

I LOVED
THE CHURCH
UNTIL I SAW
WHAT IT
WAS DOING TO US
AND I WAS A PASTOR

By Shaun Kearney

THE PASTORS DYNAMICS BEHIND THE PULPIT IS WHAT HOLDS MOST CHURCHES TOGETHER

LIVING IN THE KINGDOM NOW

Our fellowship is with the Father and the Son.

“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full” 1 John 1:3-4.

True koinonia goes far beyond attending services arranged by the clergy. Koinonia is God in His redeemed community on earth shedding light, and salting the world all around. True koinonia does not vacate the world to hide away in a building one day a week to endure a religious experience. Koinoniaites are available to one another for edification. They believe most definitely in the need to come together, but not for the purposes that religious institutions might insist upon. They don't believe their lives were meant to be divided into compartments, one spiritual, and the other secular, with the spiritual half wasting away in a religious environment where it is conditioned by controlling professionals with personal agendas, while the biggest slice struggles to make ends meet in the real world. They know the life they have belongs to Christ, to be lived as He has already decided.

This life in us is Christ's very own life; we are bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. We are members of His body, constituted for mutual love and adoration, fellowshiping with the Father and the Son, for the edification of every member. In many ways it's not unlike a marriage. In this context Paul made a remarkable statement, “for no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it even as the Lord the church: For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” Eph 5:29-32.

Conversely when you join a religious organization its leaders insist that the life Christ has given you has been entrusted to them for your wellbeing. If you want to grow as a Christian you must totally commit to them and their programs. Wives have to compete with the churches managers for quality time with their husbands. It's the same for the children. The system expects members to participate in their non-productive religious activities. You must demonstrate your commitment by responding liberally to regular financial appeals to support them and their expensive dreams. Don't even think of objecting, because they claim they are the Lord's anointed. Be warned, they have ways of finding out whether you're financially committed or not. That's why lovers of truth among the rank and file eventually move on.

Jesus said, “Father I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world”, (and put them buildings built for religious purposes with money borrowed from the money lenders) “But that thou should keep them from evil”. As the Father sent Christ into the world, so has He sent us? Not to take us out of circulation to be corralled in a religious arena until He returns.

“Jesus said “I am the light of the world”. John 8:12.

In Matthew 5:13-16 Jesus said to His disciples that they were typically two things, salt and light, and immediately proceeded to bring a teaching on each. Of salt He said, when it loses its savour men throw it away and trample it under their feet. We see this happening all around us today as religious institutions go into damage control because of their behaviour. There is hardly a month goes by without further revelations of impropriety by another leader of a movement that claims to be on the cutting edge.

Then He said, “You (corporately) are the light of the world”; a city set upon a hill, not to be hidden but to be seen. Men don’t light a candle and hide it under a table, but put it on a candlestick to illuminate the whole house. So let your light shine among men that they might see your good works and glorify my Father that is in Heaven.

May God help His saints to see that this special caste called clergy have no authority to restrict and control the way we should live in the kingdom. Our experience was not meant to be confined to a building where agenda driven preachers wear us out physically, and bleed us dry financially? It was never God’s intention for His people to spend their lives serving fruitless programs designed by religious spin-doctors?

Leaders in these religious institutions will stop at nothing to shore up their indefensible position. Using arguments that seem reasonable they plead a case that has no scriptural proof for what they practice. The church is not a rationalist society that lives by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it is the habitation of God sustained by the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus.

My wife and I were saved in 1957 and soon joined a fellowship. It was a life changing experience; it was the start of an incredible journey that continues to draw us on. In fact sometimes I feel like it’s hardly begun. In hindsight I remember walking down some trails that led to dead ends. I rushed down others with great enthusiasm in blissful ignorance, only to have to retrace my steps. Over the years I have often marvelled at His matchless grace and patience with me; and wondered why He continued to persevere with me. I don’t know the complete answer to those questions yet, but I have come to realise a wonderful thing, that God is love; and that He just doesn’t love me because Jesus died for me, but it was because He loved me, that He sent Jesus to die for me.

“If it had not been for the Lord who was on our side”. Psalm 124:1. Where would any of us be if it were not for that fact.

The point of balance is critical, and when we are young and impressionable we can lose it very quickly. Solomon said, “His legs are like pillars of marble, set in sockets of fine gold”. In other words, He was perfectly balanced in mercy and truth; never one at the expense of the other. The lack of wisdom can get us into situations that hurt us and those that we dearly love. Mercifully God’s patience and grace kept us, something for which I am eternally grateful. Like many before us we gradually became seduced by doctrines that were peculiar to our group. These doctrines were divisive and prideful. They separated us successfully from the mainstream for years. Only by their baptismal formula could you get into the “Bride” company.

Ray Miller in his excellent book, “To the Church in Auckland Write” puts it so clearly when he talks about his second conversion? “It’s a conversion to the church group you have attended, to the group of

Christians amongst whom you've been born-again! For me personally the impact and experience of being born-again, was so wondrous that the awareness of the second, didn't even register until decades later. By then, I'd married a girl I met at that church, raised a family, gone into partnership with another church member, made many friends there, gone on countless church holidays, and spent a quarter of a century of effort there.

As I look back, the reality of that second conversion was every bit as real as the first spiritual one. I grew spiritually, fed my spiritual appetite for the Bible and Christian books etc, so my involvement with the meetings and programmes and affairs of that church grew. I never questioned any difference between my spiritual growth as far as God was concerned, and my church involvement, not for years, even decades later, until eventually I sought to leave that particular church. And then, horror upon horrors, the truth slowly dawned on me: they had converted me to their own 'particular but narrow' range of church attitudes and outlook! I'd converted to their dress code of haircutting, beard shaving, jargon and phraseology, and ways of smiling, handshaking and greeting others. Likewise attitudes, viewpoints, world-views and interpretations on just about every subject had been affected.

I'd become another clone shining a pew each meeting. My own personality and individuality had become absorbed and drowned in a church style! And when I tried to leave - all cultist 'hell' broke loose; the trauma almost cost me my life!

From my observation and contacts, a second conversion occurs in most folks when they receive Christ as Lord, and are born-again at some established church group or denomination with their own meeting place.

This is a fact that countless people have discovered to their eventual cost and dismay. For some, the contemplation of this second conversion is so overwhelming they believe it's too late to change or to do anything about it, and so they resign themselves to the situation, and grow old in sadness, dissatisfaction, frustration and disillusionment. Either that or they count the cost and view the necessary effort to leave as being too painful to have to endure, so they settle back for the downward ride to wherever.

But the distinction must be made. The first conversion is a work of God and of the Spirit of God; the second conversion is the work of a person, usually a man and to a particular church group. Whilst the first brings total spiritual freedom and liberty, the second conversion brings the opposite—bondage, and the look-alike-ed-ness of a particular church group.

The first conversion brings freedom to pursue your individual gifting and calling anywhere in God's creation that he leads you after earnest seeking and following God's promptings. The second brings 'faithfulness' to one man's work and empire, now that takes very little effort -just doing what the chap in the pulpit says.

The first conversion is exhilarating and fresh as God leads by his spirit, just like the wind "blowing where it listeth". The second conversion eventually becomes predictable, ritualistic and boring, and finally frustrating - then anger sets in.

The first conversion has its security in God alone, the second has its security in a man or a group of Christians and that security produces its own comfort and takes away responsibility - its often easier to just 'trust the leaders' and follow 'the party line'. The first conversion is what Adam and Eve enjoyed, what Saul/Paul experienced, what the Ethiopian eunuch found via Philip, but notice how Philip got caught away, he didn't have to concrete him into a denomination! Its Jesus' disciples experienced as he called them personally one by one.

And another interesting observation: some, even many, dear people, have somehow missed out on the reality of the first conversion, the one that matters, and have only had the second one and they end up sheltering in a secure group of people or church or denomination. The first conversion is necessary,

absolutely. The second conversion is absolutely unnecessary”. *End of quote.*

We too became victims of the ‘double conversion’ as Ray has so aptly put it; one to Christ; and the other to a group of Christians with an agenda driven by a particular theological ideology. Full of enthusiasm I sought to win the approval of my seniors by diligently studying the doctrines of our movement and attending all the services, believing that obedience to my leaders was the same as serving Christ. Quite quickly I climbed the ladder.

I tasted a measure of success when I fulfilled a dream that years earlier had seemed impossible. In the eyes of some I would have appeared quite successful. Yet when I was in reach of my goal there was emptiness in my spirit that I couldn’t explain. The feeling was indescribable. Perhaps someone reading this may be feeling exactly what I was back then. By now I had lost my sense of direction. I resigned and took my family on a sabbatical. I never returned to my former position. As we travelled outside of the safety of our former religious circle we were gradually exposed to points of doctrine that at one time I would have simply dismissed. Confronted and challenged regularly about our beliefs we had to take a serious look at some of the hallowed doctrines that were central to the fellowships we grew up in.

1985 opened a new chapter in our lives. It was the start a journey took us into new territory doctrinally, and brought about many changes. It raised a range of questions that eventually led to answers I had never considered before, although they had been staring me in face for years. I wondered how I could have been so blind. In hindsight I see that although my mentors were honourable, I mistakenly thought that meant they were infallible as well. So, being gullible I swallowed everything they said. It has been a voyage of discovery since that time, and it is continually opening new vistas of Christ and His kingdom that have had an incredible liberating effect on us and the lives of our family members. With it has come misunderstanding as former friends began to avoid us, or excused themselves when we attempted to explain the new direction the Lord was taking us; or why we were no longer involved in areas they thought were important.

Some were too fearful to talk about these issues; others discerned our spirits as being bitter and reacted strongly as an excuse to cut us off. (It’s such a convenient way to avoid issues one doesn’t want to deal with, particularly if they have no scriptural support to fall back upon). Yet hardly a week goes by without us hearing of another old friend who has commenced their personal journey to freedom; or another group of saints who have left the system to gather under the headship of Christ in an uncompromising way. More and more believers are no longer prepared to trust ministers who are not listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

In spite of all that has happened we have much to learn, but I am confident that He is leading us as we obediently follow Him. The need to remain open for correction and direction from the Holy Spirit is continuous. In addition it is essential that we get liberated and delivered from traditional mindsets of the past, which allow Him to liberate us from all forms of religious conditioning that obscures the truth.

Why the professional clergy keep trying to confine our Christian experience into a couple of hours on Sunday mornings inside a building I’ll never know. On second thoughts, it is probably for financial reasons? Every week the faithful are urged to front up for another performance that the clergy insist is doing wonders for their faith, but in reality has become very disagreeable indeed as they suffer on. They know Christ is wonderful, but these hirelings want them to think they are wonderful too as they manipulate their relationships with Christ. They keep telling the faithful how blest they are to be under their covering, but that is far from the truth. The grumbling among the rank and file is fast becoming a growl as they endure regular bombardments of twisted applications of scripture, such as the perennial favourites, “Tithing” and “forsake not the assembling etc”. The only reason many people attend religious services is because of the fear factor, or because they don’t know what else to do. Others realise they have been deceived and so just up and leave. Many go for the sake of their children, but don’t hold your breath

Mums and Dads, because if they are not seeing Christ in your home, don't expect your church to save them, besides they can't save themselves.

The bottom line is religious institutions are in damage control. They are dying spiritually and numerically despite their claims to the contrary. Some are proclaiming that a great revival is about burst upon us and then everything will 'turn to gold', and so they soldier on in expectation. Many are lulled into thinking, "when the revival comes" then perhaps things will get better, and then they'll feel better?

Dear brothers and sisters, Christ is a person you can know now; you don't have to wait till you get to heaven, you can enjoy a relationship with Him now, without interference from a medium called the pastor. Christ wants to manifest Himself to you personally, yes He does; it really is possible?

Out of the frying pan into the fire.

We hear continually that such and such a ministry are getting staggering numbers at their services and people are finding the Lord there; that's wonderful to be sure. Have you ever noticed it always seems to happen where you not? However who doesn't rejoice to hear of people finding Christ, or being healed and delivered from all manner of bondage? For these things we praise God. But come with me, because I want to share some very real concerns I have for these precious souls who are becoming part of God's family, and as such are our brothers and sisters.

The tragedy for many people who do find Christ is that the life He gave them will be absorbed by professional clergy to do their bidding and fulfil their dreams. But doesn't God have an agenda for each one of us? The answer to that is, He most certainly does. Paul could say to Timothy when the time of his departure from this world arrived; "I have finished my course". Dear ones, God has chosen a race for each of you to run, and He has set your course, one that only you can run to the end. The only way you will run and finish the race set before you is by looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith. "So run that you may obtain the crown that He has laid up for you". "Don't you know that in a race all compete, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize". 1 Cor 9:24-25. Crowns are not door prizes handed out as we go in, they are the reward for a race well run.

Sanctification.

This word means to be set apart from the world to God for His exclusive use. Sanctification was one of those bible words that we grappled with as young Christians, not just to understand, but to experience. We wrestled with terms such as 'entire sanctification'; and whether we had one nature or two, and so the debate would go on. After all doesn't scripture tell us to be sanctified?

To comply with this command for separation from evil influences that would drag their people back into the world the clergy spend a large amount of time endeavouring to keep their people safe and sound. To accomplish this they have designed a range of services and programs to keep us all busy. To finance this they need our financial support.

There are two sides to this proposition, but the clergy have majored on just one, and ignored the other. Sanctification means far more than being "set apart". More importantly it means we were set apart from, to be joined to another. We have been delivered from the power of the prince of darkness and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son. Yes, that's exactly right. Delivered from the bondage of one master to come into the kingdom of God under His rulership.

Just as surely as Abraham was called out of Ur of the Chaldees, we have been called out of this present world system that we might be joined to Christ. That is a far cry from becoming a member of a church organization. We have not only been separated from but also joined too the Lord, for by one spirit were we all baptised into Christ. We were buried together, and then raised together with Christ. The cause of our present spiritual malaise is a religious system that has taken it upon itself to sanctify (separate from the world) saints with programs they have designed; but in this they have had very little success. In the process they have caused people to become addicted to, and reliant upon a set of religious ordinances,

rather than dependant upon Christ. In such systems as these one's sense of security and worth is built upon submission to men, rather than a relationship with Christ. The end product is weak shallow insipid saints.

“This is a people robbed and spoiled, they are all of them snared in holes, they are hid in prison houses, they are for a prey and none deliver, for a spoil and none says restore”. Isaiah 42:22.

Religious leaders may be well meaning in their efforts to keep their people from falling back into the world, but the activities they involve them in just don't work. They need more than musicals designed to produce warm and fuzzy feelings, or prayer meetings to ask God to bless their efforts and save them from the onslaughts of the world. Their plans are flawed, the results speak for themselves.

Richard Halverson in his book “The Living Body” states, that he was invited to conduct a “Church growth seminar” for several hundred Pastors of a mainline evangelical denomination. He commenced by asking them, “what comes to mind when you think of church growth”. Not one of that large group of ministers said, “growing in grace, righteousness, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.” They immediately thought about how they could grow their churches; by increased attendance, and ultimately their membership. This was their goal. This would impress their peers.

“Woe to you scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, you compass land and sea to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves”. Matthew 23:15. Eagerly religious institutions snap up new converts to add to their collection. The leaders may have had a spiritual encounter with the Lord once upon a time, but now regrettably they no longer really know Him. Their victims become infected with a virus known as religious conditioning.

Their disciples will quickly learn that all corporate expressions of their faith are controlled by the professionals, and confined to the temple on Sunday mornings. Regardless of where they take place they are always overseen.

Woe betides the member that has the audacity to gather some brethren together outside the operating hours of the temple for a religious activity in their home, (the place where saints were want to meet in the days of the disciples). He will be pulled into line very quickly. It would probably have been okay if they had only watched an “R” video, but instead they spent time in prayer and someone had the temerity to prophecy. This was deemed as being extremely dangerous, and would not be tolerated unless someone they had appointed was in charge.

A young man ran and told Moses, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp”. Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses' aide since his youth, spoke up and said, “Moses, my lord, stop them!” But Moses replied, “Are you jealous for my sake? I wish all the Lord's people were prophets and that He would put his Spirit on them!” Num 11:27-30.

The clerical system is a horrendous barrier that must be removed. It is responsible for a great vacuum in the hearts of God's people that they won't allow God to fill. They try to fill it but can't. This void in us was designed by God. It's one that He fills when we are saved; and continues to keep full as we come together under His headship. Professional pastors contaminate the environment by standing between Christ and His body. They insist on controlling every aspect of corporate life. Their master strategy is to get the newly converted to sever every association with the old life and join the church. These institutions run by ambitious clerics will eventually swallow them up. Saved from the penalty of past sin they wallow in an environment that can never help them to grow, but in the end will be their ruination. Christ is not a system but a jealous Lord.

Psalm 1: Sanctification is the by-product of an abiding life.

“Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, or sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day

and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff, which the wind drives away. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish”.

Scripture speak of two kinds of righteousness. One is imputed; the second is the fruit of an abiding life. Just as the by-product of an apple tree is apples. In like manner the by-product of a life in union with Christ is, joy and peace; things we all covert.

Blessed is the man, prosperity is his portion because he chose to walk in the counsel of the almighty, and refused ungodly counsel. Listen carefully please. A Christian is just as capable of giving you ungodly counsel as anyone else. Preachers are the worst offenders because so few delight in the law of the Lord, except for the purpose of finding sermons.

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go”. Joshua 1:8-9.

Show me a Christian who can’t walk the “strait and narrow”, it matters not whether he is a pew warmer, or a pulpiteer (preacher), and you will have found me a man who has let his relationship with the Lord slide. He may know quite a lot about God, and even have the ability to hold the attention of a congregation for an hour on Sunday mornings, (most can’t) but he doesn’t know God.

“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” 2 Corinthians 11:1-3.

“Beguiled through subtlety.” Complications come from violating the obviously simple. Deception is the enemy’s greatest tool. We are not told to stand against his power, but against his wiles and deceit. For this we need the whole armour of God.

Fear is the beginning of wisdom and wise men do not habitually and wilfully sin. They by the grace of God walk in the light. There is a vast difference between being **overtaken** in a fault and wilful disobedience. Eve was deceived, but Adam was guilty of transgression, because he was wilfully disobedient.

“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted”. Gal 6:1-2 He may be weak in the faith and wants help, so we must restore him and help him.

“I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat” 1 Cor 5:11-13. This man is wilful and must accept discipline, or be avoided, and refused fellowship.

What about false teachers of false doctrine?

Let us go a little deeper and take our heads out of the sand, and have a good look at what’s going on all around us. Because when the blind lead the blind they both fall in the ditch.

“We beseech you brethren to know them that labour among you, are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and esteem them very highly in love for the works sake”. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13.

Slowly, but surely, the style of preaching in the church has changed over the past thirty years. The mediums of radio, and in particular television, have brought this about. It has been adapted to some

measure by preachers in many other parts of the world, particularly in the more affluent countries. Take that phenomenal “money machine” the Television Evangelist. These are the high rollers of the religious world. As well known by sinners as they are by saints, they run their operations like any other business, but with one major difference. Real businesses earn their money while these people reap where they have never sown. Television evangelists are parasites, rarely practicing what they preach. They want to reap first, and then sow your money. If that was the biblical order, then we should all quit our jobs, and start begging people to give us their money, so we can have a ministry doing what we want to do, all in Jesus name of course.

The unprofitable servant in Matthew 25 accused his master of reaping where he never sowed, which of course was a lie. At least he understood that one should not expect to reap where he has not sown. In the eyes of some, TV has raised begging nowadays to a respectable, acceptable and sophisticated occupation. When asked what their occupation is, their response should be, “I’m a beggar.” In reality it has cheapened Christianity by denying the explicit teachings of Jesus and the disciples. It has produced a generation of Christians who rarely witness. They think because they support a particular ministry they are excused.

TV Evangelists beg for money in regular fund raising telethons, urging the saints to pray that the government won’t take away their tax exemption status, because they know full well their ministries would collapse overnight without it. It would be a blessing if tax exemption for religious donations were abolished. Very quickly we would see what was born of God and those who are on an ego trip, where they lavish your money, with reckless abandon, on ostentatious projects to promote their empires.

They are arrogant star performers of the Christian stage. It’s like watching “Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous”, only these people have no shame. It’s the Americanisation of Christianity. How many people they have fleeced and corrupted is any one’s guess. It’s certainly true that a fool and his money are soon parted, and these people have made fools out of millions.

How can you really know and trust a TV ministry?

You can’t, and you’re a fool if you do. Inferring they have special right of entry to God, listeners are encouraged to send them their requests so they can pray over them. For a financial consideration they will go to God on our behalf. To be fair, there are times when all of us need help, but what about my priestly ministry; doesn’t God listen to my prayers? Don’t I have access to the throne to receive mercy, and find grace to help in times of need? The inference is that God always hears them, and their prayers are more effectual. Living extravagantly on the offerings of people they claim to serve, these parasites prey on the body in the name of the Lord. I am not saying it’s blatant, but it isn’t right. There’s nothing wrong with having people dependent upon us for loving support. There will always be those who need to be cared for with compassion and love, but they need Jesus in flesh and blood, in you and me, 1 John 4:3. That’s what fellowship is for. Acts 2:42. Please don’t insult me by saying the end justifies the means.

The Electronic missionary: The Electric church has made it all too easy. This whole business of religious broadcasting is as distasteful as it is distressful. We are transmitting a message of love, and it is costing us nothing to say, ‘I love you’ or ‘God loves you’, except the breath it takes to speak it into a microphone from an air-conditioned television studio. There is a powerful missionary movement that’s been built up around the use of private satellites and cable television. Until recent times this type of religious broadcasting was confined to America, but now we have our own shows in Australia and New Zealand. From high and lofty positions in space they preach the gospel to the people around the world. In terms of personal cost, and giving of self it’s a bankrupt distortion of what Christianity is supposed to be.

Unless I’m actually there, standing alongside you; more than just a voice coming to you from an electronic ghost, but a flesh and blood person who laughs, cries, hurts and goes hungry with you. Unless I’m exposed to all the same heartaches, pains, diseases and fears; sharing life’s experiences with you, it’s

a degrading caricature of Christianity. This is the tragedy of modern Christianity. Everything's done so professionally and unsympathetically, without any real cost to those who preach it, **or support it**. It has bred vaccinated saints, with just enough religion, to build immunity to the real issues. We live out our selfish existence with no intention of doing any more for the propagation of the gospel, than to give a buck or two when moved, so someone else can go and do it for us.

I would like to draw your attention to some facts that can be verified very easily if one cares to take the time. It's an indictment upon us all that we so rarely challenge or think through some of the things we are told. Here's an example. I lived in the US for many years, and from time to time I watched Christian TV broadcasters raise millions of dollars. One project was to beam TV into the Middle East and Central Asia to reach unsaved millions there who otherwise would not hear. But the reality is, that millions of the people in these regions are nomads. Sheep, camel and horse herders, who take their homes made of animal skins stretched over flimsy wooden frames with them wherever they go. They are constantly on the move as they graze their herds over thousands of square miles. They work hard, and for relaxation they spend time in their homes talking, and drinking tea. These people have no Radios or TVs because they have no electricity. But if they did they have no interest in watching foreign religious broadcasts. I am not saying that we should be indifferent to the plight of these people, but please let's go to God and ask Him what he wants us to do about it. And what role he wants us to play in reaching out to these precious people. Whatever He says unto you do that. Don't do the bidding of men, but listen to God.

All the following are subject to the law of diminishing return.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone: but if it die, it brings forth much fruit. He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.” These verses express Jesus' basic law of living. John 12:24-25.

What you keep you loose, and what you give up you keep.

“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy.” Paul lived and moved in the concern of the great shepherd for the flock. If we are true to our calling we will literally feel what Christ feels. “I am afraid that your minds will be corrupted, and that you will abandon your full and pure devotion to Christ; in the same way that Eve was deceived by the snakes clever lies.” Paul is warning them, showing concern that they don't corrupt the life of the flock by becoming corrupt themselves. If we are to influence people for good then our lives must be exemplary and fit to be imitated. This applies to our homes as well as our ministry gift.

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.” Mark 8:35.

“And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth.” Fear is the main reason why people keep doing what they doing even more so than wilful disobedience, as such it is one of our greatest enemies. Matthew 25:25.

“There is that scatters and yet increases; and there is that withholds more than is meet, but it tends to poverty.” Proverbs 11:24.

The primary meaning of these verses, is the folly of trying to “play it safe” in the face of Christ's challenge to “launch out” where we run the risk of losing what we want most to preserve. That's what it means to live by faith. When you seek God first all the things that others will often sell out for will be added unto you Jesus said. We have found this to be most true in our lives.

Secondly there are many things that do not yield to a direct approach. The latter principle has a very broad application. It can easily be seen in many human quests. For example the pursuits of happiness, security, love, peace, and so on, but the way it functions in other areas may not be so recognizable. Take wanting to control things; trying to be influential; and seeking recognition for an example. It seems the harder we try, the further away these become. Who are we trying to impress anyway?

An appeal for some honesty?

It's tiresome being around people who are always trying to impress you with their talents. We are told how we need to go out there and grab it by the throat if we are ever going to get it. But sometimes another approach is more what God wants. Then there are others you meet in life who always seem to have an angle, some hidden agenda. Another illustration is the desire for ecstatic spiritual encounters for their own sakes. (Toronto) This can often become a form of self-serving self-indulgence. These things are sent to amuse and to keep saints occupied in non essential activity. Muse means to think, while amuse means don't think. This is what entertainment is designed to do. You just slip your brain into neutral, lie back, go with flow, and don't think. Pentecostals are past masters at this form of religious relaxation.

Truly great moments come unbidden, and they are unpredictable. Again and again when new truth dawns, it's not because we thought it out; rather it is the disclosure of something that was always there. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and He shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3:5-6.

"And the word of the Lord came unto him." Truly great moments come. This has been very true in this writer's life. They come to all of us when we walk in union with Him. They came to Abraham; to Moses; to Gideon; and to Peter in prison, where the angel of deliverance had to shake him to wake him up. These precious intrusions into our lives are the by-product of a life in union with Christ in His word. 1 Kings 17:2.

Note it doesn't say "the will of the Lord was revealed to him", or "the mind of God was made known to him," this point needs to be taken note of seriously because we have here something that is quite common today. There are many people and preachers who piously talk about having discovered the mind of the Lord on this, that, and the next thing, its usually for other people; anyone simple minded enough to accept them. And then another book will be written that will give birth to another program, that will suffer the fate of every other program that has ever been tried, it will not deliver. But it will have occupied a lot of nerds, and sold a lot of books for its author. Presently we have ignorant ministers coercing their people to run with Rick Warren's dream, drooling over the prospect of filling their churches with thousands of new believers in a matter of weeks. But when the dust settles it will be seen that what it amounted to was nothing better than a human impulse. God's mind, or will, is made known to us by the Holy Spirit through His word, and He never wills anything for us that in any way conflicts with His word.

"For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not **hidden** from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." Deuteronomy 30:11-14.

The cultivation of personal character by means of a pious devotional life is another example. Character isn't a goal, it's a bi-product.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there's no law" Galatians 5:22-23. The fruit of the spirit is not an objective; it's the result of an abiding life. So is faith Joy and peace. They are by-products of a life in union with Christ. This is the way we are supposed to live. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

God said to Joshua this book of the law shall not depart from out of your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, **and then** you will have good success. That's a by-product.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone: but if it die, it brings forth much fruit”.

I cannot emphasize the risk element too strongly.

Certainly it's a risk to abandon all, but it's a far greater risk not to. To embark on a change of environment or a change of habit is like dying a little, but out of it can come new life. The man or woman who grasps the truth of this eternal law with both hands, who counts His word more than his necessary food, is a person ready to take risks, ignore security, and hazard life itself. This person will live life to the fullest.

He that goes forth. Psalm 126.

If you want to reap a fruitful harvest you have got to go forth, and sometimes you have to leave (familiarity) family and so called friends. Forgetting some things and remembering others. You must break up the fallow predictability of your life. Start reading some sound expositors of the word of God. Read the Bible in a new translation that you haven't read before, and meditate over what you find. Take time to think about your life, about God's great plan for it. Look at where you are and start to move out into uncharted territory as He leads the way. Don't be so predictable and safety first. Don't be gullible, but be available to God. Life can be a wonderful adventure. Get out of the religious rut you have been living in. Psalms 126:6.

Since I ventured to place my hand in the hand of the Saviour my life has undergone more changes, seen more miraculous provision and divine interventions than at any other time of my life. I have never felt so secure or more comfortable with the Saviour than what I am right now.

If you are, or were a pastor, I empathize with your situation. The step from the ranks of a paid position with the security it provides, to having to trust God for your daily bread is enormous. Because others are dependant upon you financially it makes it doubly so. But if God is talking to you, He will make a way and take care of you.

In recent years I have learned that one doesn't need to take meetings for the purpose of receiving honorariums for financial support, no truly sent man is overly concerned about that. God is well able to provide for those in His employ. Pastors in the main never have to worry about this because they have a 'cash cow', tithes and offerings to adequately take care of them. Not once since I resigned from my last pastorate in 1986 have we received unsolicited money in the mail from any church I served. Although I did put out a newsletter once, and then felt so guilty about it that I never repeated that mistake again. If you feel you must then that's between you and the Lord, I judge you not. I'm grateful that He has set us free from the lack of supply. Anne and I have travelled for many years since 1986 taking meetings where we were supported by offerings, but in the last ten years we go because we believe we are being sent, and because we are, we know that we will be adequately taken care of. He has never failed us. It is a wonderful feeling to know, that because no man hired me, no man can fire me.

I should perhaps add that the labourer is worthy of his hire, and we shouldn't muzzle the Ox that treads out the corn.

This form of government now entrenched in the present religious system comes straight from Rome. All Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Denominational churches are all tarred with the same Babylonian brush. Resist the urge to gather your "proof texts" to sooth your troubled conscience to support your error. Instead do what Joshua did, be strong and of a good courage. Mr preacher man, the prospect of you ever accomplishing anything significant in the system is very slim. Believe me, I had more than most, but I'd rather have Jesus than the security of a professional pastorate. I'd rather hear Him say, "well done thou good and faithful servant".

Finally my earnest prayer for every saint who wants follow the Lord more closely is, be strong and of a good courage, be not afraid, be not dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee, He will not forsake you, and all the things that many men would sell their integrity for, God knows that you have need of.

“Surely I will not come into the Tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; nor will I give sleep unto my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob”.Psalm 132:3-5.

Eventually David found the Ark in the woods. It had been taken captive by the enemies of God's people who were now returning it to Israel. Now that David had found it again they began to make plans to bring it back to Jerusalem into the midst of His people. His presence was found in a most unlikely place, as is often the case. There were good reasons for it being taken captive years earlier. King David, a man after God's own heart became so obsessed with the prospect of the Ark being back among his people that he uttered a prayer that he would not rest until he built a habitation that God could take pleasure in. May that be our prayer also?

THE END