

The Filth of the World

An Introduction to Authentic Spirituality
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Introduction

Authentic Spirituality

It is my honor to give you this book. It has been long in the making, and it certainly has its flaws. The subtitle claims that this is an introduction to authentic spirituality. I don't believe this to be an opinion, but instead a reality. The writing of this book came from a long dispersal from one denomination to the next, from one way of fellowship to another, and finding in them that they all have similarities.

God has taken me from the dirt and mud and set me upon the rock. This book came from a severe heartbreak and being cast out of a congregation. There were many places where it is safe to say that the church didn't act like the Church. As exacting as their theology was, it lacked the truth and authenticity to handle extreme scenarios.

From there I started asking questions. I wasn't the only one. There are only a handful of us from the over 2000 other members that have left, but we can't continue to live in unreality. Questions must be asked. They aren't the enemy. Jesus has never been afraid of the questions. I think people are afraid of the answers.

So as an introduction, I asked myself what would be the best place to start? I think it is safe to say that all of the writings in this book came from one general statement: God has set up a certain way in which we should draw near unto Him. This is the way of the cross. You find in Leviticus 1 that God gives rule after rule after rule for sacrifices and offerings. We can't tamper with this. He expects us to perform in a very precise way.

It is my foundational belief that the cross is at the center of the faith. When we take everything else away, we still have the entirety of Christianity. This, of course, raises some questions. What does that mean theologically? What does this look like? How does *this* relate to all of **that**?

This is where we begin: willingness. Jesus told His disciples that unless you take up your cross and follow Him, you couldn't be a disciple. You can't be a student. You can't be a Christian. It all stems from the cross.

“Your job is the relentless pursuit of who God made you to be. And anything else you do is sin and you need to repent of it.”

-Rob Bell

“It is a poor sermon that gives no offense; that neither makes the hearer displeased with himself nor with the preacher.”

-George Whitefield

“We want to be raptured from responsibility.”

-Leonard Ravenhill

When you can praise God in the midst of adversity and suffering, you have the most powerful release from the powers of darkness. They cannot stand it, or bear to hear it, and they flee, because it is the overwhelming evidence of the reality of the invisible God. It contradicts their wisdom which says that when you are suffering, you are to be mourning, pouting, feeling sorry for yourself, blaming God, and accusing this man or that. But when you can praise God in the midst of your sufferings, you have ruined them. You have taken their last weapon, and they have nothing they can use anymore to threaten or to intimidate. You have broken through onto a heavenly ground. They are absolutely helpless to adversely affect you, and so they are required to flee.

-Art Katz

“The devil is a better theologian than any of us and is a devil still.”

-A.W. Tozer

Chapter 1

Crisis: We don't have enough

What is crisis? Merriam Webster would tell us that it is “A decisive or critical moment.” I would be willing to say that crisis might not be a moment. Our whole lives are crises. What I find true in most cases is that our mindsets are one to make a crisis only a moment. I say this to our own shame. From the title of this chapter, I'm sure that I have made a few questions arise.

Why would we need more crises in our lives? The simple answer would be that we find in our crises a time that makes or breaks us. We will either have a shout of glory, or we will flow down the mountainside into eternal turmoil. Yet, I don't want to be simple. There are always the difficult times, but am I wrong for asking what God's heart is toward crisis?

My biggest question is the one of what is the Gospel? For so many years it has been taught that the Gospel is simply man has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, our sin separates us from God, and therefore we are without hope and in utter destitution and damnation in our own strength. Yet, God has made a way for us to restore that relation with Him through the cross of Jesus Christ, and if we're willing to repent (usually omitted for another word like “decide”) then Jesus Christ will wash away all our sin and we will be forgiven.

Am I wrong in thinking that this is a poor example of the Gospel? We have limited God to words and dogmatic. If we don't use the right phraseology, terminology, and theology, then there is “something wrong with our gospel.” What is it? Why does it have to be words? Why is the Gospel something that you say? To read the words of Jesus Christ, it seems so much more likely that the Gospel is in the way we *live*.

He hasn't called us to witness; He has called us to be witnesses. Yet we want to make it into a formula. That is our first mistake. After making the Gospel into a formula, we then must proclaim it. That is our second mistake. We spend so much time wanting to do when God's intent is for us to be. God has decided that making us into His image, and therefore making us into witnesses, is His constitutive act.

Does that mean that God wants to make us suffer in order that we would be holy as He is holy? Yes. It is God's pleasure to conform us into His image. This usually means a suffering. In a sense, repentance itself is a suffering. It is a denial of self, and anything that goes against self-preservation is suffering.

When I look at the global outreach mission, and the evangelical Church today, I see that we have beat our breasts, plowed our fields, witnessed to our cities, and “proclaimed” the Gospel to every living creature, but to no avail. Is all of our hard work and dedication in vain? Why would God allow such a thing? When we have so many promises in the Bible to cling to, why does it seem as though God is silent? Is God choosing not to answer? Does God have a choice to answer when we pray according to His word? Is He bound to His word?

I have so many questions. The way that most Christians speak about God and Scripture today only promotes ten thousand times ten thousand more questions. There is a contradiction. If God is bound by His word and promises, then why don't we see God moving more today? Are there not people praying for revival? Are there not people repenting? Are there not congregations hungry for God?

It all boils down to this one answer that I believe the Holy Spirit has birthed in me... We don't have enough crises. What I do not mean is that we need to always be battling and struggling. I do not mean that we ought to always feel down and defeated. I do not mean that we need to be drug through the mud and absolutely destitute of any hope. It isn't that we need to be crushed. We need a right understanding.

The crisis doesn't come from our "testing." It comes from a right understanding of Scripture. The Gospel is something that is lived out. We are to be living epistles. Our friends should be able to look into our lives and have to admit that they "find no fault," as the people surrounding Daniel had to admit. I have no clue where I can even start with such a difficult task.

Who is sufficient for these things? Even in this writing, I am feeling my way through to where God would have me to speak. I guess the first thing that seems to come to mind is that we lack a view of the whole picture. Maybe part of this is that we read strictly New Testaments. I can't begin to describe the difficulty I have in spirit when I see people walking around with New Testaments. Of course there are also Psalms and Proverbs, but they still lack the whole thing.

I wonder sometimes if people think that Christianity is a Gentile religion. Do we think that we can have the New Testament without the Old? Why do we call them New and Old? They are new and old covenants, but to separate the Word of God and call one thing new and the other old is detrimental to the faith. It is all one Word. It starts with "In the beginning," and ends with, "The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, amen."

The Apostles didn't have a New Testament. All their insight and revelation came from the Old Testament. This really isn't anything profound. Yet, we see that our Christianity today is mostly New Testament, Greek, partial, and uncircumcised. Why is it that even to raise these statements is something altogether obscure? Why is it that for me to say such things is something that is quickly ignored?

We don't understand the Bible. Some people then take that and say, "Amen! It is those darn Pentecostals, or Lutherans, or Baptists, or anything other than me." I make a statement like, "Christianity today is mostly New Testament and Greek," and people just stare. They have no comprehension of the severity of this statement.

Heed my word, if we do not get back to a Hebrew understanding of the Scripture in its entirety, then we will only be left as a Gentile Sunday phenomenon that parades around, claps its hand, puts on a happy face, enjoys the buffets, says, "Bless you brother," has a sentiment and compassion, but altogether lacks the presence, power, and character of God. I have just described to you the majority of "churches" in America.

Because you did not heed the words of Jesus, the Apostles, and the Prophets, but instead left it open for your own interpretation, you have been left naked. What is even more grievous is that you can't even see your blindness, nakedness, wretchedness, and

poverty. You continue to parade around and dance and promote this event and that service. God is far from you.

We lack the character of God, and therefore lack Him. There might be a handful of people here and there who are struggling or striving for God, but by and large, we are content where we are. Things seem to be “working.” Why do we need to change?

How do you even answer such a question? And this is something that I have been asked. The very question itself is loaded. To ask this question, it exposes your heart. Why do we need to change? It is as if you have reached the prime of humanity. You are the best there has ever been. God should be bowing down to you because you figured out how to work the system in a way to grow your church.

It’s a bogus question. To even postulate that we don’t need to change is to completely forsake God and say, “My way is better.” Yet, in the moment of crisis, your true colors are found. You are hostile, agitated, prideful, self-focused, arrogant, murderous, hateful, lustful, greed driven, and every other kind of evil. There is no purity in the so-called Church of Jesus Christ. Praise Him for His remnant.

The goats go on about their lives with a contemporary Christian, nonchalant, neo-orthodox, Greek, philosophical, untrue, unreal “walk of faith.” The supposed shepherds (pastors) feed the goats. The sheep get nothing but hungrier. The goats swallow up all the “great food that is presented” on Sunday mornings, but the sheep starve for reality.

I thank God for men such as Carter Conlon who has stated that his occupation is “goat-kicking and wolf-bashing.” He takes care of his sheep. He tends to them. I pray to God for more men and women like him.

What is the crisis that is needed? I am not about to start saying that we need the economy to fail. It isn’t in our worldly things that will get us back to a right view of Scripture and of God. Though that is where God will hit us to try and break us of our idols, it is in His presence that we learn from Him. It is by His grace, and by trusting that He does speak through such unworthy vessels as this, that I wish to present one of the areas that are neglected.

There is a term that I have heard used: the Theocratic Kingdom. Theo means God; cratic means government. This is a term that isn’t used too often. It is used to describe the Kingdom of God. One of the flaws in our theology is that we don’t understand the Kingdom, as we ought.

Most often, our presumption is that the Kingdom of God is within. We, as the Church, have the Holy Spirit in us. Therefore, the Kingdom of God is within us. Yet, this misses the correct understanding. It is a literal Kingdom. There is a literal King (God). There is a literal rule and reign. There is a literal place where this Kingdom exists.

If the Kingdom of God is merely within, then where does God sit upon His throne? It sounds ludicrous, but this is my point exactly. Our ideologies are complete contradictions. We want to say that the Kingdom is within because then it puffs us up as being “more than human.” Now we get to have a bit of pride because we are the chosen ones. We are the men and women of God. People should bow down and worship before us because we have the Kingdom of God within us.

We are no longer ambassadors; we are now the Kingdom itself. In such a presumption, we negate heaven and negate God Himself. In negating the Earth is His footstool, and Heaven is His throne, we must also negate the God who sits upon that throne. It is in our misconception of the Kingdom of God that we go from being children of God to making God like unto ourselves.

Why is this a crucial issue? It is in our misconception of the Kingdom of God *now* that we misunderstand the Kingdom of God that is yet future. Lets turn to some Scripture.

“It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, ‘Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths’; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem,” Isaiah 2:2-3.

The house of the Lord is the whole Body of Christ, both Jew and Gentile. It will be that the Church and Israel shall go to and fro through all the earth to teach of the ways of God, and they will be given authority and govern over cities. The nations will come to Jerusalem to give of sacrifices unto the Lord, and any nation that does not come shall be cut off from the face of the earth. It has been decreed in the word of God, and it must be done. God will fulfill even this prophecy of the law going forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

This has been established in the wisdom and character of God. What is so special about Israel? What is so special about Zion? What is so special about Jerusalem? The Jews are the supreme humanists, and they refuse to believe what the Scriptures teach of the heart of man. They take the issue of depravity and call it a “Christian doctrine.” There is good in man, and of course the Jews are the best of all men.

Zion is a hill, if even that. Yet, God has decreed that the Law shall go forth from this hill? What is the significance of this hill? It is merely a mound! What about Jerusalem? What is so important about that? It is destitute and without any outside protection. If anyone wants to take it captive, it wouldn’t be a difficult thing (especially with today’s technology).

Why, then, has God chosen this? If God cannot be the God of the Jewish people, who are the supreme humanists and atheists, then what kind of a God is He? In choosing Zion, He shows forth His meekness. The point isn’t like all the other gods who need the tallest building with the most massive thrones and cathedrals and awe-inspiring architecture. God isn’t interested in the things man is interested in. He is God, and there is none beside Him. What will try to exalt itself against God, even if He is only on a small hill? The point is to *be with His people*.

What about Jerusalem? Why would He pick this of all the cities? God has chosen Jerusalem for the same reason He has chosen Zion. It has nothing that would draw you to it. There is no beauty about it, humanly speaking, and it is in that common-ness that we can see the beauty of God displayed. He is found in the places that are common. He is found in the places that lack majesty. He is in the places that would need His protection, or else they will not be protected.

This is showing forth the wisdom and character of God. Even in His choosing of where to place His literal rule and reign, we see in full view the majesty of God. Yet, here is the real kicker: Jerusalem represents redeemed Israel, and Zion is the Church. Together, they are the Body of Christ, for they are both under the same Head. They work together, so that the word of God and the Law of God go forth from the Body, which is Jerusalem (the Jews) and Zion (the Church).

We can see in Isaiah 9:6-7 that the Son was given so that the government shall be upon His shoulder, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. His throne will be upon the *throne of David*, and it shall be established with justice and righteousness “from henceforth even unto *forever*.”

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was told that she shall be found with child, and that she should name him Jesus, and that He shall be great; “and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father, David,” Luke 1:32. If you look at Psalm 2, you will see that God has the intent on establishing Jesus, who is Christ, upon the holy hill of Zion, giving Him the nations, and giving Him the uttermost parts of the earth. He shall “break them with a rod of iron; dash them in pieces with a potter’s vessel.”

The Kingdom of God is predicated upon Christ Jesus being seated upon the throne of His Father, and having absolute rule and reign over all creation. To proclaim the Kingdom of God is to proclaim to the world of His rule. The Messiah has come, and by His coming, He has established the Kingdom of God upon the earth.

“God, who made the world and all things in it, seeing that he is the Lord of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands, neither is worshiped with men’s hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he gives to all life, and breath, and all things; and has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek the Lord, if perhaps they might feel after him, and find him, though he is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also his offspring.’ Forasmuch, then, as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like gold, or silver, or stone, carved by art and man’s device. And the times of this ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained; concerning which he has given assurance to all men, in that he has raised him from the dead,” Acts 17:24-31.

Paul does a marvelous job in presenting the whole picture. He didn’t even quote Scripture, although he quoted some poets. I must stop to marvel at how there would be many people offended if some one got in the pulpit of God and didn’t even read Scripture. Yet, we have on display one of the most intense moments in all of history, and God’s very word spoken through an unworthy vessel.

It isn’t hard to see from the words of Paul that the theocratic kingdom is something that is to be on full display. The entire message was a display of the Kingdom of God. You have at the beginning of his message the creation of the world; therefore God has ownership of this world. Paul displays the theological understanding that God is

neither within temples nor buildings, nor do material things represent Him. In fact, He sustains all things, because you wouldn't even have breath without God.

If we are all in such a debt to Him that, even if we don't believe in Him, we live and move and have our being in Him, He commands everyone everywhere, no matter whom you are (or what you are in relation to the nations themselves), to repent. You have no claim on your own life. It is all a part of God's master plan. Every single moment should be lived out by the leading of the Holy Spirit. Anything that is said, done, thought, or acted upon without the Holy Spirit first speaking to your heart is iniquity. The reason is because man is evil, and therefore anything that man does apart from God is evil.

God has appointed a time where He will judge the world in righteousness and justice. The very foundations of His throne are righteousness and justice (Psalm 97:2). He will judge by the man whom He has ordained (Jesus Christ). The assurance that He has given all men everywhere about the absolute authority of Christ is that the Father raised Him from the dead. This is the Kingdom.

I would venture to say that if Jesus was given rule and reign by the resurrection, then how much more should it be by resurrection that *we* would have authority? It is not until we, both individually and corporately, have died completely that we should receive a resurrection, and therefore an inheritance in the Kingdom of God. Here is where the ultimate answer lies.

What is the Kingdom of God? It is a resurrected creation. It is a Kingdom that has been taken out of the chaos, and light has been separated from the darkness, so that the only thing within that new creation is purity. It says in James 3:17, "The wisdom that is from above is *first pure*, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

One of the questions that I have been asked more recently is the question of sin in heaven. The question was, "Will there be freewill in heaven?" The explanation of the question comes from a look at Genesis 2, that if Adam had nothing within him to cause for him to desire sin, then why did he fall? The first thing to consider is this: no one will be in heaven unless they are pure, as God Himself is pure.

The Kingdom of God is a Kingdom of holiness. Unless you have the Holy Spirit to lead you into all truth, you will not enter the Kingdom of God. How can you possibly receive the Spirit of Holiness if you are wicked though? To even receive it would be to die. There must inevitably be a death and resurrection out of evil and into good. God must so do a work in your heart that He could look down from heaven and say, "It is good." That is impossible to have pronounced over you when there is anything left of humanity, because strictly from the words of Jesus, men are evil.

If we will never even make it into heaven without being pure, blameless, holy, righteous, etc, then why would we sin when we are in heaven? There will not be any temptation or deception. The ultimate test of our worthiness to be called sons and daughters of God, and therefore be part of the Kingdom of God, is to endure the trials and temptations that come at us in this day and age. Every moment is a moment of crisis. Either I am living in a way that is worthy to the calling that God has given me (which I would like to note that Stephen had to have such a character that his face shone like an

angel and he only waited tables), or I will enter into eternal despair and agony for my constant choices to preserve myself instead of endure hardships unto the very end.

“But now God commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness.” Notice how Paul seems to be able to go straight from the earthly things into the eternal. He just finished up saying that God is not in the buildings and temples, nor do objects of wood, gold, or silver represent him. Now he steps, almost instantaneously, into the realm of eternity. For those of this Kingdom, the eternal and the physical cannot be separated.

This is a hard truth to fully comprehend and live out. Since we are ambassadors, and our home is not of this earth, we are not earthly minded. Our perception needs to be of a depth that goes beyond the world. We need to be able to see beyond the realm of the physical and into the realm of spirit. This means that we will be offensive to most.

When the man or woman tries to find sanctuary in their music, we can see through their words of, “It makes me feel better. I can cope with the world when I’m listening to music.” To see past the veil of this world and into the realm of spirit we would understand that music itself brings its own kind of aura and emotion. When people give themselves over to music, they are giving themselves to a spirit that is produced that brings a peace, but it is a false peace. It brings a joy, but it is a false joy.

The apostolic man or woman can see past the many sculptures and massive temples to gods and see the idolatry for what it is. When it would be safe to assume that most men and women today would go to Greece and be amazed at the different religious temples and their architecture, the apostle saw it and said the land was full of idols.

His mind was furnished with eternity, and in the scope of heaven, all these things were wickedness. There was nothing that impressed him. Paul passed god after god after god. There were none that impressed or caused him to be stirred. The more he saw, even of the scenery, the more he thought of the coming judgment. He knew that this world would be melted in intense and fervent heat. He knew that these things were temporal, and had no value. He knew that these things that men and women were giving themselves to had their origin in the pit, and therefore will be judged and damned.

This eternal mindset drove Paul to speak out in the synagogues and market places. He couldn’t let the men and women of the city die in their ignorance. Because he was able to see past the surface, he was able to dive into the depths of the sins of these people. Many times I find myself in a similar place. All the people of God seem to be given over to entertainment and music during the “worship.” There is no true worship of God going up; its all noise, emotion, hype, excitement, fanaticism, and vainglory.

Heaven forbid that you start to speak up and ask the people why they give themselves over to these things. Heaven forbid you point out the sin and heart of it. Heaven forbid that you show the older men and women are eating it up because it gives them excitement, whereas the youth are unaffected. Heaven forbid that you show them that their practices seem to follow more closely to Baal worship than to worship of Jehovah. To see into the realm of the eternal is to see past the flesh and the soul. And the man or woman who sees and confronts it will be looked upon as the one without the Spirit and without God. Heaven forbid, because the wolves will devour you.

When we are a people of the Spirit, we will intrinsically be a people who stir up commotion. Our very presence will bring forth a reality of the eternal. By our very presence we will stir the hearts of the men and women who are merely religious, and they will be uncomfortable. They will need to crank up the sound system even more. They will need to sing louder. They will need to dance more emphatically. They will need to pray with more passion. They will need to force tears. They will need to show forth their spirituality, when, truth be told, they are actually showing forth their non-spirituality.

This isn't to make music sound as though it is of the enemy. I choose to speak on music because it is the easiest to fall into a trap with. Music itself brings forth its own kind of atmosphere, and therefore it is easy to get carried away in the rhythm of the music instead of in the presence of God.

The theocratic kingdom is something that is extremely important. Our crisis will be forever because with the eternal mindset, we will see every moment as utter. Every second is taken as precious. There is not a dull moment, even when we are doing the most mundane and routine things. It causes everything to be holy and anointed.

Our interactions with each other are brought into a new realm of glory. How can we sit staring at the back of each other's heads? There are words to be spoken, prophecies to be given, healings to take place, etc. We can't waste time by listening to one man at the front speak, and every one else is falling in line as being less than or under. In the context of the theocratic kingdom, you have One Head, namely, Christ Jesus. Because all parts of the Body are connected to that One Head, there are none over or under any others. All are together. They are not side-by-side, but together. This is difficult to understand, especially humanly.

How can God have order when there aren't leaders? If there are leaders, how can they exercise spiritual leadership if they aren't placed over the others? It is a unique paradox of the Body of Christ to both have One Head whom all listen to and are commanded by, and to have spiritual leaders that have been separated and appointed by that Head. It is the wisdom of God to have even the leaders be under the lowest and youngest. All are together. There are none above or below, but at the same time, those who are above must be below. We all stand at equal proximity from the Throne. Yet, God establishes certain called out ones from the called out ones to rule. This is why God says that some will rule over 5 cities, and some will rule over 10 cities. It is a paradox of the faith, and without the Spirit to teach and discern, is impossible to understand.

Without the Spirit, you have a man who is the "anointed one" teaching or preaching, and the only people who can bring a corrective word to that man are those who receive a paycheck from him. How do we expect for our spiritual leaders to be kept under accountability when the only people around them will lose their jobs by speaking the wrong thing, even if it is true? There is, therefore, a lack of discipline in the spiritual leaders, and this is directly proportionate to the separation from Biblical principles laid out, namely, that the youngest and least spiritual must be able to speak, rebuke, and/or discipline even the oldest and/or wisest in the congregation.

The theocratic kingdom is a branch of theology that reaches out into all areas of life and theology. To neglect the principles laid out in this one area, as it is with all areas of Christendom, we abandon true faith, and conform instead to the image of the world

and their systems. It is a holy thing to be the Church. When we reduce being the Church to going to church, we suffer consequences that are detrimental to both faith and eternity. Our actions and words are timeless and eternal because we have been brought into a kingdom that is timeless and eternal. To lose the disciplines of Christendom so that our buildings can continue to grow is to build our houses on the sand; and when the winds come, the floods rise, and the experiences of life beat against the house, it will fall.

It is also in this understanding of the theocratic context that we are able to find healing. Because our minds are not looking at the temporal and worldly things, we can endure hardships and sufferings. It is in this mindset that even the roughest and harshest of persecution and torment (even from other members of the Body) seem to be light afflictions and temporary. It is bearable. It isn't too much to suffer.

God has made a way of healing, but it doesn't stop with the theocratic context. There is much more to be examined and prayed over. Let us continue in the next chapter as we cry unto God for understanding, but even more for solace and for Him.

God, I pray that you would keep teaching us. This is something that is important, but it is something that is difficult to understand. By your own words, and by your Holy Spirit, give us grace to understand. It isn't our heart to increase in knowledge. Our heart is to walk the path that you have put in front of us. Show us the steps, because until you do, we are lost and without hope. To where do we go if you do not reveal to us the correct path? To whom do we reach if all have been perverted? Give us strength and grace; give us clarity and discernment; give us the filling of you Spirit. Church without Pentecost is dead, and we dare not forge the Spirit so that we might continue onward. In Jesus, the Christ's, name I pray; amen.

“Catch on fire with enthusiasm and people will come for miles to watch you burn.”

-John Wesley

“In answer to your inquiry, I consider that the chief dangers which confront the coming century will be religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and heaven without hell.”

-William Booth

“True preaching is the sweating of blood.”

-Joseph Parker

“When you can distribute condoms in schools, and not have bibles in schools, it is time for a revolution.”

-Dr. Michael Brown

“Ardent love or desire introduced, as passionately longing to please and glorify the Divine Being, to be in every respect conformed to him, and in that way to enjoy him.”

-David Brainerd

Chapter 2

Absolute Surrender

Luke 14:25-34 says, “Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said, ‘If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters - yes, even his own life - he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, “This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.” Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, any of you who do not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple. Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

It says elsewhere, a couple of times, “A little leaven leavens the whole lump.” Jesus also warns us, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.” The disciples didn’t understand this at first, but we’re told that they later understood it to mean the doctrine of the Pharisees. From these few Scriptures it is made clear as to what absolute surrender is. It is absolute surrender. We can’t fancy it up. We can’t go “in depth.” It is what it is.

To even have a little bit of the world is to neglect the entire call of God. Either we give all our hearts, or we have given nothing at all. It was Ananias and Saphira that gave the part and called it the whole. The problem was not that they gave a piece, but that they lied. It was because they wanted to look like the “super-Christians” and be lauded and applauded. The part that they held back is actually a direct symbolism of their hearts.

Here is the difficult question: have you given all? I don’t mean that you have given your heart to the Lord. Have you even given Him your television shows? Have you even given Him your “church?” Have you given Him the hard to reach places? It is when we are required to give even these things that it is exposed whether or not we have indeed given all to God.

When it is required of you to even give up your own opinion, how would you react? When you must forfeit your reputation for the sake of love, do you willingly and gladly speak a word for the benefit of those souls around you? It isn’t until we have this kind of a commitment that we can truly say, “I have surrendered.” We must, as Jesus did, breathe out our last and utter, “Into your hands I commit my spirit.”

In this view of surrender we have two concepts presented: leaven and truth. The Holy Spirit is also referred to as the Spirit of Truth. To the degree that you love truth is the degree that you love God Himself. God is the Truth. What we must understand about truth is that it is not convenient. It must be apprehended, and even upon apprehension, it is requiring. It is demanding. Truth is difficult to love. Yet it is this requirement that God

holds if we are to proclaim a love for Him.

What do I mean when I say that truth is difficult to love? Many scholars “love” truth, but I must object. Is their love really a love of *truth*? Or is it a love of *knowledge*? We can find ourselves graduating from the Playboy magazines and the New York Times articles only to grab a hold of religious things in a secular way. To love truth will prevent this. If we merely have surrendered our morals to God, and not our whole being, then the proof will be that we will delight in knowledge and understanding, but will be far from walking within a reality and passionate life that transcends human ability.

How can we be sure of our love of truth? The answer is within the definition of truth. To most, truth is merely statement. It doesn't go beyond the realm of fact. To present a fact is to present the truth. Yet, the biblical definition of Truth is that it must be factual, *and acted*. If the doctrine of resurrection is true, then it must surpass a claiming. What I mean is that unless we *walk* in the resurrection, then there is no truth in our proclamation of a resurrection.

Why are the words of God true? It is because they are a full representation of who *He* is. Though a lie is not truth, there is a realm that goes beyond our categories and presumptions. A lie is not truth in the same way that a fact might not be true. Why is it a fact that a ball will not stay up in the air? Is it because science has formulas and theories to prove it? Or is it because when you throw a ball into the air, it comes down?

If we claim promises of God, such as the resurrection, and they are only doctrinal statements and “truths,” then we are lying. We present the part as though it were the whole. The tiniest bit of leaven leavens the *whole lump*. You can say that you follow Jesus, but how much are you following Him while watching the television? Did He tell you to do that? Did He speak to your heart and reveal that His will is for you to watch a certain show, play a certain video game, be online, or any of the other things we do to fill our days? How can we say that we *follow* Him if we are only *accepting* Him?

Do you understand the difference? To follow means that He will lead you. To accept simply means that you acknowledge His existence, and you “accept” that which He has done and said for you. Even our acceptance is usually a false acceptance. We don't want to change. We want blessings to fall out of the sky. And by blessing, I mean our desires and lusts (one of them being heaven).

God will not stand for our unauthentic mentalities. And maybe this is why there seems to be so little authority and power in our congregations. Our shortcomings to “evangelizing” the world can be laid wholly at the feet of the Church for not presenting a life that is counter of what this world teaches. Where can they go to see a life that is different than their own? It is all the same, but with a little Jesus sprinkled on. God will require their blood upon our hands, because we have not shown them a different way of living, let alone the difference between that which is holy and that which is profane.

Jesus told the crowd, “Unless you hate your father and mother, your wife and children, your brothers and sisters, and even your own self, you cannot be my disciple.” This needs to sink in and permeate through our very beings and into the deepest depths of our souls. Are we willing to even forsake our families? If the command came, like it did for the sons of Aaron and Moses, to slay every father and mother, son and daughter, friend and neighbor, that has profaned the name of the Lord within the camp, would we

be willing to take up our swords and obey the Lord? Or would it be more appropriate to say that we would throw accusations at God for being unjust and unrighteous?

I tell you the truth, unless you have such a reverence for His glory and to do His will, you will never see the Kingdom of God in power. We need a jealousy that is beyond ourselves. We need to come to the place of selling *all* our possessions, and walk into a newness of life that doesn't get its standards from this world. Most of us claim the faith of Abraham, but which one? There was Abram of Babylon, and Abraham the Hebrew. The difference between the two is everything. To Abram of Babylon, there was only a calling out from the things of this world. He was self-indulgent, hasty to the newest and greatest method and function, of great morale, but without knowing the Lord His God, and without knowing that God Himself speaks to His children.

Abraham the Hebrew is of the total opposite. Where Abram was well liked, and had many friends and acquaintances, Abraham was a nomad. Abram had a place to call his own. Abraham had nowhere. The very word Hebrew is thought to mean "stranger." Does that describe you? Do you feel like a pilgrim or stranger in a foreign land, where you have no true resting place, because your resting place is not of this world, but is "of the land that I (God) will show you?"

Let us not be quick to grab onto such theological truths without asking the question of its severity. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. A little leaven will render the whole as untrue. Is that what God will be forced to pronounce as your life: untrue? You loved the congregations. You loved the events. You loved the programs. You loved the music and hype of the ministries. But you forsook the Lord. You didn't take into consideration the actuality of it all.

How sore many people will be when they find out that God requires a grade of 100% (if I can use such a metaphor) to enter into eternal life. The Day of Judgment will be a horrible day to the self-indulgent church that loves all the hype and hysteria, but neglect that which is common and silent. The proof of our illegitimate claims is in our so-called worship. When the music stops, we stop. When the sermon is over, we're done with the "church thing." There is no reality of change.

People don't walk out the door and serve one another. They don't hold the door, or fix a meal for their family, or tip their waitress more than she deserves, or show any other act of love and kindness that require humility and patience and grace. Why? I have the distinct feeling that we don't do these things because there is no true foundation. We want excitement, but we don't want God. We haven't truly surrendered, and therefore, we're still in it for ourselves. What is the first question you ask when you get in your car after Sunday service? Do you ask, "What did you think about the message? Did you like the worship?" Or do you ask, "Was God there? Were you changed?"

What is truth if it is not being real? The synonym for truth is reality. If our "truth" does not bring us to a reality of life, then can we call it truth? It might be a correct statement, but it is not truth. It might be correct knowledge, but it is not truth. Truth is demanding. Truth requires and changes. If our preaching and "worship" are not affecting the people, and community more than a mere hype or excitement, then it is not true.

I am not going to go against the idea of only having songs for a service. If the Spirit shall so desire, then so it shall be done. Yet, are people changed? Do people walk

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