'issār* (used only in this chapter; the RSV translates the cognate Aramaic word *'ēsār*, 'interdict' in Daniel 6:7–13.) is a vow of abstinence, a self-imposed fast (cf. 1 Samuel 14:24; Psalm 132:2–5). The Nazirite vow is generally supposed to be an example of a pledge of abstinence (Num. 6), though *neder* is the word used there. But it may simply be that outside this chapter *neder* covers both positive and negative vows.

⁴⁸ Ronald B. Allen, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Pradis CD-ROM:Numbers/Exposition of Numbers/II. The Prospects for the Second Generation to Enter the Promised Land (26:1-36:13)/A. The Preparation for the Triumphal March to the Promised Land, the Second Generation (26:1-32:42)/4. Commands for the second generation on regular offerings, festival offerings, and vows (28:1-30:16)/c. Vows (30:1-16)/(1) The issue of vows to the Lord (30:1-2), Book Version: 4.0.2

⁴⁹ Captain Michael Ramsay 'Jephthah's Parachute: Covenant and Judges 11:29-40' in the *Journal of Aggressive Christianity*. Issue 59 (February - March 2009). Pages 5-10, Available on-line: <http://www.armybarmy.com/JAC/article2-59.html>

Another example is Jephthah. Jephthah vows to sacrifice to the Lord whatever meets him first upon returning from a military victory –it is his only child, his own daughter, who is the first to meet him. As John Wesley comments, Jephthah then fulfils this vow in much the same way as Samuel's parents, offering up his daughter to spend her life in service to God.⁵⁰

Vows are important. They aren't trivial. God takes them seriously. Another example from the Bible about how seriously God takes vows, oaths and covenants is the Gibeonites. Remember them? Moses, as the representative of Israel, is told by God to wipe out the inhabitants of Canaan, which the Gibeonites are (Deuteronomy 7:1-6; 20:16-18). Joshua then, as the next representative of Israel, is tricked into making a competing covenant before God to spare the Gibeonites (Judges 2:2, Joshua 9). God holds the Israelites accountable to both of these covenants (Joshua 9:15): the one to wipe out the Gibeonites and the one to spare them; the one He commanded and the one that He forbade. Israel suffers the consequences of breaking both covenants even though they are opposed to each other (cf. Joshua 9, Judges 2, 2 Samuel 21).⁵¹ God doesn't release us from our covenants just because we disobey them (Numbers 6; Judges 2:1; Romans 3:3-4, 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:10-14; Luke 16:16-16; Mark 10:1-12; Matthew 5:32, 19:9).⁵² The making and taking of oaths, vows and covenants is a very serious matter; therefore, Numbers 30:1-2, "Moses said to the heads of the tribes of Israel: 'This is what the Lord commands: When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.'"

But is this really so? Is there not a time when we may be released from a rash vow or an oath made without thinking? Are there not some incidents when our word isn't actually our bond? Are there not times when we can renege on an oath, a vow or a covenant made with or before the Lord? Numbers 30 does actually seem to allow some exceptions to the principle of keeping of one's word - sort of.

Numbers 30:3-5 records one possible exception:

When a young woman still living in her father's household makes a vow to the LORD or obligates herself by a pledge and her father hears about her vow or pledge but says nothing to her, then all her vows and every pledge by which she obligated herself will

⁵⁰ John Wesley: "It is really astonishing that the general stream of commentators should take it for granted that Jephthah murdered his daughter! If a dog had met Jephthah, would he have offered up that for a burnt offering? No, because God had expressly forbidden this. And had He also not expressly forbidden murder?" and referring to the authority and responsibility for Jephthah to execute his daughter: "For this is expressly limited to all that a man hath, or which is his, that is, which he hath a power over. But the Jews had no power over the lives of their children or servants, but were directly forbidden to take them away, by that great command, thou shalt do no murder." (Notes on the Old Testament).

⁵¹ Captain Michael Ramsay 'Rights and Responsibilities of Covenant' in the *Journal of Aggressive Christianity*. Issue 56, (August-September 2008), pages 48-55. Available on-line: http://www.armybarmy.com/pdf/JAC_Issue_056.pdf

⁵² Captain Michael Ramsay, *Praise The Lord For Covenants: Old Testament wisdom for our world today*, Vancouver, BC: Credo Press, 2010. (c) The Salvation Army, pages 41-60. Available on-line: <http://www.sheepspeak.com./ptl4covenants.htm>

stand. But if her father forbids her when he hears about it, none of her vows or the pledges by which she obligated herself will stand; the LORD will release her because her father has forbidden her.

Numbers 30:6-8 records another possible exception:

If she marries after she makes a vow or after her lips utter a rash promise by which she obligates herself and her husband hears about it but says nothing to her, then her vows or the pledges by which she obligated herself will stand. But if her husband forbids her when he hears about it, he nullifies the vow that obligates her or the rash promise by which she obligates herself, and the Lord will release her.

Numbers 30:10-13 records the 3rd possible exception to this rule about keeping one's word:

If a woman living with her husband makes a vow or obligates herself by a pledge under oath and her husband hears about it but says nothing to her and does not forbid her, then all her vows or the pledges by which she obligated herself will stand. But if her husband nullifies them when he hears about them, then none of the vows or pledges that came from her lips will stand. Her husband has nullified them, and the Lord will release her. Her husband may confirm or nullify any vow she makes or any sworn pledge to deny herself.

There are some important things to realize about the three possible exceptions to keeping one's vows here. I am going to us a question here: We note in Numbers 30 that the exceptions to keeping one's vows apply **only** to women. Men, we notice in Numbers 30, that you can't get out of your vows, oaths, and covenants for any reason (cf. Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:2-3, and Deuteronomy 5:11; 6:3; 23:21-23). The women are the only ones with the loopholes. Now you will also notice that not all women can get out of covenants. Here is the question: There is one group of women who can't get out of their vows no matter how rash they might be. What group is this? Which women, just like men, cannot be released from their oaths, vows, and covenants? Answer: single adult women, Numbers 30:9: "Any vow or obligation taken by a widow or divorced woman will be binding on her."

Why do you think this might be? Why are men and single adult women (widows and divorcees) bound in a way that girls living in their fathers' home and wives living with their husbands are not? The answer to this question is important. When the events in the book of Numbers were taking place, when the Israelites were following the LORD and Moses around the desert for a generation; married women and daughters living at home did not have any authority of their own. They were like the property or the employees of their husbands or fathers. Verses 3-5 record that if a girl makes a vow unbeknownst to her father that -when her dad finds out about it- if he decides that it is a vow which adversely affects her or his family, he can cancel it at that moment. Verses 10-12 state that if a wife makes a vow and her husband finds out about it later and deems that it is a vow that adversely affects her or his family, he can cancel it if he does so right away – if he delays in cancelling it, that will be interpreted as de facto approval. And Verses 6-8 say that if she made a vow before she was married and her husband

didn't know about it, he can cancel it immediately when he finds out about it. So why, in Numbers 30, can wives and daughters get off the hook when the rest of us can't? It is because in those days and in that time wives and daughters – unlike husbands and fathers and single women and unlike wives today - would be similar to employees as far as their authority was concerned. They didn't have the authority to bind their employers.

Let me give you an example. If someone came into our food bank director's office here to get some assistance and she wrote them a voucher for \$1 000 000.00, would they be able to cash it? No, she doesn't have the authority to do that. If someone else on staff volunteered me to speak at an event on a day that I was unavailable or for an event that I deemed inappropriate, would they be able to do that? No – they don't have the authority. Likewise, no one reading this here today, I presume, could call up the President of some country and declare war on them for Canada (or some other nation). We don't have the authority to do that. What the Bible is relating in Numbers 30 is that everyone is bound by their oaths, vows, and promises – as long as they have the authority to make them in the first place. I can't make a vow that someone in the congregation will quit smoking or that the radio will stop playing certain kinds of music. I can't do that because I don't have that authority. But if I vow that the Swift Current Salvation Army will raise over \$100 000.00 during our Christmas campaign, I better do everything in my power to keep that vow because I will be held accountable. Do you see the difference?

That fact is that God will hold us accountable to our covenants as we have the authority to make them. Why is this the case? Why does God hold us to every vow that we have the authority to make? Why do our vows, oaths and covenants that we make with God not break – even if we want them to? A big reason is that our covenants protect us. They are often how God saves us. You have seen rock climbing demonstrations before when people climb up the face of mountains, where there is almost nothing to hold onto? They climb up these really dangerous cliffs with all of these ropes and equipment. Picture this: The climber climbs up and up and up and then it happens: she slips, her hands fall, her legs and her feet lose their hold. She falls and then what happens? The rope catches her. She is saved by this tie that binds her to the mountain. That, my friends, is what oaths, vows, and covenants are when they are made with or before the LORD. They are the ties that save us when all else fails. They are a means by which God saves us when we are falling ultimately towards our death. This is why they do not break no matter what we tell ourselves.

God saves us via the oaths, vows, and promises through which we are tied to Him. Thomas B. Dozeman states that in ancient Israel, "Failure to fulfill a vow threatened to profane the sanctuary, influencing the health of the whole community"⁵³ And praise the Lord for covenants because one of their main characteristics (that we see in Numbers 30) is even if for some reason we want to be freed from them, even if for some reason we want to be cut loose, even if for some reason we want to break free and plunge to our death, God will not release us from our covenants. Unless otherwise specified, our covenants last until death do we part. As long as we still have breath in our body, God is

⁵³ Thomas B. Dozeman, *Numbers*. (NIB II. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1998), 231.

still pulling us back to him (John 3:16). He will not let us go. He will never leave us nor forsake us (Romans 3:3,4). God promised us as recorded in Genesis 12 and God covenanted with us as recorded in Genesis 15 that as mankind sins, God would first die rather than force all humanity to suffer the punishment we would otherwise deserve. And He did. Jesus died on the cross because of our unfaithfulness and Jesus rose again so that we can all rise with Him and live a fully sanctified and holy life. So let us do that.

If there are any of us who have not been living up to our covenants with the Lord or before God with one another, I would encourage us to do so from here forward. When we don't live up to our covenants, God doesn't forsake us or let the tie break. When we are not living up to our covenants it is like we are that rock climber and we are just dangling by a strand from the face of that mountain. But when we are living in a proper covenant with God and each other, then we are on the rock that lasts and we can climb to new heights tied to our Lord and our salvation and we can view the world like we have never seen it before.

So then, as this is so, I would encourage us now - if for some reason we haven't been living in a strong covenanted relationship with God and our neighbours - to confess to our Lord, repent of our sins and draw on the strength of that climber's cord that is binding us to the mountain of eternal life. Let us draw on the cord of His life and of His covenant and let us experience the joy of His salvation for now and forever more.

www.sheepspeak.com

Without Vision the People Perish

By Erin Wikle

A small group of us met for prayer, praise, and discipleship training, as is a daily practice for our Corps – yes, Corps. (For those who have been following my family's journey as Western transplanted soldiers in the South, the expression of the Army in Lebanon very recently received Corps status. Hallelujah!)

After a period of worship and prayer, we were reminded that, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18 KJV) and were encouraged to ask God, then and there, for a fresh vision. Easy enough.

"[...] Fresh vision, Lord!"

Immediately an iconic picture came to mind.

A vision of black and white, a small group of U.S. soldiers struggle together to hoist a flag upright into rough terrain. Are you with me? The Battle of Iwo Jima. This was the well-known WWII scene where U.S. heroic military raise the American flag in victory over the Japanese Empire.

As I asked the Lord what this meant, I realized the picture was actually different than I'd first perceived. Instead of a military group, I saw Salvationists, all in full uniform. Together, they labored in sweat and agony to raise the banner of The Salvation Army. The soil was rugged, in fact, it wasn't soil at all, but hard concrete that had appeared to have once been a foundation now broke to pieces. As the flag was raised and began to unfurl, the cross of Christ could be seen shining through it, as though covering, though not masking, the well recognized Army banner.

I quickly put my pen to paper and began to write what I saw. In this, God began to speak and clarify this picture. It was a beautiful moment.

You see, before the vision came, submission took place. Sure, it was momentary, but it was still submission – a surrendering of self with a simple desire, "To be assured of what I could not see!" I prayed these exact words: *"Father, show me your faithfulness and give me a vision for our family's future. I pray for a clear vision from you; I don't want to be distracted by my own thoughts, desires or ideas."*

The Lord gave me a clear picture, one of iconic and historical semblance, one I wouldn't forget. He assured me of a future in continued partnership, "laboring in sweat and agony" with the Army. A future where other Salvationists equally committed to the cause would toil by my side to raise the banner of God's Great Army where faulty foundations once lay. A future where before Christ would cover (approve) the great work of the red, yellow, and blue. A future in service and dedication, of sacrifice and long-suffering.

What a vision! What a promise! What an encouragement! I'll take it!

We should be encouraged when the Lord speaks, provides vision, and moves us to a place of action. This God of ours is not a watchman! He has not crafted and set us into motion to simply stand back and see what happens. No, he's an interactive and always engaging God, intrigued and in love with his creation.

This is why we cannot seek satisfaction from last year's, last month's, last week's vision – not when he holds something new for us today. Scripture says otherwise, we will *perish!* Let's be a people who are always seeking fresh vision from the Lord, be it for our Division, Corps, self, or loved one who doesn't know Jesus.

So, I dare you – ask! “Lord, give me a vision!” And when he does, pray and tell your Corps Officer or Divisional Commander. Be confident and assured that God is *still* doing a new work and desires that we, faithful Soldiers, take part in it!

“Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see” (Hebrews 11:1 NLT).

Repent and Do the Works You Did at First

Part 3 of a 3 part series

by Major Howard Webber

William Booth said, “I do not want another ecclesiastical corps cumbering the earth. When The Salvation Army ceases to be a militant body of red hot men and women whose business is the saving of souls, I hope it will vanish utterly.” What a word!

A message for the Army today

The Founder’s words reflect Christ’s message to the Church at Ephesus in Revelation. It is a timeless message – a message for today’s Salvation Army:

“I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men...You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

Yet this I hold against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.” (Revelation 2:2-5)

What has been lost

Has our movement’s erosion over the past decades been God gradually removing our lampstand from where he once placed it? Certainly we work hard and are doing much that Christ would commend, but we are not doing what once we did. We may well have acknowledged the height from which we have fallen, yet tragically, so much of our response to that knowledge has been about saving ourselves from extinction, restoring our numbers, climbing back.

Over twenty years of church growth principles, conferences and councils, seminars and studies has done little to stop our terminal decline. None of these things will save us. None of these things will end the drought, the all-consuming locust or the plague that threatens to destroy us. God alone can save us, but we have yet to reach the point of utter helplessness and humility where we acknowledge that God and God alone can save us.

“When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, 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 I will hear from heaven and forgive their sin and will heal their land.” 2 Chron 7: 13-15

We have yet to be troubled enough, anxious enough, burdened enough to pray as we ought. Our prayers have yet to reach an intensity, a passion, a fervency, where

1. we ache for God and what he desires;
2. we see the lost as he sees them;
3. we ache for the lost with the longing he has; and
4. we get rid of everything that gets in the way of our hunger after him and our longing after them.

Send the fire

Fire came down supernaturally upon Moses' offering Lev 9:24, David's offering 1 Chron 21:26, Solomon's offering 2 Chron 7:1, Elijah's offering, 1 Kings 18:38. It was fire coming down supernaturally from heaven in the self-same way that 'lit up' those early day apostles (Acts 2: 3-4), and has revived God's people and refocused their attention and energies on the eternal issues, and drawn countless masses to Christ and his cross through the ages since.

'Tis fire we want, 'tis fire we need, send the fire.' SASB 203; we readily sing it, but is it true? How much do we want God's Holy Spirit power? We have yet to reach the desperation and despair of men like John Knox who wept before the Lord, "Give me Scotland or I die."

What we need from God is his burden for the lost. Listen to St Paul, "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race." (Romans 9: 2-3). It isn't about being an evangelist, but rather, having a burden that causes us to plead and pray relentlessly to God to do something until he does, with the attitude, "If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies. If they perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees. Let no one go there unwarned and unprayed for." Charles H Spurgeon.

Where, today, are there people anxious for the lost, weeping for the lost, pleading for the lost? Who truly cares?

Funeral Speak

by Tina Laforce

When my friend asked me to speak on November 10th at her dad's memorial service, I was lost for words. I replied that I will pray about it and will get back to her. I felt privileged to be asked to do such a task. I prayed for direction and the boldness to push through the barriers that some of the people present were not interested in the things of God. I received prayer from my church. No matter my anxiety, apprehension and my fears, I went forward and drove through 'iffy' roads to Spruce Grove. God was with me through it all. The enemy tried to get me to back down but he was not successful. I know God used me to bring forth a powerful message and everyone present listened! All my praise goes to Him!

First of all I just want to say that Jesus himself experienced grief. He understands the feeling of grief and sorrow. He lost his friend Lazarus. In John 11:17-36

So Jesus made the trip to Bethany to attend the funeral. There were friends and family present along with Lazarus's sisters Martha and Mary. Martha went out to meet Jesus and she was weeping. In verse 23, Jesus says. "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said to her, **"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"** She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!"

He cares for you. "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Isaiah 53:4"

We can trust in Him to carry our pain. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee." Psalm 55:22

We are all sinners and eternally separated from God. **"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"** ...Because we are sinners, we are condemned to death. **"For the wages of sin is death"** These are found in **Romans 3:23 and 6:23.**

Some people think they are heaven-bound, based on a life of compassion and good deeds. But that's not true. In Ephesians 2:9. It says **'not of works, lest anyone should boast'**. **Because of our sinful nature**, we have a sin debt that we owe to God but no way to pay for it. None of our solutions - living a moral life, being religious, or doing more good deeds - can take care of our problem. No church, no lodge, no good works can save you.

Yet God has provided the solution - one that both satisfies His justice and grants us mercy. He sent His Son to pay the penalty we owed. He willingly took our place on the cross and experienced the full measure of the Lord's wrath against our sinfulness. In dying for us, Christ secured our salvation by paying the debt for all our past, present, and future sins. He died in our place. He became our substitute. When we trust in Jesus and surrender our life to Him, He becomes our personal Savior and Lord.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16

. . . God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” Romans 5:8. And in V 17 & 18 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

In **Acts 16:30-31**, the Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas: “. . . ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ And they said, **‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved’**”

“God . . . commandeth all men everywhere to repent” Acts 17:30.

Since we are in a world of sin and we have a sinful nature, we are sinners.

In **Luke 18:13**, the sinner prayed: **“God be merciful to me a sinner.”**

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Romans 10:13.

Whosoever includes you.

Simply believe on Him as the one who bore your sin, died in your place, was buried, and whom God resurrected. His resurrection powerfully assures that the believer can claim everlasting life when Jesus is received as Savior. Just take God at His word and claim His salvation by faith. Believe, and you will be saved. Remember, God does the saving. All of it!

If you believe on Him as your crucified, buried, and risen Savior, you receive forgiveness for all of your sins and His gift of eternal salvation by faith.

Only those who have entered into a relationship with Jesus through faith in Him will be welcomed into heaven. If you're wondering, **“How can I have eternal life? How do I get the assurance that I am a child of God and that I will go to heaven?”** Those who repent of their sins and trust Jesus will live eternally, going to heaven when they die and enjoying the new heavens and the new earth on the future day of their own bodily resurrection. Please! Let God save you this very moment. Be sure you are

saved. If you lose your soul, you miss Heaven and lose all. Apart from Christ, we will be separated from God for all eternity. I am asking you the most important question of life. Your joy or your sorrow for all eternity depends upon your answer.

Are you saved? It is not a question of how good you are, nor if you are a church member, but are you saved? Many say. God is merciful, loving and how can he send anyone to hell? Yes, God is loving and has provided the gift of His Son to take away the sins of the world. He is also a Holy God and sin is not allowed in Heaven. That's why by Jesus's death and resurrection, we have the forgiveness and cleansing of our sin.

As soon as I heard that Jack was in the hospital I started praying for Him. I asked God to send ministering angels to his room and bring to him the message of salvation. I claimed his soul in Jesus Name. I don't know if he has ever made a commitment to Christ in his earlier years but God knows. I prayed that Jack would have had the opportunity to make things right with God.

MAY HIS DEATH NOT BE IN VAIN. MAY IT GIVE HOPE AND COMFORT TO YOU. MAY IT BRING YOU TO A CLOSER RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS. I PRAY THAT YOU WILL SEARCH YOUR OWN HEART AND SEE IF YOU ARE PREPARED FOR ETERNITY. WHERE WILL YOU SPEND ETERNITY? DO YOU KNOW?

Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ Titus 2:13

Jesus' Promise

In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. John 14:2&3 John 14:6

Right now, wherever you are, repent, lift your heart to God in prayer.

The Bible says that **'if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'** 1 John 1:9

PRAY

"Oh God, I know I am a sinner. I believe Jesus was my substitute when He died on the Cross. I believe His shed blood, death, burial, and resurrection were for me. I now receive Him as my Savior. I Thank You for the forgiveness of my sins, the gift of salvation and everlasting life, because of Your merciful grace. Amen."

Grow Up

by Commissioner Wesley Harris

OVER decades some Army territories have expended much money and effort in pursuing various theories about church growth. No doubt some valuable insights have been gained which is fine, but overall, results may have been less than were hoped for.

Although often based on theories followed in mega-churches numerical replication of comparable development within our own movement could be hard to find. Sometimes there may have been more development of 'church' (with a small 'c') than actual Church growth.

Of course, spiritual growth cannot necessarily be assessed by counting heads. (I know of small corps with big influence, even in sparsely populated districts.) Generally, a multiplication of believers was expected in the early Church and in the early Army and we long to see it in our movement today.

Faith and prayer are obvious prerequisites of spiritual growth and it may be that failure in these essentials is a reason for a dearth of soul saving. But there is something else which may knock on our door like a wake up call. I mean, are we *intentional* about winning people for Christ? Despite the name we bear is salvation really our mission and the all-consuming passion of our hearts?

The remarkable Commissioner Catherine Bramwell-Booth (grand-daughter of our founders) told me that in the early days people *expected* that if they talked with a Salvationist they would be challenged about the state of their soul. Is that still the case? Are we now so frightened of saying the wrong thing that more often than not we fail to say the right thing? I must confess to have been guilty on that charge and not taken every opportunity for witness.

Real Church growth is not likely to be a mass production. It comes about one person at a time. One loving spirit sets another heart aflame! It begins in the individual Christian and goes on from there.

Dead Raising Prayers

Major Stephen Court

God has a 'greater things' end-times package prepared from John 14:12 for all of us. Since He raised dead people, it only seems reasonable to expect that He'll empower those faithful to Him to raise dead people, too. He commanded His followers to raise the dead (Matthew 10:7-9).

And, praise God, there are lots of examples of this happening around the world.

For example:

- Prolific author Wesley Harris, retired commissioner in The Salvation Army, had a grandfather, Major Blanchard, who died in Wales. As was customary the funeral was held in the home, friends and neighbours filling the living room and spilling over into the yard. The coffin was open during the service and prayers and Bible reading and just before the lid was screwed down someone noticed the eyelid of the corpse was twitching. The body was revived and he lived to old age as a well-loved Salvation Army officer.
- Commissioner Kay Rader, the first American-born international leader of The Salvation Army's women's ministries, was dead, "like a stone in a white bed," confirmed without a pulse by the attending doctor. Then a warrior of Jesus, Mariah LaSane, stepped into the room and prayed down some glory and the girl was restored to perfect health.⁵⁴
- A student at The War College in Vancouver, from Nigeria, was in a meeting not too long ago in his home congregation intended to raise his teenaged friend back to life. The meeting was a success (not in some figurative or 'spiritual' sense- the dead teen came back to life).
- Salvo Evangelist Michael Collins recently prayed for a brain-dead patient to come back to life. He lived, and he now golfs and cruises (not Michael, the former patient).
- Here's an account of a dead-raising miracle experienced by Major Dula from Mizoram, India:

During 1993 while we are ITI Corps Area as Corps Officers, Gilgal Corps (Central Division) invited me with our Corps revival Team for five days Revival Camping in their respective area Bungkawn at Aizawl our State Capital. By faith we did the works through the grace of God. Our campers comprised different backgrounds of evil doers totally nearly 100. The prayer warriors fasted one week without food and Home League members supported much in fasting. I felt strongly the very

⁵⁴ Carroll Ferguson Hunt. IF TWO SHALL AGREE. 2001. Beacon Hill Press. p23.

anointing of the Holy Spirit. Unexpectedly, on Thursday one of the campers, a drug addict, passed away (dead) at Corps Officers Quarters. The matters reach me while I prepared for my fourth Sermon. I ran towards the spot - the very young lads lying down with cold, women are crying, trying to awake up, but of no response. We lay down our simple hand in three places and pray to the Lord to bring back the spirit. The Lord did miracles to us and the very spirit live again. We praised the Lord with full of tears. He asked me "Bro Dula, I like to go home and I promise you I will came back in time. I agreed with the consent of others local Officers. Afternoon he came back with full bags different kinds of drugs and handed over to me. He said to us, "God arises me from the dead; I no in need for this devil instruments". Hallelujah. Praise the Lord.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today. BY HIS WOUNDS WE ARE HEALED (Isaiah 53:5).

- Dr. Charles A. Blanchard, former president of Wheaton College, wrote GETTING THINGS FROM GOD, a book on prayer (Moody Press). In it he recounts this remarkable testimony:

"Friends, about two and a half or three years ago I was in the hospital in Philadelphia. I was an engineer on the Pennsylvania Lines, and although I had a praying wife, I had all my life been a sinful man. At this time I was very ill. I became greatly wasted. I weighed less than one hundred pounds. Finally the doctor who was attending me said to my wife that I was dead, but she said: 'No, he is not dead. He cannot be dead. I have prayed for him for twenty-seven years and God has promised me that he should be saved. Do you think God would let him die now after I have prayed twenty-seven years and God has promised me that he should be saved. Do you think God would let him die now after I have prayed for him for twenty-seven years and God has promised, and he is not saved?' ' Well,' the doctor replied, 'I do not know anything about that, but I know that he is dead.' And the screen was drawn around cot, which in the hospital separates between the living and the dead.

"To satisfy my wife, other physicians were brought, one after another, until seven were about the cot, and each one of them as he came up and made the examination confirmed the testimony of all who had preceded. The seven doctors said that I was dead. Meanwhile my wife was kneeling by the side of my cot, insisting that I was not dead--that if I were dead God would bring me back, for He had promised her that I should be saved and I was not yet saved. By and by her knees began to pain her, kneeling on the hard hospital floor. She asked the nurse for a pillow and the nurse brought her a pillow upon which she kneeled. One hour, two hours, three hours passed. The screen still stood by the cot. I was lying there still, apparently dead. Four hours, five hours, six hours, seven hours, thirteen hours passed, and all this while my wife was kneeling by the cot-side, and when people remonstrated and wished her to go away she said: 'No, he has to be saved. God will bring him back if he is dead. He is not dead. He cannot die until he is

saved.

“At the end of thirteen hours I opened my eyes, and she said: 'What do you wish, my dear?' And I said: 'I wish to go home,' and she said: 'You shall go home.' But when she proposed it, the doctors raised their hands in horror. They said, 'Why, it will kill him. It will be suicide.' She said: 'You have had your turn. You said he was dead already. I am going to take him home.'

“I weigh now 246 pounds. I still run a fast train on the Pennsylvania Lines. I have been out to Minneapolis on a little vacation, telling men what Jesus can do, and I am glad to tell you what Jesus can do.

“Dr. Blanchard was a great educator, a man of national prominence, a scholar, as well as a devout Christian. It was not hard for him to believe that God had answered the prayer of a wife for her unsaved husband, and that he was brought back in order that he might be saved. And if it is hard for you to believe, then I ask you in the words of Paul the apostle, 'Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? (Acts 26: 8).

“If such an occurrence is rare, then it is equally rare that a woman should pray like that and believe God. God still answers prayer for those who trust Him.⁵⁵

- On October 16, 1997, Scott Holtz, with his wife Dalit, founder of Rivers in the Desert International ministries, had a similar experience:

“Having just completed revival meetings in Montreal, Canada and on my way to the airport early Monday morning. The black sedan in front of us lost control and struck a guard rail which shot through the passenger window like a javelin striking this driver in the face and instantly killing her. We were one of the first cars to arrive on the scene and then 35 minutes later prayer was offered for her and she came back to life!! In the photo you will notice that she has no right eye after she comes back to life but on the way to the hospital God gave her a brand new right eye! Glory to God!⁵⁶

- One of the more famous accounts in our era involves evangelist Reinhard Bonnke:

“During the evening meetings, I mingled with the people on the edge of the crowd while the evangelist was preaching, and experienced that, although it was difficult to see the platform, the message came across loud and clear from the powerful speakers. There were just a few parts of the site which were not quite so good, and I was told that the massive new P.A. system, which the prayer partners are buying, will mean that the message can be heard even a mile away. It had been

⁵⁵ (John R. Rice, "Prayer--Asking and Receiving," Wheaton, IL: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1942, pp. 269, 270.

⁵⁶ Flashfloods.com

hoped that this would have been available for Ogbomosho, but it was still being processed through customs. So there will be the possibility of even larger crusades in the future.

“By now, many Christians will have heard at least something of the story of Daniel Ekechukwu, who came back from the dead after three days. Again, there will be skeptics who will say, “I don’t believe it!” and many of them will be Christians. I admit it is hard to believe, but when you see him before your eyes, standing on a stage, telling his story to half a million people, you have to believe. After a serious car accident, the doctors had pronounced him dead, and his body had been embalmed, but his wife felt that God had told her that he would live. So, despite all the opposition, she had his body taken to a church where Reinhard Bonnke was speaking. After some remonstrating, the stewards allowed the body to be taken into a side room, where, unknown to the evangelist, Daniel suddenly came back to life. While Daniel was speaking I saw two people making their way through the crowd, waving their crutches in the air. Later, one of these, called Peter, told us from the stage that while Daniel was speaking, he suddenly felt convinced that if God could bring Daniel back from the dead, surely he could be healed from the results of his accident. The crowd was ecstatic when he left his crutches and ran back and forth across the stage.⁵⁷

- Evangelist Heidi Baker, whose churches have seen 60 people raised back to life, puts it this way: "Did God forget how to do the impossible? You believe that a doctor can make someone well, but when God does it you want videos before you'll believe it. Haven't you read the book?"
- In March 2003, Swiss church planters Bruno Bayer and Dr. Marco Gmuer returned, exhausted but impressed, from a journey to the Mexican highlands. They had been invited by David Hogan, a Texan evangelist who has worked in Mexico for almost 30 years. There are many wild rumours about him, including the claim that almost 300 people have been raised from the dead. Hogan became known in the West through a video series with Dr. Michael Brown in Pensacola.⁵⁸
- According to the Swedish Christian paper Magazinet the Pakistani/Swedish evangelist Christopher Alam visited Word of Life, Uppsala last week and told following incredible story from Myanmar (Burma):

“A monk had been sick and died but before the cremation the man resurrected and begun to witness about a vision from heaven and hell.

“He says: “Then I died I met a man in white clothes and it was Jesus. He showed me the heaven and the hell.

⁵⁷ <http://www.cfan.org>

⁵⁸ Jesus.org.uk

“The first man I saw in hell was Buddha. Jesus took the monk to the side and said: I am sending you to your own people and you shall tell them that they must repent and turn away from their sins and turn to Me; I am the only way to God. Time is short, I soon will return to earth.

“After this the monk has become very bold, the authorities arrests him time after time but many over all Burma have been saved as a result of the testimony from the resurrected monk.⁵⁹

What’s the bottom line? Those of us who do not attempt to get people saved probably never ever see someone get saved in our warfare. Maybe we don’t see people raised from the dead because we don’t, in western society, normally, ever see any dead bodies (since the West has sanitized the whole process and whisks away the body, quickly out of sight). Maybe we don’t see people raised from the dead because we don’t pray for people to be raised from the dead. Here are some Biblical examples and the prayers God’s followers use therein to help you along.

Pray each of these texts into your situation. The Word of God is the truth. What God has done in the past He can do in the present. If Elisha’s dead bones could raise a dead person to life, well, then, God can use all manner of thing to raise the dead today. Apply these truths, these prophecies, these historical accounts and the precedent they represent, to your lives and challenges.

2 Kings 4:27-37

(back story)

When the Shunammite widow reached the man of God at the mountain’s edge, she collapsed at his feet, clutching them in distress. Elisha’s servant Gehazi intervened to extract his feet from her grasp, but was rebuked, "Leave her alone! She is a wreck, her soul is vexed, and Yahweh has left me in the dark as to the reason."

"Did I ask you for a boy, sir?" she asked. "Didn't I warn you, 'Don't mess with my head and my hopes'?" Elisha turned to Gehazi, "Kit up and head straight to her house. Don't stop for small-talk. Take my staff and place it on the child's face."

But the child's mother interrupted, "As surely as Yahweh lives and you are breathing in front of me, I am not heading home unless you are at my shoulder." So he got up and accompanied her...

⁵⁹ source Magazinet 16/97 friday 2 May 1997
reported by Torsten Lantz .etxltz@kk.ericsson.se; see also <http://www.etpv.org/1998/hrd.html>;
http://www.sendrevival.com/testimonies/categories/deadraised/article_email_richard.htm Richard Riss
letter.

Elisha arrived at the house to find the boy dead on his bed. So, he entered the room, locked the door behind them, and prayed to Yahweh.

He climbed onto the bed and blanketed the child with his body, eyes over eyes, mouth over mouth, hands over hands. Stretched out like that, the boy's body began to warm up.

Elisha left the bed to pace the floors before stretching once more over the body. This time the boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes!

Elisha called Gehazi to have the Shunammite woman come into the room. Upon her entrance Elisha said, "give your son a hug." She collapsed at his feet, embraced her son, and carried him out.

(pray this into your situation)

Some of the following texts are fairly lengthy. We encourage you to look them up in your Bible.

2 Kings 13:20-21

Dead soldier was thrown into the grave of Elisha and was given life when his body touched Elisha's bones.

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Vision of the valley of dry bones which become living people when the word of God is preached to them.

Matthew 9:18-26; Luke 8:40-56

Jesus raises a little girl from death.

Matthew 10:8

Preach the Kingdom. Heal sick people. Raise dead people back to life. Cleanse lepers. Kick out demons. You've received freely. Give freely.

Luke 7:22

Jesus replied to the messengers, "Go back and tell John what you have seen and what you have heard. Blind people see. Lame people walk. Deaf people hear. Dead people are walking around. And the poor hear the good news."

Matthew 27:52

Tombs busted open and the bodies of many saints were brought back to life.

Luke 7:11-17

Jesus interrupts the funeral procession of the son of a widow from Nain by raising him from death.

John 5:21

Father raises dead people back to life and so does the Son. The Son raises to life anyone He chooses.

John 11:1-53; John 12:17-18

The crowd who watched Jesus raise Lazarus back to life was spreading the story all over. And that drew crowds, itself. It got so bad that the Pharisees complained amongst themselves, "We've lost control. The whole world is chasing after Jesus."

Acts 9:36-43

In the city of Joppa, God raises Tabitha from death through Peter.

Acts 20:7-12

Eutychus falls asleep and falls out of an upper window to his death (v.9) and is raised back to life through Paul.

Hebrews 11:35

Widows and mothers received their dead family members back to life again.

Matthew 9:18,19,23-25

A leader interrupted Jesus' preaching with some worship and this entreaty: "My daughter just died. Please come and raise her back to life with Your powerful hand."

Jesus transitioned His spoken lesson into a prophetic act, followed by His disciples... He was greeted at His arrival by a cacophony of noisy mourners.

"Make way," He instructed. "The girl is not dead. She's sleeping." The crowd tumbled outside with epithets of ridicule. But once they left, He entered her room, took the girl by the hand, and she rose to life!

Luke 7:11-15

Jesus, His disciples, and a large crowd, rolled into the city gates of Nain. They were met by a funeral procession, consisting of the body of a dead man, the only son of his widowed mother and a similarly large crowd.

The Lord, seeing the widow, poured out His compassion toward her, encouraging her, "Don't weep." When He touched the open coffin, the pall-bearers stopped. "Young man," Jesus said, "Arise." The dead man sat up, speaking. Jesus presented him back to his mother.

John 11:1,4-7,14,15,17,19-27,32-44

In the town of Bethany, Mary's and Martha's brother Lazarus was sick. They notified his friend, Jesus, who commented, "This sickness will not end in death, but in the glory of God – and the Son of God will be glorified through it."

Jesus loved the siblings. Yet He stayed away from Bethany for a couple of days before rounding up His disciples to head there. He briefed them, "Look, Lazarus is dead. It is good for you that I was not there when he died. It will solidify your faith. So, let's go."

By the time they arrived, Lazarus had been entombed four days. A sympathetic crowd surrounded the sisters to support them in their grief. At news of Jesus' arrival, Martha went out to meet Him. Mary stayed at home. Said Martha, "Lord, if only You had been here, my brother would still be alive. But even now I know that what You ask God, God will give You." Jesus replied, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said, "I know that he will rise again on the last day at the resurrection." Jesus explained, "I AM the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, even they die, will live. And whoever lives and believes in Me never dies. What do you make of that?" "Yes, Lord. I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, come into the world." ...

Jesus said, "Where's Lazarus?" They replied, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept... He approached the cave tomb, blocked by a boulder. "Remove the stone." Martha, sister of the dead man, said, "Lord, he's been dead for four days. He smells like he wants to be alone." Jesus asked, "Didn't I promise that if you believe you will see God's glory?" They budged the boulder out of the way.

Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, thanks for listening to Me. Yes, You always do. But it is good that the others are listening in so that they can believe that You sent Me." Then He called loudly, "Lazarus, come out." And the dead man shuffled out of the tomb, bound by graveclothes. Jesus directed, "Untie the graveclothes and let him free."

(pray this into your situation)

I Kings 17:17-23

The lady's son got sick and died. She said to Elijah, "How dare you, you man of God? Are you dumping the guilt of my sins on me by killing my son?"

Elijah replied, "Give me your son." Elijah carried the body to his room and laid the body on the bed. He lamented; "Yahweh, my God! What's Your role in this evil that has swamped this lady – the death of her son?"

Elijah stretched himself out over the body three times, shouting out to Yahweh, "Yahweh, my God! Please bring this boy back to life again!"

Yahweh listened to Elijah and restored the boy's life! Elijah took him downstairs and returned him to his mother. "Look, he's alive!"

(pray this into your situation)

2 Kings 13:21

The rising heat of fighting interrupted their battle field burial, so they tossed their comrade's body into Elisha's tomb. As soon as the dead body touched Elisha's dead bones, the man was revived and as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and got up on his own two feet.

Luke 8:49-55

“Leave the Teacher alone,” gasped the messenger from the synagogue ruler’s house, “Your daughter is dead.” Jesus cut in, “Don’t be afraid. Just believe, and she will be healed.”

They arrived at the home and expelled everyone except Peter, John, James, and the dad girl’s parents. The crowd was weeping and wailing, but Jesus said, “Don’t weep. She is not dead. She is sleeping.” They laughed scornfully since it was obvious that she was dead. Jesus marshaled them all outside and then took her by the hand, and called to her, “Little girl, arise!”

Her spirit returned and she rose up right away.

Acts 9:37-40

She got sick and died from that sickness. Her friends washed her body and placed it in the upper room. The disciples heard that Peter was in nearby Lydda, and two of them went to try to get him to return to Joppa immediately. Peter went.

He arrived and they took him to the upper room where he was swarmed by the wailing widows waiving Dorcas’s woven wares. Peter had them leave. Then he knelt down to pray. Turning toward the dead body, he said, “Tabitha, arise!” She opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up.

Acts 20:9-12

While Paul preached on, one young man – Eutychus – fell asleep in the windowsill. Paul continued to preach, and the sleeping man tipped out of the third story window and fell to his death.

Paul ran down, embraced the body, and said, “Don’t worry. There is life in him.” He went back upstairs, ate, and finished his preaching. They took the by home, alive, thrilled.

One reason most of us don't see dead people raised back to life again is that we don't see dead people. Another is that we don't pray for dead people to be raised back to life again. We can be encouraged by the testimonies and the examples today and in Scripture. Let's aim to obey Jesus' instruction to 'raise the dead'. (Matthew 10:7-8)

Warning the Rich: Partiality

by Aaron White

James 5:1-6

The main point: Those who trust in wealth, live wastefully, and abuse and defraud the poor fall under severe judgment and condemnation from the Lord of Hosts.

The consequences of taking advantage of others in this world are not always very severe. In fact, many people gain their wealth and comfort in this world from just such abuse of others and are excessively rewarded for it. We live in a world of financial inequalities, and those of us who reap the benefits of those inequalities do not often spare a thought for the victims of our economic oppressions.

But God does spare a thought for the poor, James warns his readers.

Just as he heard the cries of his people Israel when they were slaves in Egypt, he hears the cries of the oppressed, the labourers, the harvesters, those who have been enslaved and abused and defrauded. God is a champion for those who have no protectors here on earth, and those who would take advantage of them had best beware the consequences.

James pulls no punches in this passage. “The rich”, he says, are making a number of horrific errors that will come back to burn them.

James has already addressed in his letter the reality that some would-be Christians were treating the poor in an unacceptable manner, and how offensive this was to the gospel. It is not clear in this passage if James is speaking directly to wealthy Christians or just to “the rich” in general. But we can see how absurd it is to think of Christians abusing, defrauding, cheating and ignoring their poorer brothers and sisters. How could they withhold the rightful wages of those with whom they claim to share the Holy Spirit? It simply does not make any sense! And yet we know that Christian brothers and sisters have done exactly this. How can we claim to have a unity in the Spirit, and love for the Body of Christ, if we treat one another so shamefully? We cannot, and such attitudes and actions open us up to serious judgment.

But who falls under this judgment of “the rich”? It is dangerous to try and assign an income figure to this label, though it is equally dangerous to separate this discussion from real-world wealth. These are not simply spiritually realities: the poor are actually poor, struggling to feed and clothe and shelter themselves, and “the rich” are actually rich, having an excess of wealth and secure comfort. It is helpful here to look at what “the rich” are being condemned for in this passage: storing up wealth (putting their trust and security in temporary things); holding back rightful wages from their own labourers; living in luxury and wasteful self-indulgence; and murdering the righteous person. These are the attitudes and actions that define “the rich” who stand under fearful judgment. It is

not the mere fact of having access to wealth that is condemned; it is the valuing of wealth above people and above obedience to God.

These attitudes and actions are offensive to God first of all because they betray a misplaced trust and worship. The rich have put their hope in their impermanent wealth to protect them from destruction, as if their resources keep them immune from trouble. The opposite is true, says James. “The rich” believe they are storing up their wealth, but in reality they are storing up wrath against themselves in the last days. It is pure folly to love wealth or to envy “the rich”. All of their carefully protected wealth will rust and rot, and this too will be a witness against them. They will rust and rot just like their gold and clothes. (see Jesus’ teaching from Matt 6:19-24)

It is offensive as well because it is wasteful. We have been given resources to live on and to bless one another, particularly within the context of the followers of Christ. But “the rich” would rather spend their wealth on themselves, or even see it wasted, than to share it with the poor. This represents a disordered desire: we want more than what we need, or other than what we should have, and because we do, other people suffer. This is pure selfishness, and is condemned (see the woes pronounced in Amos 6:1-6).

It is also offensive because “the rich” are directly abusive towards others who have a distinct claim on their resources. Deuteronomy 24:14-15 commands Israel to “not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner residing in one of your towns. Pay them their wages each day before sunset, because they are poor and are counting on it. Otherwise they may cry to the Lord against you, and you will be guilty of sin.”

And Malachi 3:5 prophesies that the Lord will swiftly judge “those who oppress the hired worker in his wages.” The poor do not exist solely for our benefit and privilege, and yet “the rich” in this passage have chosen to use the labour of the poor without giving them their wages.

The Lord will not fail to hear the cries of the labourers who are defrauded in this way.

Finally, it is offensive because “the rich” condemn and murder the righteous, who do not even resist this violence. Earlier in his letter James had mentioned that it was “the rich” who were oppressing them, dragging them into court and blaspheming the name of Jesus. Why honour or envy these “rich” who stand judged and condemned for this behaviour?

Our attitude and actions must be different, then, if we do not want to stand condemned with “the rich”. We should rather stand in solidarity with “the poor”, those who have no options economically, and those who know that they cannot affect their own salvation from sin and destruction. We should trust that which is permanent, not wealth that rots and rusts. We should live simply and not wastefully, learning to properly use and share the resources we have been given. And we should honour those who labour for us, and

pay proper wages, also fighting for those in our world who are taken advantage of in the name of profit.

On Incarnation

by Morten Andersen

On Incarnation: a Vancouver War College debrief

Having grown up on the country side, never being surrounded by tall buildings or sirens, and never being exposed to open drug use, it was quite the change of environment.

However, I have experienced not knowing where my next meal would come from; have experienced being in despair and taken a look at the bottles in the cabinet, fighting the battle of the temptation to drown my despair and sorrow in strong liqueur or beer; I have grown up around bio-polar and ADHD, seen the effects of alcohol close up, experienced being completely depleted of love, and looked through the empty facade or mask, which desperately tries to hold everything together by denying the real issues – and the more I looked through that mask the more I failed to recognize my own issues. Instead I kept magnifying how everyone else where superficial and live lives depleted of love, hidden underneath another mask of self-denial, hurts, pains, habits and hang-ups. And yet I was powerless to do anything about it.

I have grown up with social out-casts who went in and out of jail, for drinking and for violence. But I also knew that the real issue was never the drinking, nor the violence. My friend was just another person with a butt-load of hurts, habits, hang-ups and perhaps most of all fear for being known. I just didn't know how to express that feeling, or what to do about it. Yet I was filled with tears on their behalf – sharing that pain, frustration, anger, despair and powerlessness.

Even though I never used drugs myself, I was by no means spared from addictive behaviour. I relate to the struggle of fighting the impulse – the sense of want, and wanting it NOW! And most of all the sense of disgust, followed closely by shame and guilt and the feeling of being completely alone in that situation, with nowhere to turn for help and no-one to talk to. And the more I looked for that help and for those persons “out there” I only just kept seeing more people having the same problems. The only difference being they had travelled so much further down that road and convinced themselves that their behaviour was completely acceptable, perhaps even something to brag about. And then, what only brought forth more guilt, shame and disgust, was all of a sudden socially acceptable – and before long the struggle was buried too far down to hope to reach by myself. Soon it was even necessary to keep doing. But still the emptiness never disappeared.

I don't know what my expectations were for coming to Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. I guess I expected to learn what it meant to live my new life – the new “Christian” life, whatever that meant. I was next to rootless, because I knew all my opinions, all my viewpoints, all my convictions, all my values, all my thinking, all my behaviours, even all my excuses – all of it – was up for revision. All I really expected was hardship and pain in the process of change, blended with a weird mixture of laughter and fun, travels and delays, rising up only to fall forward again, of daily living and daily death. I expected it to

be a year of submission and obeying. To follow God's direction – I mean, what else could I do? No reason to fool myself anymore – everybody thought I was crazy anyways... might as well get the full nine yards out of it.

What I didn't expect was how I found myself in those whom I on the outside had no similarities to. I didn't expect my inner being, being exposed on the canvas of another human soul, body, mind and heart. I didn't expect to find this place being one of the Western World's most clearest mirrors. Whatever presuppositions, whatever was hidden out of sight in me, whatever I was afraid of – all of it – was walking around me in perfect daylight and clear sight.

It reminds me of whenever I walked into my neighbour's barn where I grew up. It was a colder temperature inside, on the warm and sunny, summer days, and the floor was hard and dirty. Everything was darker inside, so it took a moment to adjust the eyes. But after a few moments I saw the light from the warm sun shining through all the crack, and all the saw dust specks was hanging in the air, dancing around.

In the same way, I have now travelled to a colder and harder place where the sun doesn't shine as much. But somehow the sun shines through all the cracks, and lights upon all the saw dust specks, which dance around in mid-air all around me. And in seeing the saw dust, I slowly learned to quite myself for a moment and see yet another plank sticking out of my own eye.

So in answering how I incarnated my conclusion is this: I came here exactly as everybody else – with baggage and tainted glasses. I came here exactly as everybody else – with dreams for a brighter future, but too disorientated to take them down from the sky and turn them into reality. I came here exactly as everybody else – with a longing to help those around me, but strangely reluctant to help myself first.

I came here exactly as everybody else – deluded, and caught up in redundant stuff leading to destination “no where” without realising it spells “now here.”

Praise be to God that I also came here with an unquenchable thirst and hunger for Him, for honesty, for knowing love, for wanting to live life to its fullest, with a drive to keep going on, and for having been placed with the best possible support around me. I rejoice to say that my eyes were, and continue to be, opened to my own planks. And I want to testify how humbling it has been to find how much I actually was like the people who live in a place “such as this” - how humbling it was to realise the labels pushed down on these people are but reflections of our own minds, souls, bodies, and hearts.

I was just as broken, just as love depleted, just as deluded, as anyone else here. And that made it my home. And just as anyone else living in this home, I often experienced the barriers I experienced in my addictive behaviour. The struggle to share. The struggle to stop.

The struggle to accept. The struggle of emptiness. The struggle of being new. And thus the struggle to love. Thus the struggle to relate.

Thus the struggle to find the motivation to keep doing what must be done and oftentimes I failed to live out the requirements, but instead I were merely doing them.

Sometimes I even felt a struggle to care.

Soldier Interview

Major Stephen Court

Five years ago JAC interviewed soldiers from five territories regarding battle issues that we all face. They were great. As I read through them again recently I thought I'd challenge myself with the question schedule. This is the result. You may want to ask yourself the questions, too. If so, feel free to fire them back to JAC at revolution@mmccxx.net.

JAC: Quick bio:

SEC: multi-generation salvo;

- saved at Camp Newport;
- sanctified at James Gardens;
- Crusader for Christ (session of officer training)
- married to Danielle;
- father to Zion, Judah, and Moses.

JAC: Tell us, about your salvation and sanctification.

SEC: I was six years old at Camp Newport for a Junior Soldier Camp at which my mom was the speaker. The gospel was preached. We were offered friendship with Jesus Christ. Little slips of paper were distributed for us to write down our sins. I was six! I wrote down 'all'. There was a fire. We threw our 'sins' into the fire, having confessed and repented of them. And I started my friendship with Jesus that continues today.

Many years later I was growing frustrated at not experiencing what I read about in the New Testament and in some Salvo writing. A veteran suggested reading Brengle – so for six months I did, consecrating everything I could think of. It came to a head one day when I rode my bike down to a neighbourhood park, armed with my Bible and Helps to Holiness (Brengle) and an intention not to leave until this whole thing was settled. After awhile it became clear that I had not yet surrendered my future.

Now, this was an oversight. It wasn't that I had big plans for the future. If you'd asked me what I wanted 'to be', I'd likely tell you 'football player' but I knew I wasn't good enough to be a professional football player so there was no realistic aspirations. In fact, I'd stayed in school longer than needed, partly because I was uncertain of what I was 'to be' and didn't want to waste a year or two in an entry-level position.

Anyway, I gave my future, such as it was, to God, too, and then He had it all. Hallelujah.

JAC: What engages your passions and energies these days.

SEC: Evangelising – what's better than seeing someone saved from sin and hell?
Discipling – we call this The Year of DISCO (discipleship covenant groups) and it is exciting to see God transform people through discipling relationships.

JAC: What is your role with The Salvation Army?

SEC: My wife and I lead the Crossroads Corps in Edmonton Alberta, Canada. On my good days I'm a catalyst for mobilization.

JAC: What is your mission/calling?

SEC: win the world for Jesus.

JAC: How does The Army support your war-fighting?

SEC: The Army opens a field for exploits for us. We step into it and fight with godly power and the weapons of righteousness and watch God work wonders

JAC: How do you influence people?

SEC: JAC, armybarmy blog, twitter (@StephenCourt), facebook, podcasts, books, example, prayer...

JAC: What are your dreams for the next several years?

SEC: Win the world for Jesus. On the way there, multiply campuses of The War College, see an online leader training school start, coordinate a global discipleship initiative, get DisCo into every corps, see the Army finish off one component of the great commission by invading the remaining 74 countries, see new outposts in 2000 cities in 200 countries in 20 years (well, 13 more), reach William Booth's goals of 100,000 officers and four million soldiers, publish some more books...

JAC: What are the keys to successful warfare on your front and the larger salvation war?

SEC: we're involved in extraordinary prayer; we line up for holiness; we disciple; we evangelise.

JAC: How are you and your comrades strengthening The Salvation Army?

SEC: We're trying to do it right, providing more proof that the Salvo Way works. We're trying to disseminate thoroughly salvo resources for the salvation war. We're trying to raise up soldiers and candidates. We're trying to exhort and encourage the troops. We're trying to multiply cells and outposts and corps toward world conquest.

JAC: What are some of the dangers we have to face in the coming years? (and how?)

SEC: Within the Army?

Compromise – by keeping to salvo standards and being holy;

Fragmentation – by universally embracing covenant;

Inequalities – by instructing people, correcting problems, and holding people accountable;

Leadership – by following holy, salvo, proven leaders;

Popularity – by exploiting it for kingdom advance.

Without the Army?

Capitulation to religions/cults – humility, boldness, sacrifice;

Compromise with the world – holy boldness, zeal for Jesus, truth to Scripture.

JAC: What final exhortation have you for this audience?

SEC: stay close to Jesus.

Each For All and All For Each

by Commissioner Wesley Harris

THE GENERAL'S emphasis on our being *one* Army is timely and not to be taken lightly. It is an important matter.

For many of the years of my retirement I have had the privilege of lecturing to key officers brought to Australia for Administrative Courses. Without fail I have marveled at the way in which people from widely different backgrounds have so quickly demonstrated that they have so much in common. From the beginning they have been 'on the same page' and demonstrated a remarkable 'oneness' and in a much divided world I have seen this as the Lord's doing and marvelous in my eyes. But our remarkable unity in the Army despite enormous diversity is not something we should take for granted.

It can be strengthened by administration, the appointment of leaders, international congresses and conferences and many other means. In some parts of the universal Church there is much emphasis on the local governance and independence of churches and that may be understood for if progress doesn't take place locally it can hardly take place at all! But from our inception the Army has also encouraged connectedness, has sought to speak with one voice with the stronger and the weaker sharing fellowship spiritually and helping each other practically. Sometimes corps may describe themselves as, for example, 'the Blank town Salvation Army' but that doesn't mean that there are lots of separate salvation armies! There is *one* Army, paradoxically the same yet different in thousands of situations yet one in doctrine and mission

With all possible acceptance of local responsibility must go a wider vision of our Army. What has been called a 'parish pump mentality' should not prevail. A united Army will make a more cohesive and effective contribution to the Church Universal and its mission than would one that was disparate. Primarily, of course our unity is in Christ. Because we belong to him we belong to each and are comrades in an army dedicated to winning the world for Jesus' Come join our Army!