

THE LIVING CHURCH NEWS

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The Spirit of Power!

Dear Brethren and Friends,

As Pentecost approaches, it is important that we all focus on the Holy Spirit of God. For God's Spirit was poured out on the multitude on that very first Pentecost of the New Testament Church (Acts 2:15-17). It powerfully changed their lives—as we shall see. Pentecost is regarded as the “Feast of firstfruits” in Exodus 23:16. It pictures the early harvest in ancient Israel, and the Holy Spirit being poured out pictures God's power and blessing on that spiritual harvest of which all of us will have a part if we truly surrender to God and persevere! The Apostle Paul was inspired to write Timothy: “Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:6-7).

Fact: Before the Holy Spirit came, the Apostle Peter was so fearful of being “found out” as a follower of Jesus that he denied this vehemently and began to literally curse and swear! “Then he began to curse and swear, saying, ‘I do not know the Man!’ Immediately a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ So he went out and wept bitterly” (Matthew 26:74-75).

Yet after God's Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Apostle Peter, he quickly and courageously confronted dozens or perhaps even hundreds of unconverted Jews who accosted Him regarding His healing of the crippled man at the “gate called Beau-

tiful.” Looking them right in the eye, Peter told them: “But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses” (Acts 3:14-15).

Later, the apostles were again accosted by the Jewish religious authorities and threatened if they continued speaking in Christ's name. “But Peter and John answered and said to them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard’” (Acts 4:19-20).

At this point, Peter and John went back to the disciples and

they all together began to pray fervently to Almighty God: “Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus” (Acts 4:29-30).

Notice, brethren, how they beseeched God to give them the **power** to heal and do these miracles so that they would have the “boldness” to speak out with the full Truth of God!

After this fervent prayer, the place where they were meeting was “**shaken**” and “they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness” (v. 31).

It is obvious that the *entire attitude* of the early apostles was dramatically **changed** with the receiving of God's Spirit. For now Christ was actually *living in them* through



Volume 18, No. 3



Inside This Issue...

Build Genuine Faith... page 3 • May the Force Be With You!... page 5 • The Renovation... page 8 • Christian Courtship... page 11 • Necessity of the Holy Spirit... page 15 • Woman to Woman: The Blessing of a Closed Door... page 18 • Local Church News... page 22 • Commentary... page 24

His Spirit. They had a depth of *understanding, faith* and **courage** that they had not ever had before! Dear brethren, as this Work becomes larger, and we are going to have more persecution, we will need the same kind of absolute **trust** in God and **courage** to go through the trials, tests and persecutions that will certainly come! But God will give us that needed help *through His Spirit* if we truly cry out to Him and “walk with God” with all our hearts.

Again remember, dear brethren, it is **not** simply *you and I* who are doing this Work. It is the living Christ dwelling in us through the power of His Holy Spirit! We must understand and “walk” accordingly. For the Holy Spirit living within us actually involves Jesus Christ living within us through His Spirit! Remember always my “favorite verse”: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20, *KJV*).

With Jesus Christ actually *living within us* through His Holy Spirit, we are not in any way limited by our human frame or human passions, for we have the ultimate power of the great God dwelling within us to overcome ourselves, the world and Satan

It is not simply you and I doing this Work. It is the living Christ dwelling in us through the power of His Holy Spirit!

the Devil. Remember Jesus’ powerful words: “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

The entire Bible indicates that Jesus did not say the above words in a “poetic sense.” Rather, we have virtually no power, spiritually speaking, to do anything without Christ in us. Through Him in us, however, we are able to “*bear much fruit*.” Jesus went on to say: “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples” (John 15:7–8).

Therefore, dear brethren, if you and I walk with God, talk with God, commune with God and learn to “feed” on Christ’s Word (John 6:57), we will ask many things according to God’s

will and we can know that we will receive an answer. We will certainly be able to “bear much fruit”—far beyond what we can do without God’s Spirit actually living within us and, in fact, Jesus Himself living within us through the Holy Spirit.

Brethren, always remember Mr. Herbert Armstrong’s one-sentence definition of true faith: “God will always do what He has promised to do in His Word.”

Think about that, meditate about that. And learn to **practice** that faith and confidence as you talk to God and cry out to Him for answered prayer!

In the many *thousands* of hours I spent personally with Mr. Herbert Armstrong, I found that he was, indeed, a man of unusual faith and confidence in God. He would earnestly “feed” on the Bible. So he grew in faith because of that and then he always tried to hold God to His promises! If God promised anything, then Mr. Armstrong would say in his prayers: “Father, you have promised. We hold You to Your promise!” There were times when Mr. Armstrong became “distracted” by the “cares of this world” and by all of the many administrative things he had to do in the Work of God—the bills he had to pay for television, radio,

the printing press, the constant oversight of the ministry, the properties of the three campuses of Ambassador College and more. So Mr. Armstrong, later on, **warned** a number of us ministers very strongly: “Fellows, do not let yourself get distracted from your own personal study and

prayer by the *administrative details* of the Work and things like that. Never ease up on your personal Bible study and prayers. Never water down your personal faith in God and His promises in His inspired Word!”

So we will all do well to take heed to this! As the Day of Pentecost approaches, let each of us increasingly “go to our knees” and **cry out** to Almighty God for more of His Holy Spirit, for more of His power, for more of the capacity to have an **impact** on this very confused world. The world around us is really coming apart—as most of you know. The world *desperately needs* what we have to give. So let us use the **power** described in the Day of Pentecost to overcome ourselves and to really accomplish a great Work which can begin to be known around the world and

POWER continues on page 20

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Build Genuine Faith

I have just finished reading a *New York Times* Op/Ed article entitled, “Death, the Prosperity Gospel and Me.” It is a very touching piece by a woman diagnosed with cancer, describing how she has studied and been influenced by the so-called “prosperity gospel”—and how, when told she had stage-four cancer, she was devastated and began to search for answers.

This writer, Kate Bowler, is a respected religious scholar teaching at one of America’s most prominent schools of theology. In her article, she describes the prosperity gospel: “The modern prosperity gospel can be directly traced to the turn-of-the-century theology of a pastor named E. W. Kenyon, whose evangelical spin on New Thought taught Christians to believe that their minds were powerful incubators of good or ill. Christians, Kenyon advised, must avoid words and ideas that create sickness and poverty; instead, they should repeat: ‘God is in me. God’s ability is mine. God’s strength is mine. God’s health is mine. His success is mine. I am a winner. I am a conqueror.’ Or, as prosperity believers summarized it for me, ‘I am blessed’” (February 14, 2016).

She then goes on to describe the “prosperity preachers who blanketed the airwaves with it. ‘Blessed’ is the shorthand for the prosperity message. We see it everywhere, from a TV show called ‘The Blessed Life’ to the self-justification of Joel Osteen, the pastor of America’s largest church, who told Oprah in his Texas mansion that ‘Jesus died that we might live an abundant life.’”

Faith from Our Father

Brethren, God has *not* yet begun to “call” this dear woman to the genuine *understanding* that I hope all of us have. Her eyes have *not yet* been fully opened. For, as Jesus said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44). But when her eyes are fully opened, she may become able to understand that it is important *not* to take a few verses out of context when trying to understand something in the Bible, but to take time to study **all** of the verses involved on that subject. She needs—as all of us need—to realize that the Bible is genuinely *inspired* by God and we need to study **all** of it,

not just a little part of it. She will then understand how we all should realize the meaning of Jesus’ command: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by **every** word of God” (Luke 4:4). We should all understand that, when Jesus Christ refers to the Old Testament verses as the “word of God” it was the **only** written word of God available during Christ’s time on the earth, as the New Testament was not yet written.

So **all** of the 66 books of the Bible were inspired by God and reveal “His mind” on any topic. We have to *deeply understand that!* We should all understand that we should “let the Bible interpret the Bible.” In other words, if a certain verse is difficult to understand by itself, we need to sincerely and thoroughly study **all** of the verses on this topic to get the full Truth of what God’s word teaches.

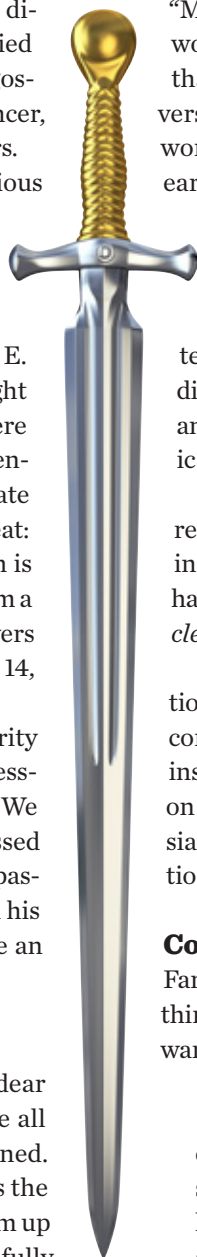
Therefore, with this understanding, we should realize how *wrong* and even how “silly” is the idea indicated above that Jesus died so that we might have more “stuff.” For the entire Bible is *extremely clear* in its teaching on **why** Jesus Christ had to die.

Ephesians 1:7 tells us: “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the *forgiveness of sins*, according to the riches of His grace.” And again, God inspired the Apostle Paul to state *why* Jesus died on the cross and shed His blood for us. In Colossians 1:14 we read: “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the *forgiveness of sins*.”

Coming: A Sword!

Far from promising riches and abundance of *physical* things in this life, the *true* Jesus Christ of the Bible warned His followers:

“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not wor-



thy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matthew 10:34–39).

Again, Jesus Christ clearly instructed His disciples: “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:24–26).

Obviously, when you study *all* the scriptures on this topic, it is very clear that the *true* followers of Jesus Christ will go through all kinds of trials and “tests.” But in the *end*, Almighty God *will deliver us* and bring us into His everlasting Kingdom. Though faced with His imminent *execution* at the hands of the Romans, the Apostle Paul ended his last letter on this transcendent note: “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:6–8).

Dear brethren, our Father in heaven has called us *out* of this confused world. He is teaching and training us to be kings and priests assisting Christ in **ruling** the entire world in the soon-coming Government of God. In the inspired “prayer of the saints” set forth in Revelation 5:10, the true saints are pictured as telling Christ that He has “made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.”

But, meanwhile, we must learn to walk and live by **faith**: “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). This faith must be “informed” and based squarely on the *inspired word of God!* Then, after genuine *repentance* and *baptism*, we are promised the gift of God’s precious Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38–39). He has promised to “hear” the prayers of the righteous: “The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit” (Psalm 34:17–18).

Yet it is very plainly revealed in Scripture that God’s “deliverance” may sometimes take the form of granting us eternal life in His Kingdom when we have had the *faith* and *courage* to serve God *even unto death*—as did Jesus Christ Himself, the martyr Stephen, the Apostle Paul, and *hundreds* of other faithful servants of God down through the ages.

Faith for Healing

One way or another, God has promised to “heal” His servants. As His Word states: “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for

the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the *prayer of faith* will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven” (James 5:14–15).

Yet God’s Word reveals that there are occasional “exceptions”—where “God knows what is best” and decides **not** to heal in particular situations. As the Apostle Paul explained:

“And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. *Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times* that it might depart from me. And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. *For when I am weak, then I am strong*” (2 Corinthians 12:7–10).

In my own life, I have found that God *in His mercy* has allowed sickness, infirmity and trials to test me *in order* to make me “cry out” to God even more fervently and to be more passionate about serving Him. Yet I have personally seen **dozens** of people who were supernaturally **healed** by God Almighty! I am *not* talking about someone “getting over” a cold or some minor thing. I am talking about supernatural, *powerful* healings involving cancer, heart disease or being paralyzed. These miracles were not brought about by some shouting, arm-waving preacher in a tent “show” trying to attract attention. Rather, Almighty

I have seen dozens of people who were supernaturally healed by God Almighty!

God heard the fervent prayers of a faithful minister who **believed** that Almighty God would **act** according to His inspired Word and **heal** as He has promised normally to do.

Also, I hope we **all** understand how the Bible repeatedly tells us that answered prayer involves not only *belief*, but one who has surrendered to **obey** Almighty God and His commandments. For God’s Word tells us: “And whatever we ask we receive from Him, **because we keep His commandments** and do those things that are pleasing in His sight” (1 John 3:22).

At this point, I would like to invite **all** of you who have not done so to request our absolutely **free** booklets *Does God Heal Today?* and *Twelve Keys to Answered Prayer*. If you do not have

FAITH continues on page 21

May the Force Be With You!

By **Gary F. Ehman**

As Christians observing the Holy Days with our fellow brethren, we must become aware that our journey is not “solo.” We have been called, chosen and are continually being led towards a goal of nearly incredible result—a result we cannot humanly hope to understand in its entirety.

The Apostle Paul explained his hope to the Ephesian brethren, that “the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power” (Ephesians 1:18–19). The Christian who continues the journey towards the fall Holy Days will find it useful to step into Paul’s mind as he encouraged the Ephesians—and us today!

The First New Testament Pentecost

To fully understand, we must review the meaning behind the marvelous concept of the first New Testament Day of Pentecost—and a promise made to us by Jesus Christ shortly before He ascended to heaven: “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are **endued with power** from on high” (Luke 24:49). Jesus was telling them to wait in Jerusalem until the Day of Pentecost and there, God would fulfill that promise.

But what does it mean to be “endued with power”? Is this power *the* Holy Spirit, or is it power that flows through, and from, the Holy Spirit? And is this important for us to know? Let’s look at this word “endued.” It is *enduō* [en-doo’-o], of being clothed or the sense of sinking into a garment. This is what Jesus said the night of the Passover: “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He [it] may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, [that] the world cannot receive, because it neither sees [it] nor knows [it]; but you know [it], for [it] dwells with you and will be in you” (John 14:16–17).

Jesus said in Luke 24 that the “helper,” that “Spirit of truth,” is “**power**.” The Greek word for “power” is *dunamis* [doo’-nam-is]. Primarily, it indicates force, but in this case it means inherent power; power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature, or force that a person or thing puts forth.

This power is not inherent in human nature, but, as Christians with God’s Spirit, it is now God’s nature in us. The Apostle Peter preached this on the Day of Pentecost in 31AD:

“But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days,

says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved” (Acts 2:16–21).

The Power of God

What is this power that is behind our very identity as Christians? The word “power” in regard to the Holy Spirit can be defined as authority: “And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease” (Matthew 10:1). The word “power” here is the Greek *exousia* [ex-oo-see’-ah] and is defined as authority, right and privilege over. These men, not yet converted, went out with the Spirit of God “with” them that each might exercise—in a very limited but marvelous way—the very power of God in serving mankind in his own remote corner of the world.

Power has always been a factor in the course of human events. The earth’s environment around us reveals God’s creative power. King David acknowledged this, praying with thanks: “Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; in Your



hand it is to make great and to give strength to all” (1 Chronicles 29:11–12). Two different words are used in verses 11–12. In verse 11, the Hebrew for “power” is *gʾbûrâh* [gheb-oo-rawʹ], meaning force, might, mastery. In verse 12 it is *kôach* [koʹ-akh], or strength and might.

God’s power comes to Christians through Christ living His life in us: “For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you. Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified” (2 Corinthians 13:4–5, *cf.* Ephesians 3:20, Ephesians 6:10 and Philippians 4:13). The Apostle John defines this as a spiritual begetting (*KJV*) transforming the Christian’s inner nature: “Whoever has been born [*gennaō*, begotten] of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God” (1 John 3:9).

With this as background, what does God’s Spirit **in us do for us**? Most importantly, it provides strength. Paul, again, sets the stage: “And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the **power** of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:7–9).

Note that there is a distinction between the Spirit and mere power: “And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:4–5). As Christians, we have God’s Holy Spirit and the power of that Spirit, which flows through us from on high.

As mentioned above, Paul reminded the Ephesians of “the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power...” (Ephesians 1:18–19). All the previous words are in effect here, and Paul adds another one describing God’s “mighty power.” Two words are combined here. The Greek is *kratos* [kratʹ-os] *ischus* [is-khoosʹ], the vigor and authority of His ability and forcefulness. Or, simply, the strength of His might.

What We Are Promised

Why is there all of this power, strength, might and ability? And why is it given to Christians—those who have God’s Holy Spirit? Paul explains: “In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works

all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were **sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise**, who [which] is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the **purchased possession**, to the praise of His glory” (vv. 11–14).

The Apostle John made this promise even more clear: “And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life” (1 John 2:25). John was referencing Jesus’ redemptive prayer regarding the Church: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:1–3). We are sealed by the Spirit to inherit eternal life: “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” (2 Corinthians 1:21–22).

Returning to Paul’s use of the term “purchased possession” back in Ephesians 1:14, the Greek term Paul used is *peripoiēsis* [per-ee-poyʹ-ay-sis], meaning the obtaining and preserving of that which you have obtained. The scriptural definition is: “For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:22–23). The word “redemption” is *apolutrōsis* [ap-ol-ooʹ-tro-sis], the liberation that comes from a ransom being paid. The blood of Jesus—His life—was the ransom price paid; the Christian is the “purchased possession.”

It may be easy for us, individually, to say that Christ and God’s government is what this world needs. Yet God will accomplish this in a specific way, focusing on His Church, made up of the individual members all working as one: “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness,

What does God’s Spirit in us do for the Christian? Most importantly, it provides us strength.

with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift” (Ephesians 4:1–7).

Paul goes on to show a ministry *has been* ordained and given the responsibility of Church government that is based on cre-

ating a fully trained congregation of future kings and priests: “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (vv. 11–12).

At a Miletus conference, Paul made it very clear that the ministry must be in concert with those they lead, because they belong to Jesus who purchased them. He wrote: “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:17, 28). The Greek phrase “take heed” is *prosechō* [pros-ekh’-o], meaning that the leadership is to pay attention to, be cautious about, apply themselves to their leadership responsibilities.

It can be tempting for us to say, personally, that since this is the responsibility of the leadership, we can sit back and “do nothing.” Do we think, “All I have to do is sit back and stay out

The Apostle Paul was focused on the subject of the Church, stressing its unity of purpose in our attaining the full glory of Jesus Christ.

of the way; to just sort of ‘pay and pray’”? We need to remember that the Holy Spirit—that same Spirit—is given to us, individually—and **individually we must do something with it.** It is the same Spirit! The gifts may be different, but the Spirit and the power that flows through it is the same.

Each is indispensable in God’s plan: the Father, Jesus, the ministry and you: “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because **God** from the beginning **chose you** for salvation through sanctification **by the Spirit** and belief in the truth, to which He called you **by our gospel**, for the obtaining of the glory of our **Lord Jesus Christ**” (2 Thessalonians 2:13–14). Can anything be clearer than that? Through the Holy Spirit, God calls each individual Christian as a part of the glorious body of Jesus Christ!

A Unity of Purpose

Of all the Bible’s authors, the Apostle Paul was the most focused on this subject of the Church, stressing its unity of purpose in our attaining the full glory of Jesus Christ. The goal of each individual is in that unity, “till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). All, no one left out, are to achieve the full stature of Christ, not just a few. Paul emphasizes this with the promise that Christians “speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying

of itself in love” (vv. 15–16). Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, energizes the ministry and the Church to the full measure of the stature of His glory.

That power resides in every true Christian and it is our individual responsibility not only to avail ourselves of it, but also to use it accordingly: “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12–13). The phrase “work out” in Greek is *katergazomai* [kat-er-gad’-zom-ahee], meaning to perform, to accomplish or to achieve.

Paul instructed the Church, both the members and the ministry, in this awesome concept: “Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:6–7). How wonderful is God’s Spirit and the power that it gives us! It moves us toward the total, complete unity of purpose in His Church for which Jesus, the night before His brutal murder, prayed to the Father “that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me” (John 17:21–23).

The word “glory” Jesus used is *doxa*, meaning majesty, and only God is majestic. But, that majesty is revealed in all true Christians: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God” (Romans 8:18–19). The word “revealing” here is *apokaluptō* [ap-ok-al-oo’-to] and literally means to uncover, or to make known. The glory of both God and Jesus is going to be demonstrated to the entire world in us, individually and as Their Church. We are to become glorious as They are glorious.

Tremendous power is going to be expended to give us that same great power, as we become Spirit beings. This is what is going on inside you at this very moment. God is working a great miracle in us: “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who [which] dwells in you” (v. 11). We—all Christians today, and those who ever lived—will be as those on that first Pentecost in 31AD, poised, but then in Spirit form, to become a great demonstration of that force—that power of God—for the salvation of all of mankind.

May the force be with you! (L)



The Renovation

major renovation and renewal as it is transformed. The transformed creature is different from the original one.

The Greek word meaning “renovation” appears again in a similar context. Paul observed to Titus: “For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another” (Titus 3:3).

In other words, we were in need of major spiritual repairs!

Paul continued: “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and **renewing of the Holy Spirit**, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:4–7). The word “renewing” is *anakainosis*—a **renovation** done by the Master Builder, Jesus Christ our Savior, by means of the power of God, the Holy Spirit.

During the season of Pentecost, we remember the giving of God’s Holy Spirit and the great power for change in our lives that comes from Christ dwelling in us. God’s word often uses the analogy of a building being built or changed, so it can be helpful to look at His transforming work in this context.

A Process

If you visit a home with a lot of construction debris around, the homeowners might explain, “We’re *in the process* of renovating this area of the house.” A home renovation is not accomplished immediately—rather, it is a time-consuming *process*. It may involve repairing some old damage, or cleaning an area or even adding some space. A skilled renovator can change a house that is old and dying into one that is renewed and livable—and much more valuable to the owner. A renovated house is located at the same address, but it is *different* from the previous version.

Similarly, God’s Spirit dwelling in us changes us, and that continuing lifelong process is our ongoing conversion. So fruitfulness is important to God. Jesus explained why we must grow in our conversion when He said:

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vine-dresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear

By **Dexter Wakefield**

A popular genre of reality TV is the home renovation show. In these programs, the renovators purchase a “fixer-upper” that may be barely habitable, then undertake to transform it into a beautiful home. After they “count the cost,” they establish budgets and commit to a contract, which often involves major changes to the residence, often replacing decayed, broken or substandard features with much better new ones. The process usually involves unforeseen problems, extra costs and even personal conflicts, but by the end of the show viewers see a beautifully renewed house that some new owner would be very pleased to call “home.” Perhaps you have been through a renovation of your own home—as my wife and I have with ours—or have purchased a “fixer-upper” of your own. Making a fixer-upper habitable enough to live in, or even to re-sell, involves a lot of work.

Did you know that the Bible speaks of a renovation? The Apostle Paul wrote to the Church of God in Rome, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by **the renewing** of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:1–2).

The Greek word translated “renewing” literally means “renovation” [See Strong’s NT:342; “**renovation**.” Also see Thayer’s NT:342; “**a renewal, renovation**, complete change for the better.”]. When a “fixer upper” is *renovated*, it is *renewed* as a home.

To express “be transformed” in the scripture above, Paul used the Greek word *metamorphoo*—from which we get our word “metamorphosis.” For example when a caterpillar goes through metamorphosis into a butterfly, it goes through a

fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He *prunes, that it may bear more fruit*. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned” (John 15:1–6).

According to Jesus—the Vine of which God’s people are all a part—fruitfulness and conversion have a lot to do with our ultimate salvation. *Pruning and growth necessarily involve change.*

Why Renovate?

Then why do we need spiritual renovation and renewal? Sin hurts! It injures spiritually, physically and psychologically. Sin pollutes us spiritually. It devastates individuals, families and relationships. It harms the sinner as well as others. Simply put, sin is bad for you! In the world, the deception exists that if a particular sin does not seem to be hurting anyone else, then it is OK. *But there is no victimless sin!* The one committing the sin is always harmed by it. *Sin is toxic to the sinner!* When God grants us the blessing of repentance, we begin to see ourselves as God sees us, and the realization of our true spiritual condition can be a painful one. He makes us very aware that we need *cleansing and renewal*.

God is holy, and our sin polluted us spiritually and separated us from God. The prophet Isaiah said, “Behold, the Lord’s

When God calls us, His Spirit is working with us to **open our eyes and ears to His truth**

hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” (Isaiah 59:1–2). Yet it is in God’s nature to have mercy and to heal, and it always has been. The Apostle Paul explained, “For He says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.’ So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy” (Romans 9:15–16).

Happily for us, God, in His mercy and grace, has made it possible for us to be *cleansed and healed* by the sacrifice of His Son, and we have a special remembrance of that great gift ev-

ery Passover. Paul wrote, “He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared *to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself*. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so *Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many*. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (Hebrews 9:26–27). Christ’s first appearance was to *save us from the guilt of our sins*. No one who is still profaned by that guilt can be resurrected to immortality in the Kingdom of God. When Christ comes a second time, the resurrection of the just occurs, and it will be for our *salvation from death in the grave*.

Each year, when we take the Passover, we remember that the Lamb of God was sacrificed to make it possible, by unearned grace, *for us to be **cleansed** of our sins and for us to be **reconciled** with the Father*.

The first great part of God’s plan of salvation is pictured by the Spring Holy Days and involves the good news—the gospel—of the grace of God. As the Apostle Paul said, “But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to *the gospel of the grace of God*” (Acts 20:24) “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to *build you up* and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (v. 32). That is good news indeed!

Our renovation begins with a complete cleaning out!

Counting Fifty

After “counting fifty” from the Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread, we come to the Holy Day of Pentecost. On that day two millennia ago, the Holy Spirit was given *in power*, beginning the Church of God—and that power is still with God’s people today. First, it works *with us*, and then it works *in us*. If we want to have this precious Spirit, we must first obey God. The Apostle Peter said, “And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit [which] God has given to those *who obey Him*” (Acts 5:32).

Jesus had taught this to His disciples when He said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that [it] may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, [that] the world cannot receive, because it neither sees [it] nor knows [it]; but you know [it], for [it] dwells *with you* and will be *in you*. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:15–18).

When God calls us, His Spirit is working *with us* to open our eyes and ears to His truth. Our “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). This seeing and hearing is a great blessing from God! “But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to

see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it" (Matthew 13:16–17). God brings us to true repentance, baptism for the remission of sins and then we receive the Holy Spirit of God by the laying on of hands by one of His true ministers (Acts 2:37–38; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6). Once we have that indwelling Spirit, the renovation work can begin. And it is God who does it. "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

The Renovation Begins

Often, a house that is in need of renovation has suffered damage. It can look just fine from the outside, but inside it can be a real mess. Perhaps there has been water damage from a leaky roof, resulting in stains, mildew and rotted trusses. Or perhaps a foundation has sunk, resulting in cracks in the walls. It may be that some of the house's mechanical systems are broken and dysfunctional. And it will certainly need a thorough cleaning from attic to basement!

In life, people suffer damages too. They may look fine from the outside, but inside, God knows that there are lots of problems. Everyone in God's Church is a real "fixer-upper." Fortu-

When God renovates us, He *cleanses* our guilt, *repairs* our relationships, *fixes* broken hearts, *replaces* dysfunctional attitudes, *reinforces* good behavior, and *renews* our lives

nately, the Master Builder Himself will come and live in us to make the improvements.

What are some of the things that God's Spirit does in us?

The Holy Spirit sanctifies! God sets His people apart as holy in several ways, and a most important one is by the giving of His Spirit. To the brethren in Rome, Paul wrote that he "might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, *sanctified by the Holy Spirit*" (Romans 15:16).

The Holy Spirit heals! God does not take away all the consequences of our past sins, but He does remove the guilt and begins a healing process. When God renovates us, He *cleanses* our guilt, *repairs* our relationships, *fixes* broken hearts, *replaces* dysfunctional attitudes, *reinforces* good behavior, and *renews* our lives. Jesus visited a synagogue one Sabbath and read a prophecy from the book of Isaiah: "*The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD*" (Luke 4:16–19).

The Holy Spirit leads! It leads us in a new way of life and helps us keep God's commandments. This way of life is a bless-

ed one, and the Holy Spirit is like a fountain from which we can drink daily; "for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and *lead them to living fountains of waters*. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 7:17). Our job is to *follow the lead* of that Spirit daily.

The Holy Spirit transforms! One's will is one's power to choose. God is transforming our wills to be like His, so that we choose as He does. He wants us to obey Him from the heart—and, having done so, to be able to live joyfully in His Kingdom forever. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Roman brethren, "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet *you obeyed from the heart* that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" (Romans 6:17–18). God's transforming Spirit turns our hearts towards Him.

How Is Your Renovation Progressing?

"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, *you are God's building*. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one *take heed how he builds on it*. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that

which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work,

of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone *defiles the temple of God*, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are" (1 Corinthians 3:9–17).

The temple of our body must never remain defiled with sin. God knows that even with His Holy Spirit leading us to keep His commandments, we still make mistakes. Happily, in His mercy, God has a way to continuously keep this temple clean. The Apostle John admonished the first-century Church and us; "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son *cleanses* [present: ongoing] *us from all sin*. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.... If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and *to cleanse* [future: ongoing] *us from all unrighteousness*. If we say that we have not sinned [past], we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ

RENOVATION continues on page 21

Christian Courtship

By **Gerald E. Weston**

Some people have accused me of being a matchmaker. Well, I don't know how in the world they could come up with such an idea. Me, a matchmaker? I don't think so, but I will admit to this: I do love a really good, real-life love story.

Tragically, too many of today's real-life love stories deteriorate into bitter relationships and sad affairs. Why is this the case? Why are there so many unhappy marriages and broken relationships? What is the source of so much heartache?

The reason I am addressing the subject of Christian courtship is because too many people I really deeply care for and love have made some very bad decisions that have lifelong consequences. Many of the problems began with courtship. We normally think of courtship as the process of attracting a mate, but the wrong kind of courting *courts disaster*.

Without any exaggeration, the overwhelming majority of people in Western culture today, and even many in God's Church, are courting future heartache.

When Does Courtship Begin?

Since courting involves going to great lengths to win favor, with a view towards marriage, we should consider; When does courtship actually begin? This may be a simple question, but few know the right answer.

While we often use the expression, "opposites attract," we also use another equally strong expression: "Birds of a feather

flock together." Both are true. Some women are attracted to men of low moral character, thinking they can reform them. This is very foolish thinking, as it almost always turns out badly for the woman, and any children produced by the relationship.

On the other hand, individuals who have strong moral character, who are positive and sincerely want to live according to God's law, are attracted to those with similar values. Conversely, those who "play church," who profess one thing but practice something else—who live by this world's values—will most certainly attract like-minded individuals.

So the question is, do you personally want to marry someone who will value the same things you value, who will not come home drunk and embarrass (or harm) you or the children, who cares for your needs and will be faithful to you? If so, then you must strive to be that kind of person yourself.

It is for this reason that courtship in its fullest context begins with what we call "reputation." We normally think of courtship as a period of time of active, steady dating that precedes and leads up to marriage. However, in today's world, courtship itself is often bypassed entirely. Boy meets girl, they end up in bed together—then most often they split; the not-so-uncommon "one night stand." In some cases, however, they continue to see each other, and it is a short step to conveniently moving in together. Marriage sometimes follows, not because this is the person he or she really wants to marry, but because splitting up is not so easy. Who gets the television and how do you divide the dog? This is to say nothing of children that sometimes come along.

Under these circumstances, the couple usually has no concept of what marriage is all about—especially true, godly marriage. Little or no thought goes into what kind of person, what kind of parent, provider or housekeeper he or she will be, nor do they know how faithful the other will be in the long term.

Instead, many men and women have reduced mate selection to an animalistic process, devoid of thoughtful inquiry. Then, when the relationship goes down the drain, they blame the other individual and wonder why it turned out badly.

Wendy Shalit, author of *A Return to Modesty*, quotes a 1998 issue of *YM Magazine*, stating that "the best predictor of someone's future behavior is their past behavior." She goes on to define this as "reputation" (Shalit, 34).

When Your Reputation Begins

Proverbs 20:11 explains: "Even a child is known by his deeds, whether what he does is pure and right." Reputation, from this perspective, begins very early in life, even from childhood.

We read in the Bible about a young man who was so highly respected that the Apostle Paul took note of him (Acts 16:1). When Paul came to Derbe and Lystra, he met Timothy, the son



of a Jewish Christian mother, and whose father was Greek. Timothy had a very positive reputation.

Reputation can be good or bad, but is something we all have one way or the other. Paul wanted to mentor Timothy, because he saw in this young man a certain godly approach toward life. Timothy had a positive reputation. As a child, he had faithfully followed what his mother and grandmother taught him.

Now, consider this: if Timothy had a bad reputation and tried to repair it at the last minute when Paul arrived in town, would Paul have taken him under his wing? What if Timothy had said, “Well, you know, Paul, I know I haven’t lived a very good life, I’ve been doing a lot of things that are contrary to the Word of God, but I would really like to be a minister, and I’ll clean up my act from this day forward.” Paul himself had a

You either have a good reputation or a bad one,
but one way or the other, you have a reputation—
and it is being noticed by others.

“reputation problem” at first, and knew the effort required to repair a lifetime of mistakes. Would he have subjected an eager young Timothy to a lifetime of derision and scorn while he was yet unprepared?

And yet, often this is what we find with singles, young or old, who have sown their wild oats, who have used drugs or alcohol in a wrong way, who suddenly meet the “right person.” They begin to make approaches toward that individual to introduce themselves, hoping that the person is going to be attracted to them—but, is that the way it works?

Will someone looking for a mate of high moral character suddenly take your word for it that you are going to clean up your act and be the person of his or her dreams? Not likely!

Importance of a Good Reputation

If you are honest, hard-working, living a consistently godly life and conducting yourself with moral integrity, your reputation will precede you.

The choice is yours, so what is it going to be? Here is what it comes down to: if you someday want to marry someone who is faithful, someone who is stable, someone with whom you can share a relationship of real quality and lasting beauty, you have to be that kind of person. However, it takes time to build a good reputation. So start today—not tomorrow! You never know when you are going to run into Mr. Right, or Miss Right.

If you want to marry Mr. Right, you have to be Miss Right. If you want to marry Miss Right, or Miss Very Right, you have to be Mr. Very Right. Birds of a feather *do* flock together!

When that special person walks into the congregation where you are, or you go to the Feast and find yourself introduced to somebody that you never knew before, and you see that person,

and you are interested, why would you think that he or she would suddenly be interested in you if a negative reputation has preceded you? Even if the person is brand-new in the Church, word gets around. There is also the problem of suddenly trying to change bad habits—which is not always easy to do.

Courting begins long before you arrive at the stage where you are actually dating. It begins with the kind of person you are.

Many people date based only on physical appearance—and when they date for looks that is usually all they get. On the other hand, the person who really wants to obey God is *looking beyond looks!* He or she is looking at what kind of person you are. Obviously, physical attraction is important, but have you ever noticed how a good-looking man does not

look so physically attractive once you really know him? Or how a merely pleasant-looking woman becomes more physically attractive once you have come to know her?

What kind of a mother will she be? What kind of a father will he be to your children? How loving, how outwardly concerned, and giving is this person? Or, is this person selfish? Is he a hard worker? Does she tip the bottle too much? Does she go to a lot of fast parties, or does he exhibit wild, irresponsible behavior?

This is the type of thing that people are going to look for if they are looking for a quality person. They want to know that they are marrying somebody who not only looks good, but somebody who has a good reputation and who has good character, as much as humanly possible.

Is Your Reputation Good or Bad?

God is going to reward us tomorrow for what we do today, and the same principle applies to dating and marriage. If you are single, you are being judged right now by singles of the opposite sex.

You either have a good reputation or a bad one, but one way or the other, *you have a reputation*—and it is being noticed by others. So, what it comes down to is this: if you want to marry a real quality person, start now by being the kind of person that you hope to marry, because in a very real sense, courting has already begun! You are attracting or repulsing others by your behavior, even though you may not yet know the person of your dreams.

Now, this does not mean that there is not forgiveness; and, some of our young people in the Church, as well as some of our older people, need to do some reputation repair. Some have been doing things that they ought not be doing. This is especially true of those who grow up in the world, but they are often very repentant and have already begun working on overcoming bad habits. It is also true that many of our young people “take a walk over fool’s hill,” only to return and “clean up their act.” They should be forgiven, but sadly, they may

be carrying bad baggage from their trip! God will forgive the sincerely repentant unwed mother, but this will not absolve her of the responsibility of child-rearing. God will forgive the drug abuser who cleans up and stays sober—but there is no guarantee that He will heal the physical damage done by the drugs or by the actions of the one who was intoxicated.

If you have been on the wrong path for a while, it does not mean that *all is lost*, but it *does* mean this—if you want to have a good reputation, you are going to have to clean it up, and this only happens if it is from the heart. Unlike beauty, such efforts cannot be “skin deep.”

People are very forgiving, especially in our modern world. People make so many mistakes that it is hard to find someone today who does not have plenty of regrets and some degree of “baggage.” So if you have been drinking too much, “partying hearty,” or been involved in any other ungodly behavior, procrastinating positive change is not in your best interest. *Now* is the time to change! You never know when that right person is going to walk into your life, so the sooner you clean up your reputation, the better.

God forgives instantly upon true repentance, but human beings—especially your prospective husband or wife—may take a bit longer to convince. Not knowing your repentant heart, they will be looking for outward evidence—how you behave—and they will tend to forgive not just because of your sincere words, but because they will begin to see different fruit coming from you. And you should not expect this to happen overnight. Regardless of the circumstances of your “bad rep,” much time, study, fasting and prayer for change will be

God forgives instantly upon true repentance, but human beings—especially your prospective husband or wife—may take a bit longer to convince.

necessary, but you should never grow weary (Galatians 6:9–10) for in constant effort comes reward.

Three big destroyers of reputation lead to what I call a “S.A.D.” love story—and, it is *sad*, because this is an acronym for *sex*, *alcohol* and *drugs*. These are three big ones—but not the only ones—that will destroy your reputation and turn people of godly character away from you.

Sex Outside of Marriage?

In our Western society, sex outside of marriage is taken for granted by the vast majority of people. But a loving God counsels us against this vile behavior—and it is vile. People just assume that men and women are sleeping together before they are married. Our language is drenched in it. We have substituted words such as spouse, husband or wife, with the word “partner.”

Yet, the damage to individuals and families from this sin is enormous. Many people today are simply skipping the entire dating and courtship process and jumping into the privileges of marriage without marital commitment.

Notice that our loving Father’s counsel is to avoid such behavior. 1 Corinthians 6:9 states, “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God?” Now, what is this unrighteous behavior that will keep someone out of God’s Kingdom?

He says, “Do not be deceived...” (v. 10). In other words, this is behavior that can deceive us. We can rationalize around it. We can think that, “Well, it’s okay. I can do this today, and I’ll repent later and God will forgive me. I will sow my wild oats. I will do whatever I want to now, and then I will clean up my act at the last minute when I find the right person. We’ll get married and live happily ever after. I’ll be faithful to her, and she will be faithful to me.”

This type of thinking is *dead wrong*—sex outside of marriage has a price-tag and it has to be paid!

Sex, Alcohol and Drugs

Notice some of the things Paul writes here: “...neither fornicators [people who have sex before marriage], nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the Kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9–10).

Remember, the *three* sins that will give you a S.A.D. love story are, *sex*, *alcohol* and *drugs*. Two, and in principle all three, are mentioned here.

Sometimes, we in the ministry shed tears when we hear of the things some of our young people do, and sometimes we are thrilled when they do what is right and see things working out in their lives.

Our Heavenly Father knows and loves us more than any human being does, and He inspired the Apostle Paul to write, “Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body” (1 Corinthians 6:18).

Pam Stenzel, a prominent lecturer on the dangers of sex outside of marriage, points out that in the 1950’s there were just five common sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Today, there are more than 30, and 30 percent of them are incurable. They will be your companions for the remainder of your life!

According to the United States Centers for Disease Control, “about one out of every six people aged 14 to 49 years have genital herpes,” but the most common STD today is the Human Papilloma Virus. The CDC reports: “About 79 million Americans are currently infected with HPV. About 14 million people become newly infected each year. HPV is so common that most sexually-active men and women will get

at least one type of HPV at some point in their lives. Health problems related to HPV include genital warts and cervical cancer.”

There are more than 30 varieties of HPV that are sexually transmitted. Some have no symptoms, until they produce abnormal cells, which can turn into cancer. HPV is so prevalent and serious that most doctors now recommend the vaccine Gardasil despite its many reported ill effects. Yet even if a young woman chooses to be vaccinated against HPV, Gardasil will not protect her from the many other STDs.

Among those teenagers having teen sex, about one in four will contract an STD prior to adulthood. While these statistics are from the United States, it is difficult to see how the situation is any better in the rest of the Western world.

Consider this: do you really want to tell that special person of your dreams that you are carrying a disease that can harm her or your future children? Or that your reproductive organs have been damaged by an STD and you *cannot* have children? Yes, courtship begins before you meet that special person with whom you want to spend the rest of your life!

When God told us to flee sexual immorality, He truly did so for our own good. This is one of those points I like to refer to as “unshakable unbreakables.” These are rules that you set for yourself that will protect and preserve your life, your reputation and your future happiness.

Flee Fornication

For example, a single person should never go into an isolated location where temptation with a member of the opposite sex may have a chance to flourish. It is good for teens to date in groups, and avoid what are known as “compromising situations.” This is one way to “flee fornication” as we are instructed to do in 1 Corinthians 6:18 (*KJV*).

This certainly does not mean that a young man must avoid going into his grandmother’s house when she is alone, and this does not mean there is not a place for one-on-one dating, especially when you are old enough, prepared for, and seriously thinking of marrying a particular individual.

Mr. Armstrong pointed out to Ambassador College students many years ago that sex is not just the final part of the act, but is also the activity that leads up to it. We refer to this as foreplay. Too many couples *play with foreplay* and end up with regrets when they go much further than they intended. Proverbs 22:3 instructs us: “A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished.” So if you are prudent, you will avoid *playing with foreplay* outside of marriage! Make that another of your unshakable unbreakables.

Alcohol Abuse Destroys Reputation

The second way to destroy your reputation is through the misuse of alcohol. Alcoholic beverages can be a blessing or a curse. When used for the purpose of getting drunk, they are

a curse—period! Nothing good can come from this kind of behavior, and with social media and everyone carrying a cell phone camera, your reputation can be destroyed in a single evening.

In Proverbs 31, we are instructed by King Lemuel’s mother. Her son was going to be a king—just as we will be kings someday. She first warns against immoral women, and against becoming involved with sex outside of marriage, but her second warning regards the misuse of alcohol: “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes intoxicating drink; lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of all the afflicted” (Proverbs 31:4–5). Notice that one’s judgment is impaired by the improper use of alcohol. The Bible does not condemn alcohol, only the misuse of it. When alcohol is used for the purpose of getting drunk, it is a problem. When drinking a glass of wine or some other alcoholic beverage with a meal, it is seldom a problem.

However, recreational drinking is a major problem in our world today, and sadly, this is what some of our young people are getting into, even at the Feast of Tabernacles! For the sake of your physical, mental and spiritual well-being, and for the sake of your courting reputation, *do not let yourself become* caught up in recreational drinking.

D is for Drugs

There is a D in S.A.D. and it is closely related to A. We might say that drugs are alcohol on steroids. So-called recreational drugs can be found on university campuses and parties everywhere, and they strongly encourage inappropriate and destructive behavior. Besides the potential damage these can do to your mind and body, you are courting disaster to your reputation. Make it an unshakable unbreakable to never, never, *never* touch them!

Do you realize that recreational drug use is mentioned in scripture? Notice what God’s word says in the Book of Revelation: “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, *sorcerers*, idolaters and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone which is the second death” (Revelation 21:7–8). We normally associate sorcery with someone wearing a pointed hat and carrying a wand. Or, we might think of Harry Potter.

However, it is interesting that, when we study the word *sorcerer* in the above verse, we find that it comes from the original Greek *pharmacos*, from which we get the word pharmacy, and relates to the distribution of drugs. Why would we find such a word used in this passage? Some people have misapplied this word to modern medicine that is used to treat the sick. They never thought of it in the context that we find it today.

Many cults, past and present, use mind-altering drugs to induce a state of ecstasy or trance and bring about some

COURTSHIP continues on page 20

NECESSITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

By **Peter Nathan**

Early in my service as a minister, I visited a man who outwardly had every appearance of becoming a solid member of the Church. However, he very quickly let me know that he wanted to be baptized so that he could receive the Holy Spirit and be able to speak in tongues. In counseling with him, I tried to help him understand that the role of the Holy Spirit was so much more than just speaking in tongues. Many mistakenly think of speaking in tongues as the primary or even sole external sign of the Holy Spirit, just as it was displayed on the day of Pentecost in 31AD (see Acts 2).

The principal instruction about the Holy Spirit, however, was given by Jesus Christ at the Passover, reinforcing what He had stated months earlier on the preceding Last Great Day (John 7:37–39). As He sat at dinner with the disciples at their last Passover together, with just over 50 days remaining until Pentecost, Jesus made a promise to those with Him:

“If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that [it] may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, [which] the world cannot receive, because it neither sees [it] nor knows [it]; but you know [it], for [it] dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:15–18).

Later at the meal, Jesus reiterated this promise:

“But when the Helper comes... I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth [that] proceeds from the Father, [it] will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning” (John 15:26–27).

With these words, Jesus encapsulated for His disciples the necessity of the Holy Spirit and the impact it would have on their lives—and by extension on ours. Jesus goes on in chapter 16 to set out a number of reasons for the giving of the Spirit. These include “convict[ing] the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (v. 9)—of **sin**, “because they do not believe in Me” (v. 10) of **righteousness**, “because I go to My Father and you see Me no more” (v. 11) and of **judgment**, “because the ruler of this world is judged” (John 16:8–11). Furthermore, the Spirit would “guide you

into all truth; for [it] will not speak on [its] own authority, but whatever [it] hears [it] will speak; and [it] will tell you things to come. [It] will glorify Me, for [it] will take of what is Mine and declare it to you” (vv. 13–14).

So, having considered this instruction about the Holy Spirit, we can look at how this affects us. Based on what Jesus stated to the disciples, let us consider seven reasons why we need the Holy Spirit.

1. To Develop Christian Relationships

Jesus promised that His disciples would not be left as orphans. Orphans are defined as children who do not have parents; no matter how kind and caring others may be toward them, they lack that parental relationship. We are offered a relationship with Jesus Christ through the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is a relationship that is far greater than that of an orphan somehow regaining a lost parent.

The need for the Holy Spirit to be present abundantly in our lives is given in terms of one of the most intimate relationships possible—marriage. Marriage is a different metaphor than that used by Jesus at the Passover. There we were told that we would not be left as orphans. Now the relationship is deeper as we prepare to be part of the bride of Christ at His return. What is essential? The Holy Spirit. Without it, the door is shut and we have no part. We are left like orphans—outside, alone (Matthew 25:11–13).

The parable of the ten virgins, representing the Church, focuses on our preparedness for the coming of the Bridegroom. The supply of oil in our possession shows our state of preparation! Oil is one of the symbols used to describe the Holy Spirit. It was used for anointing and setting apart from this evil world. It was an essential element for the operation of the Tabernacle and the Temple. It was needed for the offerings, lamps or menorah, and anointing of the priests and

kings. Isaiah saw the latter function as being a sign of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 61:1).

Prior to the return of Jesus as the Bridegroom, the Holy Spirit forms a vital function in building Christian relationships. Jesus was able to read from the prophets in the synagogue at Nazareth, possibly on a day of Pentecost. He read from a text in Isaiah noting: “The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed” (Luke 4:18).

Preaching the Gospel in a Christ-like manner is enabled because of the Holy Spirit with the end results of helping people be healed of their fractured relationships with our Father in Heaven. In reading Isaiah, Jesus was focusing on the use of oil as a light in the Temple. The Holy Place was dark. The absence of windows or open doors prevented the Holy Place being lit by natural daylight. The menorah or candlestick was the only form of light in that darkness. God’s Church is to be that light in this dark world. The return of Jesus Christ—the bridegroom—is set at midnight, a time of darkness. We with our lamps fueled by the Holy Spirit of God are the light.

Notice how Jesus referenced this at the beginning of His ministry:

“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp-stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14–16).

In Matthew 25:13, the watching we are enjoined to do is linked to our own spiritual condition. Do we have our Father’s Holy Spirit? Are we using it in an appropriate manner? The next question then is: do we have enough? Will we be part of that most joyous occasion?

2. To Take on the Mind of Christ

The apostles were empowered by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel, starting in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. They understood their roles as witnesses to the death and resurrection of the Christ, but realized that something was required of them in return; they had to *obey*. Note Peter’s comment to the Sanhedrin shortly after the day of Pentecost: “And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him” (Acts 5:32). Peter clearly remembered the instruction that Jesus had given at that last Passover. Obedience was a condition for receiving the Holy Spirit (John 14:15–16). That enabled them to be witnesses (John 15:27). However, the obedience was not just *blind*

obedience. It was to accomplish a purpose—to take on the very mind and thinking of the Being who gave the Spirit.

John recorded in his first epistle a priority for us as followers of Jesus Christ. We are to become those who practice righteousness and become “righteous, just as He [Jesus Christ] is righteous” (1 John 3:7). His righteousness came about by a state of mind, a mind that Paul encourages us to acquire through letting us see that difference between the spirit of this world, that humanity has, and the mind of God (1 Corinthians 2:9–15). That is accomplished through one means only—having the Spirit of God within our minds. “For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit... from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God” (1 Corinthians 2:11–12).

The avoidance of deception is only available to those who have the Spirit of God within them, enabling them to understand the thinking and approach of our Father (2 Thessalonians 2:2–3, 10–12; 1 John 2:7–9).

3. To Read with Understanding

Jesus promised the Holy Spirit so the apostles could be led into all truth (John 16:12–15). Just knowing Scripture was not enough. Paul before his conversion knew the Scriptures very well, but his limited understanding of them led him to murder and persecute the followers of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:1, 9:1). After his conversion, with the insight provided by the Spirit, he became a man driven to give *life* to people, healing the sick and even raising the dead (Acts 20:9–13). Paul is an excellent example of how knowledge without the application of the Spirit does not work the righteousness of God.

Another example of this need is that of the Ethiopian eunuch, who declared in response to Philip’s inquiry as to whether or not he understood the Scriptures: “How can I, unless someone guides me?” (Acts 8:31).

Paul even went on to declare that we cannot understand the real nature, role, and purpose of Jesus Christ without the Spirit. He told the Corinthians: “Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3).

4. To Pray Most Effectively

Not only is our study of God’s Word enhanced by God’s Holy Spirit; our prayer life will also be enhanced by the use of that Spirit. Paul explained this to the brethren in Rome:

“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit... makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be ut-

tered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:26–27).

Paul’s comment is not that that we do not know how to pray in terms of *the mechanics* of prayer, but rather we often don’t know the *exact needs* that should be addressed. For instance, when we pray for someone’s healing, we frequently have no real appreciation of what needs to be corrected so that the person can have full health again. We simply see some symptoms. Or when we pray for the Work to go forth, we have no idea who the

Above all else, the Holy Spirit is necessary to help us overcome this world and produce the fruit that our Father desires.

Father might call as a result of that prayer. The Holy Spirit, as the power of God, is able to fill those gaps in our understanding. One Greek grammarian states, “the Greek adverb does not refer to the manner of praying, but to the correspondence between the prayer and that which is really needed.”

Paul also encouraged the Ephesian brethren to: “[pray] always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:18).

John encourages us with a similar statement: “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him (1 John 5:14–15).

5. To Produce the Fruit To Overcome Sin

Above all else, the Holy Spirit is necessary to help us overcome this world and produce the fruit that our Father desires. Jesus talked about this being accomplished through “abiding in Him,” a concept that involves the presence of the Holy Spirit (John 14:23–26; 15:1–8, esp. v. 8). Once again, Paul reinforces these statements by Jesus Christ in laying out the “fruits of the Spirit” so that we can appreciate them (Galatians 5:22–23).

James also addressed the need for us to receive the “implanted word” so that we can be “doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving ourselves” (James 1:21–22). He then goes on to list the fruits of Christian wisdom, which we could parallel with the fruits of the Spirit (James 3:18). These qualities of Christian wisdom are not available to humanity without the indwelling or implanting of the Holy Spirit:

“...longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have cruci-

fied the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another” (Galatians 5:22–26).

6. To Exercise the Father’s Gifts

As He sat discussing the need for the Holy Spirit, Jesus told those with Him that they would accomplish even more than He had done:

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it” (John 14:12–14).

How was this to be done? If the fruits of the Spirit are evident in our lives, and we are using those fruits to honor and glorify our Father, He can bestow upon us the gifts of His Spirit—gifts which Paul details at length (1 Corinthians 12:1–31).

Gifts of the Spirit only come as a result of **developing the fruit** of the Spirit. Evidence of this is given in the account of Simon Magus. Here was a man who wanted to buy the gift that the apostles possessed—but without ever repenting and seeking our Father’s will in his life (Acts 8:18–24)!

Being able to speak in tongues is a **gift** of the Holy Spirit, not a **fruit**! The man I described earlier had it backwards, as do so many professing Christians today—they desire the gift of tongues without having to produce fruits of the Spirit!

7. To Prepare for Eternal Life

Jesus promised the disciples that His death as the Passover Lamb, His subsequent resurrection and His ascension were so that He could prepare a place for us within His Kingdom (John 14:1–4). His departure was to ensure the future for all humanity who are willing to submit to the Father’s will and accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the payment for sin. The result was a future hope of eternal life ruling in the Kingdom of God, bringing order and peace to this planet and ultimately the entire universe. The Holy Spirit plays an important role in this process (John 14:25–28).

Paul understood this when he wrote these words to the Christians in Rome:

“...that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on

SPIRIT continues on page 21

Woman to Woman

THE BLESSING OF A CLOSED DOOR

By **Michelle Grovak**

How many times have we, as mothers and grandmothers, recounted the story of Noah and the ark to our little ones? Recently, reading it to my six-year-old grandson, I saw an aspect of the story in a different light.

The animals, seven pairs of every clean, and two of every unclean, are settled into their temporary homes—each bird on a perch, each reptile in a cage, each horse in a stall, and each sheep in a pen, just as God had instructed Noah. Animal feed and provisions are packed away, just as God also instructed. Noah, Shem, Japheth and Ham are all on board, along with their wives. The door of the ark remains open until all is completed, as is recorded in Genesis 7.

The time has come; after 120 years of preparation, the time has come for water to pour down, and rush in, and bubble up. The time has come for the door of the ark to close. But, who will shut the door? Will it be Noah and his sons? When it happens, the end of the heavy door of the ark begins to rise off the ground, not by man, but by the unseen hand of God. The ark's inhabitants can hear the wooden door creak as it is heaved upwards. And slowly what can be seen of the sky disappears from view.

Who could miss the obvious blessing of a closed door? The ominous clouds would gather. Thunder would roll and lightning would crash, spooking the animals and causing a noisy uproar in the pens and cages. Rumbles would sound from underground, shaking the ark.

Anticipating what was to come, those on board must have breathed a collective sigh of relief, seeing that God had ensured the success of their undertaking—by *closing and sealing* off the door *through His own power*. Perhaps God designed the ark in

such a way as to make it absolutely necessary for an outside force to perform the final step. Noah built the ark as instructed, and, in faith, waited for God to do what he could not do for himself.

What might have happened if it had not been so? If Noah could have closed the ark, would he have hesitated, thinking of all the people left outside? Perhaps God relieved Noah of the burden of shutting out all of humanity. For whatever reason, God shut up the ark Himself (v. 16)—and what a blessing that closed door was!



We know the rest, how the rain poured down and the waters of the deep rose until all land was covered and even the highest mountain was buried by more than 20 feet of water. Surely those inside the ark thanked God and praised Him for that closed door, the barrier that stood the test of water pressure and did its part to keep all aboard high and dry.

Doors Opened and Closed

When the waters subsided, and the door opened, Noah thanked God for the opened door. We Christians like to think about how God opens doors both in our personal lives and in the Work of God. Open doors just naturally seem gratifying. We *want to walk* through those open doors. Whether a promotion

at work, a proposal of marriage, or a trip abroad, open doors are exciting, and when God is the one who opens them, they are a true blessing in our lives.

But what about the blessing of a closed door? When a door closes, can we see that door's closing as Noah perceived it?

Revelation 3:7 tells us that God both opens and closes doors. Can we understand that He closes doors for our own good? And if a door closes for our own good, the closed door is, in effect, a blessing! It is easy to see how the ark's closing by God's hand was a blessing, but what about closed doors in our own lives? What about a closed door that looks like a trial?

A lost job, a broken leg, a serious illness or the death of a loved one—all involve doors closing, either temporarily or permanently. These can leave us confused and discouraged. If our Father is pleased with us, how could He allow this to happen? Devilish doubts can enter our minds when trouble abounds.

However, the Bible encourages us to look at trials from a different perspective. James 1 focuses us on the positive aspects of trials, which prepare us for God's Kingdom. "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience" (James 1:2–3). And then: "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love him" (v. 12). Finally: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father" (v. 17).

Whether God chooses to open or close a door, let us consider it a gift from the Father. He knows our character and the areas requiring growth in order to fill the role He has for us in the Kingdom of God. Learning patience, growing in faith, controlling our tongues? Closed doors can help us grow and change. Waiting patiently behind a closed door is a perfect opportunity for introspection, for self-examination, to see ourselves as God sees us. Or perhaps the closed door is simply saying it is time to look behind another door. Perhaps the answer is not "no," but rather, "I have something much better for you."

Doors of Protection

Sometimes when a door closes, our loving Father is protecting His children from physical, emotional or spiritual harm.

As mothers of young children, we can relate to the blessing of closed doors. We purchase complicated door guards to keep little ones away from household products in cabinets. The exasperation of a toddler is worth his safety! The exterior doors to our home keep the little ones safely inside and protected from dangers outside. I remember being a five-year-old, who loved life in our home in the country. Every morning I scampered outside to explore nature. But we also owned a big red rooster. That rooster was quite a bully. When I exited the back door, invariably he attacked. Circling the house with the red menace on my tail, I made it to the front door. I can still hear that door slam after I managed to escape once again. I can still feel the relief of having that closed door between me and that awful bird.

Can you think of times when a closed door turned out to be a real blessing? Pondering these times can be the starting point for fruitful meditation on God's working in our lives. Or take the opportunity to have a family discussion centered on how various closed doors in the life of the family have proved to be blessings. These family conversations can help children learn the value of a closed door.

Although it may not come naturally for us, with God's help we can cultivate an attitude of seeing the blessing of a closed door. The next time a door slams shut in your face, try to remember God shows His love to us in many different ways. Perhaps something harmful is on the other side of the door. Perhaps we need to stop and examine ourselves. Or perhaps we need to look to another door. Remember Noah and the blessing of the closed door. And thank God for all things, even closed doors! (LN)

TOMORROW'S WORLD

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Schedule subject to change | For stations and times, check the Television Log on page 34 of your *Tomorrow's World* magazine.

POWER continued from page 2

have an **impact** on this very confused, Satan-influenced society. If we will not do this, *who will?*

Think about it!

May God help every one of us be determined to draw much closer to the God of the Bible during this period of time and drink in of the power that is available to all of us through the indwelling of His Spirit by which He created the heavens and the earth and everything in them. This is the power Jesus Christ Himself used in overcoming His own human nature, having been willing to “empty Himself” (Philippians 2:7) and even to die for us in one of the most slow, gruesome and agonizing deaths ever imagined in the minds of Satan-led men.

Truly, because of this—and because Christ yielded to the Father totally and sought the power of the Holy Spirit, God honored Him in a magnificent way: “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9–11).

As most of you know, we also have the magnificent opportunity ourselves of becoming full sons of God—born into His spiritual Kingdom and Family forever!

On the night before His crucifixion, our Savior and King cried out to His Father: “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me” (John 17:20–23).

This should be the real goal that all of us have. And it is obvious that only through Jesus Christ living within us through the Holy Spirit can we attain this goal! So again, let us “go all out” to seek God’s Spirit and to use God’s Spirit to grow to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so we may be with Christ and with the Father in His Kingdom forever.

With Christian love,


COURTSHIP continued from page 14

kind of “transcendent experience.” God says that these *pharmachais* (sorcerers) are not going to be in the Kingdom of God. Recreational drugs are not productive, and provide nothing positive in the long run. What they *will* do is harm you, your reputation, and your future happiness!

Never Skip Dating and Courtship

Too many people today skip courtship and dating altogether. They jump into bed with someone they know little about, move in together for convenience, and only as an afterthought consider marriage. Marriage today is no longer an institution. It has become a one-day event for the bride to have her day in the sun and receive lots of presents. There is still something charming and romantic about a wedding, but the purpose of marriage has been lost.

When two people skip all of the things that should have gone before, they fail to build the foundation for a lasting marriage. They care little about reputation—theirs or that of

the person with whom they are “hooking up.” Too often, their wonderful marriage ceremony turns into a S.A.D. affair. When it does, it is because they are living according to the ways of this world and eating the fruits of their *sad* choices.

True Christian Courtship

True Christian courtship is an important step to building marriages, families and wonderful love stories—and we all love a good love story. When we see two young people just starting out in life, we rejoice with them. We want a love story that is going to last, and proper dating and courtship are steps along the path to achieving that goal.

For those of us in God’s Church, we ought to be doing things differently from the world, because we want different results. We want positive results. We want to see a beautiful love story in which we can all rejoice.

I hope and pray that each single man and woman in God’s Church will have a beautiful, warm, loving courtship and a love story that will last a lifetime! (LN)

FAITH continued from page 4

them, contact the Regional Office nearest you or go online to *TomorrowsWorld.org* to download or order your own copies of these vital booklets. They will give you a deeper understanding of this whole topic!

Brethren, let us **all** who are mercifully “called” by God at this time learn to really exercise total faith and **trust** in God’s word and “walk by faith.” If we learn to do this in *this way* and do all things according to God’s word, we will indeed have a *completely* “abundant life” in God’s Kingdom and in His Family **forever**. Far beyond anything remotely understood by the Prosperity Gospel preachers, once we are resurrected by God and brought into the *Family* of God, we will experience a depth

of joy, prosperity and total fulfillment, which most humans have never started to commence to understand. As the Apostle Paul stated: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God” (Romans 8:18–19).

When the *true* Jesus Christ comes back to this earth and the true Christians are *revealed* as *full sons of God*, we will have a *glory* and **majesty** and **power** exceeding what human beings have ever imagined. So we need to go forward in *real faith*—faith based on *what the Bible actually says*. For in the end, we are real “winners” because we were willing to **believe** what God actually says and *obey Him* and “walk with God” and with Christ throughout all eternity. (LN)

RENOVATION continued from page 10

the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world” (1 John 1:7–2:2).

A New House Is Waiting

But even the best of houses does not last forever. Everything physical wears out, especially our bodies. The Apostle Paul explained that ultimately, God has a new, eternal body to be our habitation—which Christ brings *from heaven* when He comes. And His Spirit makes it possible. “For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1). Our immortality is something that Christ currently has in heaven and that we “put on” when He brings it at His coming (1 Corinthians 15:51–54).

Paul continues in 2 Corinthians 5:2–5: “For in this we groan, earnestly desiring *to be clothed* with our habitation which is *from heaven*, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being

burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has *given us the Spirit as a guarantee*.”

How we long to be clothed in that habitation! And it is His Holy Spirit that *guarantees* that Christ will give it to us.

The Apostle John tells us about this glorious future that God’s Holy Spirit makes possible: “Beloved, now we are children of God; and *it has not yet been revealed what we shall be*, but we know that when He is revealed, *we shall be like Him*, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:2–3).

The Apostle Paul continues the description: “Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being *transformed* into the same image from glory to glory, just as *by the Spirit of the Lord*” (2 Corinthians 3:17–18).

This Pentecost season, let us remember that it is the healing, transforming, renewing Spirit of God that makes these wonderful promises possible! (LN)

SPIRIT continued from page 17

the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit” (Romans 8:4–5).

We need the Spirit in our lives so we walk in the paths of our Father. The result of walking in righteousness is described a few verses later: “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you,” followed by “For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Romans 8:11, 13).

We are offered the promise of eternal life because of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice for our sins. If we accept that sacrifice and are willing to submit in obedience to our Father’s instruction, we can receive the Holy Spirit. This will prepare us for a wonderful future with Jesus Christ and our Father, to which we look forward as pictured by the forthcoming “fall” Holy Days.

I look forward to that future time when I can sit down again with the man I mentioned at the start of this article and help him understand all the facets of the Holy Spirit and its use in our lives. As we prepare to keep the Day of Pentecost, let us all recall what Jesus taught His disciples about the Holy Spirit nearly 2,000 years ago. Those teachings are just as relevant to us today as we seek to follow His example of doing all things to the honor and glory of our Father in heaven. (LN)

Wedding

Mr. Eric Lundgren and Miss Julia Vaux of the Charlotte, North Carolina, congregation, were married on Sunday, March 13 in a sunny outdoor ceremony in Fort Myers, Florida. The bride is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James (Judy) Vaux of the Fort Lauderdale congregation and the groom is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Chris (Barbara) Lundgren. Pastor Rod McNair conducted the ceremony. Many brethren, family and friends celebrated with them at the dinner and dancing that followed.

Births

Peder and Melisa Moluf of the Kansas City, Missouri, congregation, welcomed their first child, **Charlotte Ruth Moluf**, on November 6, 2015. She weighed 6 lbs., 11 oz., and was 19.5 inches long. She is the first granddaughter of Bryan and Diana Burkinshaw of Albuquerque, New Mexico and the third granddaughter of Larry and Barbara Moluf of Kansas City.

Mark and Amanda Sandor, of the Bluefield, West Virginia, congregation, are happy to announce the birth of their third child, **Julia Michele Sandor**. She was born on November 18, 2015 weighing 7 lbs., 3 oz., and was 21 inches long.

Christopher and Amber Leonard of the Charlotte, North Carolina, congregation, happily announce the birth of their third beautiful daughter, **Olivia Eden Leonard**, born December 6, 2015. Olivia weighed exactly 9 lbs. and was 20.5 inches long. She is loved and spoiled by both of her big sisters, Eliana and Hannah.

On January 2, JD and Thea (Difley) Jackson and daughter Savannah, of the Cincinnati, Ohio, congregation, gratefully welcomed son and little brother **Jar-**

ed Wayne Jackson to their family. He weighed 9 lbs., 8 oz., and was 22 inches long. Both mother and baby are healthy and happy.

Mr. and Mrs. Seth (Tabitha) Forrestier, of the Big Sandy, Texas, congregation are pleased to announce the birth of their fourth child, **Lance Charles Forrestier**, on Sunday, February 7. Lance weighed 8 lbs. 4 oz., and measured 20 inches long. Big brothers Jack and Jude and big sister Annie are excited to welcome the new addition to the family.

Yancy and Samantha Taber of the Bristol, Virginia, congregation are happy to announce the birth of their first child, **Alivia Brooke Taber**. She was born on February 9, weighing 4 lbs., 0.7 oz., and measuring 17.5 inches long.

Patrick and Tracy Hughes of the Homer, Alaska, congregation welcomed their first child into the world on February 14. **Maes Ezekiel Hughes** was born weighing 7 lbs., 5 oz., and was 21 inches in length. Little Maes is healthy, very alert and doing great.

ORDINATIONS

Mr. Dale Bailey was ordained an elder and **Mr. Bob Walker** a deacon on the Sabbath of February 20 by Evangelist Douglas Winnail, Pastor Gary Stein and elders Dwain Crisman and Daniel Dever. Mr. Bailey and Mr. Walker serve in the Big Sandy, Texas, congregation.

Mr. Lenard Hine was ordained an elder on the Sabbath of March 5 by Canadian Regional Pastor Stuart Wachowicz. Mr. Hine serves in the congregations of Edmonton, Bonnyville and Red Deer, Alberta, Canada.

Mr. Herbert Ellis was ordained a deacon on the Sabbath of March 5 by Canadian Regional Pastor Stuart Wachowicz. Mr. Ellis serves in the Terrace, British Columbia, congregation.

Jason and Kate Canary, of the Auckland, New Zealand congregation, were overjoyed to welcome their first child, **Eden Kate Canary** on February 20. Eden weighed 3.7 kg. and measured 58 cm. in length.

Mr. and Mrs. Diedrich (Tina) Fehr of the Edmonton, Alberta, congregation are delighted to announce the birth of their seventh child, **James Fehr**, on March 1. He weighed 8 lbs., 13 oz. Two sisters and four brothers were eagerly anticipating his arrival to lavish him with care and attention!

Mr. and Mrs. Christopher (Leah) Hine of the Edmonton, Alberta, congregation, are delighted to announce the birth of their first child, **Isaac Thomas Hine**, on March 2. He weighed 6 lbs., 5 oz., and was 20.5 inches long. Mr. and Mrs. Lenard Hine of Edmonton and Mr. and Mrs. Harrold Bussey of Woodstock, Newfoundland, Canada, are the happy grandparents.

We want to hear more about the happy milestones in the lives of our brethren. If your family has had a birth, marriage or major anniversary, please ask your local pastor to send word to the *Living Church News*, PO Box 3810, Charlotte, NC 28227-8010 (or to send e-mail to lcn@lcn.org).

In Loving Memory

Mr. Richard Hubbard, of the Cranford, New Jersey, congregation, died on Thanksgiving Day, 2015, after a massive stroke. He was a generous servant of God, baptized in 1965, who remained faithful to his calling for many years. He loved singing and choir, and was a dedicated husband of his wife, Flora. His presence will be dearly missed in the congregation. Funeral services were conducted by Associate Pastor Dennis Chornomaz and there was a standing-room-only crowd of friends and brethren who came to pay their last respects and express sympathy to the family.

Mr. Ernest Shipman of the Tacoma, Washington, congregation finished his race on January 3 at 85 years of age. To the very end of his life, Mr. Shipman set a fine example for others and many brethren have been touched by his life. He was born in 1930 and was baptized in 1956. A memorial service was held on February 6 by Area Pastor Brandon Fall.

Mrs. Alice Elizabeth Bivin, age 80, of the New Orleans, Louisiana congregation, died on January 10. Baptized in February 1987, Mrs. Bivin was a long-time faithful member of God's Church. She was preceded in death by her parents, one brother and her husband Charles Bivin. She is survived by her daughter and son-in-law, Cindy and Keith Wheelahan of New Orleans; son and daughter-in-law, Larry and Connie Bivin of Mobile, Alabama; one brother; eight grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. Mrs. Bivin will be greatly missed by her family, friends, and the brethren who knew and loved her. She had a calm, peaceful presence about her and expressed joy and love toward everyone. Associate Pastor Bill Long conducted the funeral service in Alto, Texas, on January 15.

Mr. Cliff Gustafson of the Tacoma, Washington, congregation has finished his course. He died peacefully on January 19, with family and friends at his bedside. Mr. Gustafson was born in 1936 and was baptized in 1975. He had a full and energetic life of 79 years and despite his health difficulties, he always seemed to keep a positive attitude, a quick smile, and enjoyed performing sleight of hand tricks. A memorial service was held on February 20, given by Area Pastor Brandon Fall.

Mr. Carl Lawson, age 91, finished his Christian race on January 19 and is now awaiting the resurrection. His wife Mary preceded him in death by just under five months. They had been married for more than 70 years and had

nine children, 22 grandchildren and many great- and great-great-grandchildren. Mr. and Mrs. Lawson were faithful members and a great support in the Church over the many years since their baptisms in 1972. When their health no longer permitted them to attend services, they listened each Sabbath over a telephone connection. Mr. Lawson's funeral message was given by Peoria Associate Pastor Irv Woelfle.

Mr. Edwin Mauch, 95, died at his home in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, on January 23. A man of great dedication to God's Work, Ed and his wife Opal left their farm in North Dakota in 1965, taking their three daughters to Minneapolis in order to be closer to their Church family. Leaving the farm life, Mr. Mauch developed great carpentry skills and left his mark on many homes in Minneapolis and often traveled to Pasadena in the winter to apply his talents in the facilities there. He was also a worker at the summer camp in Orr, Minnesota, and his skills and dedication to hard work helped shape the camp. Always ready to help, encourage, teach, give helpful advice, and pray for his brethren and friends, Mr. Mauch will be sorely missed by young and old in his congregation. He and his wife Opal celebrated their 72nd wedding anniversary on October 16, 2015. Besides his wife, he is survived by three daughters and their husbands, and grandchildren.

Mrs. Neva Doan of Spokane, Washington, died at her home on February 1. She was born in 1923 and baptized in 1973. Up until recently, she was a very active individual at 92 years of age. We will miss her and her sense of humor and will look forward to seeing her again.

Mr. Harry Odle of the Bluefield, West Virginia congregation, died on February 19 at age 83. Mr. Odle was a long-time member of the congregation. He was preceded in death by his wife nearly 20 years ago. Mr. Odle is survived by four children and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He will be greatly missed for his friendly smile and his faithful outlook on life.

Mrs. Denise Sanders of the Red Deer, Alberta, congregation, died on March 11 at the age of 71. She is survived by her husband Clifford, five children, 12 grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild. Mrs. Sanders was baptized in 1980. She and her husband met at a Feast of Tabernacles singles activity and married in 1990. Her memorial service was conducted by Pastor Stuart Wachowicz. She is remembered for her positive attitude, her dedicated service to God and to fellowman, and her great love of gardening.

COMMENTARY

Britain Prepares to Vote

To paraphrase the famous playwright William Shakespeare, we might ask, “To be, or to not to be, in the European Union; that is the question.” This vexing issue may be settled once and for all on June 23 in a national referendum on the question, “Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union, or leave it?”

For more than 40 years this has been the enduring question that has plagued United Kingdom politics. Britain thought it had joined an economic and trading bloc, but events since have confirmed that the EU is primarily a political union, which the UK never wanted. Many in the UK feel they do not belong or thrive in the restrictive, overly bureaucratic EU that seems intent on becoming a super-state. For those of us in God’s Church, the fulfillment of major prophecies relating to the period of time right before the return of Jesus Christ is also directly relevant.

And so it was that David Cameron, the leader of the UK Conservative Party and current Prime Minister, promised that he would give the nation a referendum on the EU. He took a bold gamble and committed himself to renegotiating Britain’s relationship with the EU. If this were a success, he would recommend Britain should stay in. If not, he would recommend that the UK leave.

After months of laborious diplomacy, this process culminated on February 19 in a last-gasp agreement with the EU in Brussels. Seemingly against all the odds, the UK could have a “special status” one-off deal within the EU that Cameron felt he could recommend to his party and the nation. Germany’s pre-

mier, Angela Merkel, played a leading role in the controversial decision, insisting that she wanted the UK to remain in the EU and that all 28 member nations should stay together. This has provided a “rare and unique UK political moment”—the most important decision for the nation to make over the past 40 years, and perhaps even the next 40 years as well.

Since then, the UK has endured an intense national debate between the Stay side and the Leave side. Cameron is strongly advocating that the UK remain in what he calls a “reformed EU,” as this would render the UK, in his slogan, “safer, stronger and better off.” But the Leave side insists that now is the time to reclaim precious sovereignty and control, to go it alone on the international stage. Their slogan is “freer, fairer, better.”

How does all this relate to Bible prophecy? Members of God’s Church will be familiar with the Bible’s prediction that just before the return of Christ a ten-nation power will briefly arise in Europe—the domain of the old Holy Roman Empire—and give its power to a supreme political and military leader or “Beast.” This person in turn will be aligned with a supreme religious leader (see Daniel 7:20–24; Revelation 17:12–14).

The glaring question is whether Britain will be a part of this final ten-nation combine. The decisive answer would seem to be, “No!” Whether Britain stays in or leaves the EU at this juncture, the nation has made it very clear that it will never be part of a European super-state, and the recent EU agreement has granted full exemption from any further steps towards “ever closer union.”

—John Meakin

The above is adapted from one of the many commentaries, discussing vital topics facing our world, available at the lcg.org and TomorrowsWorld.org Web sites.