

03/01/09

1 Corinthians 14:4 **CHARGE YOUR SPIRITUAL BATTERIES!**

When you pray in tongues, you are building yourself up spiritually. Its like doing exercises for your spirit, the way you would go to the gym and do exercises for the body. Therefore, the more you pray in tongues, the stronger you become spiritually. You become more sensitive to the things of God, better able to hear the voice of Holy Spirit, and you're more anointed with God's power to confirm things you say about Him from the Word of God. Jude 20 says that when you pray in the Holy Spirit, you're "building yourself up". Are you doing your spiritual exercises faithfully? If not, you should be.

Just like working out at the gym, the more you exercise, the larger and stronger your muscles become. If you look at a person who has diligently exercised for years, you can see the differences. Their muscles are bigger and stronger. If its aerobics we're talking about, the ones who exercise consistently can exert more effort for a longer period of time before reaching a place of exhaustion. So it is with praying in tongues. If you want to become mighty for God, one of the best ways is to become consistent with praying in tongues. The more you do it, the stronger you become. The less you do it, your level of spiritual strength and sensitivity drops proportionately. I know in my own life, the more time I spend praying in tongues, the more in-tune I am concerning the things of the spirit realm. The less I pray in tongues, the less able I am at connecting with God and the things of God. If you've been struggling to hear God's voice, get that needed dose of spiritual insight and wisdom, or just to have that sense of spiritual awareness, establish (or re-establish) your daily time on prayer in tongues!

03/02/09

1 Corinthians 14:15 **IS YOUR PRAYER TIME BALANCED?**

Paul told the Corinthians that he prayed with his understanding, and with his spirit. If you are to develop in prayer, you must do the same. You must balance the two, and use them both to pray effectively. When we talk about praying with our understanding, we're talking about praying out of our "heads". That is, praying according the things we know intellectually. Praying with the spirit is praying in other tongues, as the Spirit gives the utterances (Romans 8:26,27). It is praying beyond the realm of what we know, and praying by faith, trusting in the Holy Spirit to give us the words so that we can pray according to God's perfect will. We need them both! Some believers, for whatever reasons, scoff at tongues, erroneously thinking that intellectual prayer will suffice. It will not! On the other hand, some believers think all they need to do is pray in other tongues. That is also wrong. You need to become proficient in both, because both are necessary, and that's why the New Testament is full of references to people doing both, including the Apostle Paul.

As an example, in Mark 11:24, Jesus said that when we pray, we're to believe we receive what we pray for. That's praying out of our intellect, because how can we believe we have received our answers if we're not sure of what we've been praying for? This is what Paul was talking about to the Corinthians. He said if he always prayed in tongues only, his understanding would be "unfruitful" (1 Corinthians 14:14). On the other hand, there are times when we have to pray in tongues because our understanding and intellect can't fully grasp or process the issues or situations being prayed over. As an example, you don't need to pray in tongues if you're praying for your healing! 1 Peter 2:24, and other verses, tell us that healing is included in the redemptive work of Christ on the cross. So, all you need to do is stand on those verses, pray that you receive, and then believe you receive! Tongues isn't necessary in a case like that. But if you're praying about something much more complex in terms of personalities, guidance, direction or emotions, tongues is definitely an advantage in prayer. So be sure your prayer time is balanced, and when it is, you're have the confidence to know that no matter what situation you face, you'll have the

mind of Christ, and pray the proper prayers in the proper way.

03/03/09

1 Corinthians 14:15

DO YOU SING WHEN YOU PRAY?

When you decide to become more effective in prayer, understand the important role singing plays in your times of prayer. Paul talked about two types of prayer here: prayer with the understanding, and prayer in the spirit, which is the same thing as praying in tongues. But he also tells us that prayer can manifest with singing as much as with normal, verbal conversation. Have you ever sung your prayers to God? If you have, you know how spiritually uplifting it is. If you haven't, let me encourage you to open up to the possibility in your prayer closet. I know by experience, when I let loose and allow my spirit man to express himself uninhibited, singing is often the way I express my faith towards God in prayer. And its WONDERFUL! Like the old advertising slogan goes: "Try it, you'll like it!"

Sometimes when I'm participating in praise and worship in a church meeting, I'll just shift over and begin singing in other tongues, using the melodies of the song, but praying and praising the Lord in other tongues, rather than by singing the actual lyrics of the songs being sung. At times in my own private prayer closet, I'll do the same. As I'm praying in tongues, I'll just start to sing what I'm saying. Its spontaneous – I don't plan it but if I'm sensitive to the Spirit, many times He leads me to do it. Why? Because its refreshing to my spirit, in the same way you just feel better when you're singing a song you like in the shower! There's something about singing that releases creative "juices" within us, even if we're just singing with our understanding. How much more if we're singing out of our spirits, making melody in our hearts to the Lord? (Ephesians 5:19). So take advantage of that when you pray. In the same way you enjoy singing along, out loud, to your favorite song on the CD or over the radio, sing along with the Holy Spirit, the holy angels, and the heavenly host! Sing your praises, and sing your prayers to God!

03/04/09

1 Corinthians 14:13 * 3/4/2005 * WHEN PRAYING IN TONGUES, PRAY YOU MAY INTERPRE

Paul told us that when we pray in other tongues, we should also pray that we interpret our prayers. Do you do that? I didn't for years, but not too long ago I came across a mini-book which talked about doing just that, using this text as support for their argument. My spirit bore witness with the teaching, so I opened my heart to the possibilities of interpreting my own prayers when I would pray in tongues. I was pleasantly surprised by the results! Not only did I receive much more insight, wisdom and revelation from my own prayers, but I also received a level of spiritual refreshing I had not previously experienced. I encourage you to open up to the possibilities here. If you've never prayed that you interpret your own tongues, go to the Lord and put it before Him as a simple faith request.

Two well-known ministers have said that they do this, and at crucial times in their ministries, when they needed clear and distinct direction from God about which way to go, they got their requested direction after interpreting their own tongues they had been praying to the Lord. One was Kenneth E. Hagin, the other was Oral Roberts. Both men have said that critical guidance was received as they interpreted their own tongues, and as a result, they were able to make sound decisions which further propelled their ministries along on a path of growth and expansion. I don't know about you, but I need all the help I can get from God! So if I'm praying in tongues, and the possibility exists for me to interpret my own prayers, then I'm open to it. How about you? How do you do this in your private times of praying in tongues? The same way you see tongues and interpretation of tongues operate in a public setting. First, the tongue is given, and then the interpretation follows. When you pray in tongues privately, especially when you're praying over complex, difficult or important things, stand in faith that you may interpret your

own prayers. I've done it, and I know it brings a great measure of refreshing to my spirit. I believe it will for you too!

03/05/09

1 Timothy 3:16 THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

In the Greek, the word which is translated "mystery" in this verse is *mysterion*. In the New Testament context, it means information which is understood only by a select group and no other. In this particular setting, it means that only the believers have the ability to spiritually discern what the mystery is all about. It is information which God wants the body of Christ to know about, and no one else. Yet many Christians don't know what the mystery of Godliness is. Do you?

If you look at the verse carefully, you see that Paul calls this mystery a "great" mystery. Why? Because of what the mystery reveals. The mystery of godliness is a revelation of the body of Christ – showing believers how the body came into being, what it should be doing, and how the church age will come to a close. The mystery itself has six parts, each part revealing something about the body of Christ. The first three parts deal with the head of the body – Jesus. The second three parts talk about the rest of the body, which is us – born-again believers worldwide. The first three parts deals with what God did for us, and the second three parts deals with what we're doing for God. We'll take a part a day, and see what God reveals to us. Remember, it's a mystery. As such, the world can never understand this because it's a truth that is taught and revealed by the Holy Spirit to the church. Only the believers can understand this because it is spiritually discerned.

03/06/09

1 Timothy 3:16 GOD WAS MANIFESTED IN THE FLESH

The first part of the six part mystery of Godliness is this: God became a man. There could be no body of Christ today had Jesus not come to earth and take upon Himself a flesh and blood body. This is what Philippians 2:7,8 talks about. It's what is commonly referred to as the Incarnation. God, the second person of the Trinity, emptied Himself of all of the power and privileges of Deity, and by the power of the Holy Spirit and the seed of the Word of God, literally changed form to become like us in everyway – from birth to death. In my mind, nothing else can ever reveal God's love for us more than this. Think of it! Hebrews says that God prepared a body for Jesus (Hebrews 10:5). Why? So that as a man, God could pay the penalty for our sins. A man caused the fall through sin, so a man was needed for redemption. That's why Jesus came, lived and died on the cross. For us. For you.

In my mind, this is the greatest love story that could ever be told. Don't ever let the devil, or other people, convince you that you're not loved. God loves you. Individually and intimately. He loved you so much, He sent His Son Jesus to die in your place, to pay for your sins. God has always loved you, and will always love you. He can't stop loving you! He's head over heels in love with you. There's nothing you can do or say that can convince God to stop loving you. If He sent His own Son to die on a cross in your place, don't ever come to the place in your life where you doubt His love for you. He did something for you that you couldn't do for yourself. He became a man so that as a man, He could be a sinless substitute; paying the penalty for your sins and mine. Oh Christian! Would to God that we were able to fathom the depths of God's love for us! This is the essence of Christianity, and the message the world needs to hear about. Understand it, and tell it over and over!

03/07/09

1 Timothy 3:16 GOD WAS JUSTIFIED IN THE SPIRIT

The second part of the six part Mystery of Godliness is this: Jesus is the first man to ever be born again. When the Bible says God was “justified”, that means He was “made righteous”. You can’t be “justified” without becoming “unjustified” first, right? Well, we know God is perfect and can’t sin, so what does this mean? It means that when Jesus took upon Himself our sins as our substitute, He died the same spiritual death we all experienced when we committed our first sin. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says that He who knew no sin was made to be sin for us – so that we could become the righteousness of God in Him. Where was Jesus for those 3 days and 3 nights after His death on the cross? The Bible says He went to hell in our place, with our sins, to pay the penalty that we should’ve paid ourselves. Some believers have a hard time accepting this truth, but for me, its very clear and easy to understand. The Bible says that through death, Jesus destroyed the one who had the power of death – who was the devil (Hebrews 2:14). Not the physical death on the cross, but the spiritual death experienced when our sins were placed upon Him to bear. Acts 2:24 tells us that God loosed Jesus from the “pains” of death. This can’t be a reference to physical death because dead people feel no pain. But the souls in hell feel pain don’t they? Their bodies are dead in the grave, but their spirits are alive and in pain.

Paul talks about this in Acts, quoting from the Old Testament to help his listeners understand this great truth. Acts 2:27 is a portion of a prophetic conversation between God the Father and God the Son. The conversation took place after our Lord’s death on the cross – when He was suffering in torment in Hades for our sins. Read that passage carefully. Read also Hebrews 1:5,6 carefully. You’ll see that Jesus is no longer called the Son of God there, but instead, He’s referred to now as God’s “firstborn”. In Romans 8:29, Colossians 1:15,18, Hebrews 1:6, Hebrews 11:28, Hebrews 12:23 and Revelations 1:5, Jesus is called the Firstborn. What does that mean? It means He’s the first man to ever be born again from spiritual death to spiritual life. That what Paul means when he said that God was “justified” in the spirit. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was born-again in exactly the same way you and I were when we confessed Him as Lord and Savior. The difference of course is that He died spiritually because of our sins, not because of His own. Many Christians stumble over this awesome truth, but this preacher understands it and believes it with all my heart. Stop and consider what the scriptures tell you – not what you’ve always heard in church, or what you just thought for yourself. Your beloved Savior went to hell in your place, to pay for your sins, and was justified and made righteous again by the power of the Holy Spirit. Now, at the right hand of God, He’s not only all God, but He’s also all man – and the name for His humanity (Jesus) is the name every knee will bow to for all eternity! Hallelujah!

03/08/09

1 Timothy 3:16

SEEN BY ANGELS!

The third part of the six part Mystery of Godliness is this: JESUS HAS SAT DOWN AT GOD’S RIGHT HAND. When we talk about Jesus being raised from the “dead”, most Christians think only of the physical aspect of that truth. But there’s much more than that, and that’s the third part to God’s six-part Mystery of Godliness. In the bowels of the earth, in the pit of hell, Jesus was born-again. His spirit was recreated, and he became the “firstborn from the dead”. That’s what He’s called in Colossians 1:18 and Revelations 1:5. So when He was raised from the “dead”, its first a reference to being raised up out of hell – the place of the spiritually dead. THEN, after being raised up out of that place, His body was brought back to life when His spirit re-entered it, and he came out of the tomb triumphant over death, hell and the grave! Spiritually born-again, and physically resurrected from the dead.

But remember, He still had to place His blood on the heavenly mercy seat to ratify the New Testament. That’s why He told Mary not to touch when she first saw Him in the garden after His resurrection. But, just a few hours later, He told her and His disciples they could “handle Him and see...”. (John 20:17 and Luke 24:39). What’s the difference? When He told Mary not to touch Him, He hadn’t

yet placed His holy blood on the heavenly mercy seat. Later, when that had been done, His disciples could touch Him all they wanted – His job of redemption was finished and the New Testament had been ratified. Then, 40 days later, our Lord ascended back to Heaven, where he sat down and was coroneted and declared God by God once again. Hebrews chapter 1 records the coronation ceremony in heaven. Read it and rejoice! That’s when Jesus was “seen by angels”. God turned to them all and said, “Now, you see my Son Jesus? He lowered Himself and was subservient to Me as Man’s redeemer, but He’s both God and Man, and from now on, you are to worship Him for all eternity.” (Hebrews 1:6) So Jesus is actually MORE THAN what He was before He left heaven to become a man and die in our place. Before, He was God, the second person of the Trinity, as much God as the Father or the Holy Spirit. But now, He’s all of that PLUS the first begotten of the Father, and the Head of the church AS A MAN! The body of Christ is all about men in Christ. Jesus is the head, but we’re the body. And the last three parts to God’s Mystery of Godliness deals with us – and the job we’ve got to do before its time to leave earth and go home to Jesus in heaven.

03/09/09

1 Timothy 3:16

PREACHED AMONG THE GENTILES!

The fourth part of the six part Mystery of Godliness is this: SALVATION WAS FOR ALL MEN. This was a total shock to the Jews, because they all thought salvation was for them alone. The Jews thought that for a person to be saved, they would have to convert to the Jewish faith. But that was never God’s intent from the day He promised to send a Redeemer. Its just what the Jews had come to think and believe about themselves. That’s why Peter and his company were so amazed when Cornelius and his household not only got saved, but filled with the Spirit at the same time (Acts 10:45). When Jesus gave us the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-20), it was made clear that His work of salvation wasn’t just for the Jews. It was for all men everywhere. In fact, this was Paul’s primary calling – to go to the Gentiles and preach the Gospel (Acts 9:15, Romans 11:13). So if you aren’t a Jew – rejoice – and thank God! If you are a Jew – rejoice as well – because your Messiah is everyone’s Messiah too!

This is a large part of what it means to preach the “gospel”. The word “gospel” means “good news”. What would be good news to a lost Gentile? That he has to convert to Judaism and work his tail off the rest of his life trying to keep all the Old Testament’s rules, laws and regulations? No, that’s not “good news”! If you go back and look at the first five books of the Law (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy), you can see how difficult and yes – impossible – it was to keep the law. But now, you can breath a great big sigh of relief because in the New Testament, none of that kind of religious works is necessary. Through simple faith in the finished work of Jesus, anyone anywhere (Jew or Gentile) can believe and receive the free gift of salvation. No religious works to perform, maintain or monitor. Just faith! Wow! Now that’s good news indeed! Imagine! Through faith, you can come boldly to God’s throne to fellowship, ask for help, or get whatever you need in life (Hebrews 4:16). No sacrifices to perform. Jesus was the last and perfect sacrifice. No more futile attempts to keep the law – Jesus has fulfilled the law for us. No more religion – now a vital relationship with God instead. So next time you enter into your prayer closet for times of fellowship and worship, remember that because the Gentiles were part of God’s plan of salvation, you’re now a part of His family!

03/10/09

1 Timothy 3:16

BELIEVED ON IN THE WORLD!

The fifth part of the six part Mystery of Godliness is this: THE WORLD IS OUR ASSIGNMENT! In order to be meet for the Master’s use, you must develop a global mentality. The Great Commission (Mark 16:15-20) is a worldwide assignment, and Jesus isn’t going to come back to set up His earthly

kingdom until the whole world has been reached. That means there are no boundaries that can or should ever stop us. The world is our assignment, so you need to stay global in your thinking. Jesus died for all men everywhere for all time, and its now our job to go tell them the good news. Wherever they are! If they're in the world, we're responsible to get to them with the saving message of the cross. Someday you will stand before Jesus to be judged for the life you're living right now. When (not if) He asks you about what you did to help Him fulfill the Great Commission, how will you answer?

The problem with so many believers is that they're only interested in their own little world. Their life, their jobs, their careers, their kids, their retirement, their happiness. But what about the world out there dying everyday without Jesus? When the Mystery of Godliness declares that Jesus will be believed upon in the world, that means we're out there in all the world preaching, because people can't get saved until they hear the Word of God (Romans 10:14). It's a tragedy of epic proportions to see so many Christians in bondage to the sin of selfishness. Do you know what the 3 greatest enemies to the Great Commission are? Its not the devil, his demons or even the ungodly governments he sets up to try and thwart the spread of the Gospel. NO! Our 3 greatest enemies are LETHARGY, APATHY AND LAZINESS. They do more damage than anything the devil could do because these three come from the inside out, and are matters of the heart. How about you? Too busy to care? Too tired to go? Too pre-occupied with yourself? If so, repent and make yourself available to God! You may not be called to go become a missionary in some far away country, but your world is all around you daily. Wherever God puts you – that's your missions field, and that's the part of the world He wants you to take care of.

03/11/09

1 Timothy 3:16

RECEIVED UP IN GLORY!

This is the sixth and final part to the Mystery of Godliness: THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH. This is not a reference to Jesus Himself, as many think. He has already been received up into glory, and has already been crowned and glorified in heaven by God Himself (Hebrews 1:1-14). No friends, this is a reference to the body of Christ. WE are going to be received up in glory! Remember, the first three parts to this Mystery deal with the Head of the Church – Jesus – and what He did that we couldn't do for ourselves. But the last three parts of this Mystery deal with the body of Christ – as Christians obey the Great Commission and go preach the gospel worldwide. And what happens when we've fulfilled our assignment? We'll be taken up in glory. Its called the Rapture in many Christian circles, and although many don't believe in it, this preacher does. I hope you do too!

No, it won't affect your salvation one way or the other if you don't believe in the Rapture. But just imagine it with me for just a moment – no matter where you stand on the subject. What a glorious way to go out – caught up in the sky to meet the Lord in the air – with all our dearly departed loved ones with Him to welcome us! The word “rapture” simply means “caught up”. And that's what Paul was talking about in 1 Corinthians 15:50-52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. I believe there is a 7 year tribulation period coming, and that during those 7 years the church will be with Jesus in Heaven, enjoying the marriage supper of the Lamb. I believe that when the body of Christ is received up in glory, that is the beginning of the 7 years of tribulation, which will culminate in the Lord's powerful and majestic return to defeat the enemies of God at the battle of Armageddon. Remember the last three parts to the mystery deal with us – the body of Christ, and that this is mystery – which means the truth about the mystery is a secret known only to us. When the Rapture takes place, millions around the world will not know how to explain it. They won't be able to because they don't understand the mystery. When Jesus comes to get us in this blessed event, no one will see him except the saints. That's why its different than the return of Christ at the end of the 7 year Tribulation, because at that time, every eye will see him – saved and unsaved alike. And you know what, during those last 7 years before Jesus returns to set up His kingdom – there will be

evangelism taking place at a level and pace never before seen on Earth! But for us – we’ll be in Heaven, being judged for the things we’ve done in this body, and enjoying the marriage supper of the Lamb. Get ready! Its upon us and could happen today. Live in the light of that truth, and be more focused and prioritized for the things of God!

03/12/09

1 Peter 4:12 **HAVE YOU BEEN SHOT AT LATELY?**

If you really want to regain your sense of perspective, I encourage you to read the books of First and Second Peter often. They’re written to encourage saints to “hang in there” in the midst of severe tests, trials and persecutions. ALL of the New Testament books address this subject, but Peter’s letters devote the lion’s share of content to this issue alone. Yet, in looking at how Christians “react” when all hell breaks loose in their lives – you’d never think they had a clue concerning this issue of suffering and persecution. But, the fact of the matter is this: the more you do for God, the more you’re going to get shot at by the enemy. The less you do for God, the less of a target you become. Why? Its very simple. If you’re serious about doing something meaningful with your life for God’s glory, you become an instant threat to the kingdom of darkness. And the more you desire to be a player and not just a spectator, the more you can expect the devil to come against you.

However, once you realize that greater is the Holy Spirit in you (1 John 4:4), you won’t allow fear or frustration to have a place within you. Instead, you’ll actually be looking forward to the fight! Why? Because if you look at difficulties as opportunities to grow, you’ll understand them the way God wants you to, and by doing that, you turn the whole situation around. Instead of the devil using his attacks to destroy you, God is helping you THROUGH the attacks so you become a stronger, more mature and more seasoned spiritual warrior for the cause of Christ. A great minister named Smith Wigglesworth once said this: “If you are not worth tempting, you’re not worth much!” What a great statement! I love it! God promised that as you pass THROUGH the fire, He would be with you to protect and strengthen you (Isaiah 43:2). So stop looking at your problems as problems. Instead, see them through the eyes of faith, and let God work in you and through you in the midst of difficulties. Don’t be surprised when all hell breaks loose – expect it, and as Philippians 4:4 says, rejoice ALWAYS! The joy of the Lord is your strength!

03/13/09

Romans 8:35-39 **NOTHING MEANS NOTHING!**

Because people tend to understand their relationship with God by how they relate to one another, we sometimes have a hard time fully realizing how much we are loved by God. We hear this all the time from pulpit messages, books, CD’s, tapes, seminars and conferences, but are we really listening? In most cases we are not. This passage in Romans is so rich, it boggles the mind just to contemplate it. When God says that nothing can separate you from His love for you, nothing means NOTHING! Go to your dictionary, and find out what the word nothing means! It means exactly what it says – nothing! And God means exactly that when He says it to you in these verses. Remember, this letter was written at a time when Christians were being threatened with their lives for believing in Jesus. In the midst of all that, Paul writes to encourage and remind them that no matter what happens, NEVER DOUBT GOD’S LOVE FOR YOU! EVER!

Listen to God’s list here: neither death, life, tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, the sword (martyrdom), angels, demons, principalities and powers (more demons), things present, things to come, things too high, things too low, NOR ANY OTHER CREATED THING, can separate you from God’s love! Baby, if that doesn’t raise your level of self-esteem, nothing can! Its

remarkable but true! NOTHING CAN COME BETWEEN A SAINT AND GOD'S LOVE FOR THAT SAINT. Well, God will never use me again because of all my mistakes! Who told you that? Some stupid preacher? Don't listen to people who don't know what they're talking about. God said He loves you, and will always love you. Period. It's a love you didn't earn, so you can qualify for it. He just wants to love you, and has decided that NOTHING can ever change that fact. Whoa! When you understand that, your whole perspective changes when you going through "hell". You become "more than a conqueror". Your knowledge of God's unchanging love for you will give you the inner fortitude to tackle ANYTHING the devil throws against you. Why? Because you know God is ALWAYS for you, never against you! And you don't have to try to convince Him to keep loving you – He already made that decision before you ever existed! In 2 Corinthian 7:4, Paul said that in the midst of tribulation, he was joyful. How could he say that? Because he knew what many of us need to know today. Christians don't know the joy of the Lord in spite of tribulation, but BECAUSE OF IT! God's on your side honey – relish the thought!

03/14/09

Philippians 4:9 HOW ARE YOU LEADING OTHERS?

Paul was a leader. So are you. You may not be an apostle like he was, but you're called to lead others nonetheless. It could be your family, your kids, your spouse, your co-workers or your friends, but whether you like it or not, God has called you to lead others into a closer walk with Him. How do you do that effectively? By example, living your life in such a way that people can relate to you on the four levels found in this verse of scripture. Notice what Paul told the Philippian Christians. He said they had LEARNED from him. Next, he said they had RECEIVED from him. Third, he said they had HEARD from him, and lastly, they had SEEN things in him. These are the 4 areas where we lead others. They learn from us. They receive from us. They hear from us, and they see things in us. Stop for a moment, and ask yourself how much of these four areas are being demonstrated before those God is calling you to lead? What are people learning from you? What are they receiving from you? What are they hearing from you? And, what are they seeing in you?

When you lead others, you will be TEACHING them what God has taught you. That is the learning aspect of leadership. When you lead others, you will be IMPARTING to them that which God has given to you. That is the receiving aspect of leadership. When you lead others, you will be ACCESSIBLE and IN TOUCH with them. That is the hearing aspect of leadership. And finally, when you lead others, you will be a LIVING EXAMPLE for them to follow. That is the seeing aspect of leadership. When you teach, you instruct. When you impart, you demonstrate sacrificial and generous giving. When you remain accessible, you demonstrate humility and meekness. And when you live what you preach, you demonstrate growth and maturity. How well do you stack up? Its challenging, but well worth the effort. We'll take a closer look at each of these 4 levels of leadership in the days ahead. But for today, just step back from yourself, and objectively analyze your effort to date. If there's room for improvement, let's get started! Those who need your leadership await you!

03/15/09

1 Timothy 4:6 ARE YOU NOURISHING YOURSELF?

Paul wrote and told Timothy to nourish himself with words of faith. That truth applies to us as much today as it did back then. Why? Because all of us are tri-partite beings, made in the image and likeness of God. We are spirits, we have souls, and we live in physical bodies. And just like our physical body needs food for proper development, growth and nourishment, our spirits need food as well. God's word is that food because His word is full of faith, and that's the nourishment our spirits need to get strong and stay strong. Words of faith NOURISH you! They build you up, not tear you down! They encourage

you, not discourage you! And the more you are challenged, attacked, persecuted or maligned, the more you're going to need the nourishment only God's faith-filled words can provide. That being the case, how often do you take time to feed your spirit? Once a week in church on Sunday? Every so often, whenever you're in the mood and nothing else is left to do? That's the way most believers handle the nourishing of their spirits, and that's why the majority of Christians are weak, emaciated and defeated in this life. How about you?

God gives us clear instructions in Joshua 1:8. He said His book of the law should never depart out of our mouths. Day and night we're told to meditate in it so we can observe to do it faithfully and consistently. THEN we're told we'll become prosperous and successful. Why? Because the more time you spend feeding yourself on God's word, the more nourished your spirit man will be, and as a result, the stronger you'll be from the inside out. Do a study sometime on spiritual strength, and from Genesis to Revelations, you'll find that getting strong and staying strong is a central, foundational theme throughout the Bible. The reason for this is simple. Our adversaries are very strong spiritual enemies, so we must be stronger in Christ to prevail. Of course the Bible says that greater is He in us than our enemy in the world (1 John 4:4), but that strength has to be developed to be realized. Just because we have the Holy Spirit in us is no guarantee of success, victory and prosperity in life. No, to get there you must NOURISH yourself daily. How? Feed on God's word. Study it. Meditate in it. Read it out loud. Listen to yourself SAYING it. Faith comes from hearing, and hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). So if you're weak, get busy and change that! Words of God are words of faith, and they're the spiritual food you need to get strong, and stay strong!

03/16/09

Romans 14:23 THE SIN MOST CHRISTIANS COMMIT DAILY

I love to find the verses in the Bible that state absolute truths and absolute facts. This is one of those verses. **WHATEVER** is not of faith is sin! What does "whatever" mean? It means **ANYTHING! EVERYTHING! WHATEVER!** No exceptions. No excuses. No options. Live by faith. Walk by faith. Anything less is sin as far as God is concerned. That's why this sin is committed by many Christians daily, and they don't even know they're committing it! They live in doubt, fear, double-mindedness, unbelief every day, and never even give it a second thought. Then they get mad at God when all hell breaks loose in their lives! Remember God is a faith being, and because we're made in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:26,27), we're made to be faith beings just like our Creator. He doesn't just expect us to live by faith, or encourage us to live by faith, He **DEMANDS** we live by faith! **ANYTHING** less than walking by faith and not by sight is **SIN!** Let that sink in!

Christians, at least in the USA and other countries and cultures where the Word of God is readily available, have no excuse for failing to please God with a daily faith walk. Faith comes by hearing God's word (Romans 10:17), and the Bible is there to read and study anytime we want. Not just is it available, but its available in dozens of different translations, paraphrases, study editions – whatever! Whatever your situation might be – don't worry! There are plenty of Bibles and study aids out there available to you. So to whine and complain to God when things go wrong is never going to wash with Him! This whole issue is about choices. And when I **CHOOSE** to allow doubt or fear or unbelief to control my thoughts, words and actions, I'm in sin before God. Plain and simple. Now of course we like to complicate things, but with God its very black and white. Living in faith is pleasing to Him (Hebrews 11:6), not living in faith is sin to Him. And of course you realize that sin – any kind – blocks God and prevents Him from moving in our lives the way He wants. So, take a step back from your life, analyze it in light of Romans 14:23, and if you're in sin, get out of sin! Make a once-and-for-all decision to believe God, no matter what! In doing so, you'll rid yourself of one of the most rampant sins out there within the

body of Christ, and position yourself to receive all that God has promised to give you!

03/17/09

Romans 10:17 THE ONE REASON FOR A LACK OF FAITH

According to this passage, whatever is not of faith is sin! So, if there's a lack of faith, can we isolate the source of the problem – and fix it in our lives? Absolutely! There's only one reason for a lack of faith in our hearts, and that is a lack of God's Word in our hearts! And why is there that lack of faith in our hearts? **BECAUSE WE HAVEN'T BEEN LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD ENOUGH.** Plain and simple. Its no secret where faith comes from, and where it can be found **DAILY**. Faith is God's creative force, and its found in His Word. Never forget that God's words are spiritual containers. They contain the faith of God, which is His creative power. God used faith to create our universe (Hebrews 11:3). He didn't create our universe out of nothing, and many who don't know what they're talking about would try to tell you. No, He used something to create – and that something was His faith. He released it when He **SPOKE WORDS**, and we're created to release it the same way too. When God speaks, its His word releasing His faith to get something done. When you speak God's word, that same faith is released on your behalf to get something done too.

So because faith comes by hearing God's word, we need to **PRIORITIZE** our time in such a way whereby we're feeding our spirits with faith consistently – listening to it every day. Its not going to happen any other way. Faith doesn't come because we love God. It doesn't come because we go to church. It doesn't come because we're good, or because we give our tithes, or because of anything other than hearing God's word! Period. So if you're struggling to get to a place of pure faith in whatever situation you're facing today, understand what the source of the problem really is. If you're having a problem believing God, that simply means you've not spent enough time or effort to deposit God's word into your heart by listening to it. It means it hasn't become the priority yet in your life which it needs to become. But you can change that anytime! Only you can choose to turn things around – so get busy and turn them around! How badly do you want victory? Badly enough to re-arrange your daily schedule so you're feeding your spirit with God's word every day? Faith comes by **HEARING** it! Not just by reading it, but by hearing it. That means somebody has to be speaking it – either its you or someone else to you – either in person, on tape, in a meeting, or wherever! Words contain God's creative power called faith, but that power is released and put to work **ONLY** when those words are **SPOKEN!** And you won't be speaking them until you're first hearing them! Never forget that, because that's the way it works.

03/18/09

Galatians 6:10 * 3/18/2005 * **ARE YOU LOOKING FOR THE OPPORTUNITIES?** 3/18/2005 0:00

Every Christian is commanded to evangelize the world around them. You might not be called to become a full-time missionary and travel to some far-away country, but nevertheless, you **ARE** a missionary! Anyone not saved is missions as far as God is concerned, so that makes your "missions-field" your individual areas of influence. That would be your workplace. School if you're a student. The airport if you travel a lot in business. The supermarket when buying groceries. Jesus said that all Christians are to go into all the world and preach the Gospel (Mark 16:15-18). Are you doing that wherever you go each day?

To be faithful to God's command to evangelize, you must have your eyes open to the opportunities for evangelism all around you. Each day, you work, or study, or travel, or shop – alongside hundreds of people lost and on their way to hell. Many of them are not ready to hear the Good News, but many others are, and the Holy Spirit knows which ones are which. So, if you face each day with faith, believing that God will arrange encounters and meetings with those ready to hear the Word, He will do exactly what you

believe for! Our verse today says AS we have opportunity, not IF we have opportunity. Its never a question of finding people ready to listen to you. Rather, it's a question of recognizing those opportunities when they present themselves to you. So as you get ready for the day ahead, always take time to pray, exercise your faith, and believe you'll have "eyes to see" when God orchestrates evangelistic opportunities for you. That's when life becomes exciting, and fulfilling – the way God intended for it to be.

03/19/09

1 Chronicles 28:10 GOD'S ANSWER TO OUR EXCUSES

This is one of my favorite verses in the Bible. I love it because it clearly lays out God's expectations for my life, and leaves me no room for the flesh! God has ordained each of us to be a co-worker with Him in building the Kingdom of God on earth (2 Corinthians 6:1). This is also called the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-18). Our life on earth is not all about God, and its not all about you. Its about US! God and men working together, through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Men choosing to work with God, be a co-worker alongside God, giving Him glory through active, anointed, obedient evangelism. So whatever God has told you to do in the Name of Jesus, He expects you to be strong and do it! No excuses for failure – ever. By giving us the Bible, the Holy Spirit, the Name of Jesus, and much more, He has made the way for each of us to get strong, and stay strong. Why? To build His kingdom and fulfill the Great Commission. This is your duty, and mine – each day!

God has no tolerance for spiritual weakness when it comes to His assignments and expectations for us. He's patient, forgiving, merciful and much more, but nonetheless, He has COMMANDED US to get strong, and COMMANDED US to stay that way! Read the first chapter of Joshua, and note how many times God tells Joshua to be strong and courageous. Then in verse 9, He specifically reminds Joshua that he is being commanded to be strong and courageous. This is not a suggestion, or wishful thinking on God's part. He commands that we be strong – and from that position of spiritual strength, do what He assigns for us to do. Period. Don't come crying to God with some sad story of defeat, compromise or failure. He will have none of it honey! Instead, He's going to let you know, once again, that defeat is not an option! Failure is not acceptable. Half-baked victories are an insult to Him. So encourage yourself in the Lord today! Change your mindset, and no longer tolerate anything less than total victory – in every area of life and ministry! No matter what God is telling you to do, be STRONG and DO IT!"

03/20/09

Joshua 1:9 A COMMAND FEW CHRISTIANS KEEP

When Moses died, God appointed Joshua to lead Israel in his place. In Joshua chapter 1, God gives His marching orders to Joshua, and tells him what is expected of him. Note that in this chapter, 4 times God specifically talks about strength and courage. In verses 6,7, 9 and 18. And when looking at verse 9, pay special attention to the fact that God is COMMANDING Joshua to be strong. When God says "Have I not commanded you?" It's a rhetorical question – meaning Joshua already knows the answer. And the question is not referring to Joshua's assignment to go in to possess the land. No my friend! It's a question referring to the need for Joshua to be strong so that he CAN go in to possess the land. The same is true for you and I today. All Christians are commanded to be strong – just like Joshua. Why? Because we face the same enemy he faced – Satan. The devil is very strong, focused, prioritized, organized, and committed against us. We must be more so against him – plain and simple.

When you ask Christians to quote the commandments they're required to keep, very few would know to include this command here in Joshua 1:9. Yet, if we don't fulfill this command, we'll never be able to fulfill the other commands found in the Bible. Why? Because everything we do has to be done from a position of spiritual strength. That's just the way it is. God's mercy, grace, favor, forgiveness and

much more is always available of course, but bottom line – we must be strong in spirit to carry out our assignments, and successfully ward off the attacks of the enemy. The stronger we are, the better able we are to do that. Here’s something to never forget: God loves ALL His children equally, but He can only use, work through, and anoint the strong ones! This is why He says the ONLY congregation He is intimate with is the congregation of the MIGHTY (Psalms 82:1). Are you a member of this congregation? If not, why not? And if so, what are you doing to stay a member in good standing? God is commanding you today – be strong! Get there – stay there!

03/21/09

Hebrews 12:2 WHO ARE YOU LOOKING AT?

The Bible tells us to look at Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. What does that mean? It means He should be our standard in every area of human expression or relationship. Want to know how to react to praise? See how Jesus reacted to praise, and do the same. Want to know how to respond to criticism? See how Jesus responded to His critics, and do the same. He is the only Man who lived His life from start to finish without sin – ever! So, find out how He lived, and follow His example. In what you say, what you think, and in how you act. A few years ago, a phrase became popular in Christian circles. It was the phrase “WWJD”. It means What Would Jesus Do? Although the phrase was over-marketed to the point it became old news, the truth behind the phrase is powerful. No matter what you face, or where you face it, always ask – “What would Jesus do?” and you’ll know the right thing to say and do.

In 2 Corinthians 10:12, the Bible tells us that when we “measure” ourselves by ourselves, we’re not wise. Well then, what would be wise? To measure yourself by Jesus! That’s wise! Listen, if you keep comparing yourself to the standards others set for you, you’re never going to find peace. People’s opinions about what you should live like, dress like, talk like, eat like – are fickle and always changing. But in Jesus, you find a measuring stick that is true, accurate and unchanging. Once you establish the Lord as the reference point for growth and maturity in your life, you’ll once and for all be free from the opinions of your peers. After all, if Jesus is pleased with your life, who cares what anyone else thinks about it? We’re going to stand someday before the Lord’s judgment seat, and no one else’s. So, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, and live to be just like Him.

03/22/09

Psalms 78:41 ARE YOU LIMITING GOD?

In this verse, we see that the Jews had limited God, and today, many Christians are doing the same thing as well. Are you? Check up on your thought processes, and you’ll find out, because one way believers limit God is with their “small” mentality. By that I mean they think in limited terms, rather than in unlimited terms. Ephesians 3:20 says God can do exceedingly and abundantly above whatever we can ask for, think or even imagine! That’s pretty awesome when you stop to think about it. Not only can God do far above what you ask Him for, but He can do far above even what you don’t ask Him for! How big is your imagination? Mine is pretty big, but even so, God says He can do so much more than what I can even dream about! But, do you REALLY believe that, deep down in your heart? 1 Corinthians 2:16 says we have the “mind of Christ”. Do you understand what that means?

To have the mind of Christ is to have the ability to think like Jesus thinks. And that is important because your faith will never rise above the level of your thinking. Look at the ministry of Jesus in the four Gospels, and take note of what He was able to do. Miracles, healings and the supernatural were common for Him. Why? Because He was the Son of God? Yes, but remember, SO ARE YOU! That’s what you have to understand. Jesus thought like God, therefore, nothing was impossible to Him or for

Him. And the same is true for you and me. If you don't think like God, you're going to limit His ability in your life. He wants you to expand your thinking so that you come to the place where you absolutely realize that there is NOTHING too hard for God (Genesis 18:14). When you finally believe that, you'll take the limits off of God in your life, and He will be free to manifest the miraculous whenever its needed. Jesus said the works He did we can and should be doing also (John 14:12). So let's get busy and move into the miraculous! All things are possible for those of us who choose to believe (Mark 9:23), and who dare to dream big!

03/23/09

Isaiah 64:7 **GOD IS WAITING ON YOU!**

For many believers, the development of a vital and consistent prayer life is one of the toughest things to do. You may be one of those that I'm talking about. Yet, when you begin to really study what the Bible says about prayer, you come to the realization that prayer is, without doubt, the greatest exercise of authority and dominion on earth. If more Christians understood that, there would be many more prayers being offered up to God daily. But why is it so hard for so many? The answer is in two words: **THE FLESH!** Your flesh is not your friend. It is a deadly enemy that must be controlled and subdued daily. It **NEVER** wants to pray – ever! That's why the Bible tells us to **STIR OURSELVES UP** to pray! For most believers, developing a consistent prayer life will demand intense struggles of discipline. Are you willing to stir yourself up to pray?

Here is a Bible truth you must never forget. God does **NOTHING** apart from prayer. Why? Because according to Genesis 1:26,27, mankind was given dominion on the earth when Adam and Eve were created. God owns the earth, but man is supposed to manage it, and subdue it. That's why prayer is so important. God is waiting on us to pray – and once we pray He moves in response to those prayers. Even when it appears as if God got involved apart from our prayers, rest assured somebody somewhere prayed His manifestation into being on your behalf. So remember - your flesh never wants to cooperate – that's why you must **MAKE YOURSELF** pray! Have you ever noticed that when you decide to pray, suddenly your mind is bombarded with all sorts of unimportant things you need to do right now! What's happening? That's your flesh trying to resist your decision to pray! Decide to spend an hour in prayer each day, and watch what your flesh does. Suddenly you have this strong urge to edge the lawn, or re-shingle the roof, or wash and wax the car, things like that. Understand what's happening when these thoughts come to you. Its your flesh, and you must **RESIST IT**, and **FORCE IT** to obey! Prayer is joining forces with God. When we pray, we do what we can do, and God responds by doing what we can't do! But we have the dominion, so we must make the first move! So don't procrastinate any longer. Find time to pray – every day, and stir yourself up to do it. **NOTHING** is more important!

03/24/09

Isaiah 65:24 **GOD IS ALWAYS AVAILABLE!**

Before you ask, God has already answered! What a revealing statement, and one which so few of us really understand. Here is a truth about prayer you must never forget: **GOD IS MORE EAGER TO ANSWER THAN WE ARE TO ASK!** Oh that the body of Christ would learn this! Its incredible to think that God, the Creator of the universe, who upholds all things by the Word of His power (Hebrews 1:3), longs to answer our prayers, and longs for us to come talk things over with Him! That to me is one of the most awesome aspects of God's behavior towards mankind. When you look at God and His creation as a whole, you begin to see how insignificant each of us becomes, but that's not how God looks at it! He **WANTS** to talk to you! He **WANTS** to answer your prayers. He **WANTS** to be spiritually intimate with you. And yet look at most of us in the body of Christ. Most of us have such anemic prayer lives, and then

wonder why God seems to be a thousand miles away. But right now, as you read this, your Heavenly Father is up in Heaven, anxiously waiting for YOU to decide to come spend time with Him! Imagine that!

With all the billions of people on earth right now, God is still waiting on you! He longs for you to spend time with Him. And when you come to Him with prayers of faith, He is so happy and pleased. Not just because He can give what you need, but because you choose to set time aside for Him! How precious this truth is to me, and I hope it will be to you as well. To think that at any time you can come to God, and He is NEVER too busy for you! He's ALWAYS available, and takes great delight in communing with you in prayer! You never have to take a number and wait with God. When you come to Him, He's right there, waiting and eager to discuss, impart, reveal, anoint, answer, explain, correct, instruct – or whatever else might be called for. So be encouraged to pray – often! Understand how much pleasure it gives God when you decide to bless Him with your prayers. If you want to bless Him, come to Him and be intimate with Him. Nothing gives Him more joy than that!

03/25/09

1 Corinthians 16:15 ARE YOU ADDICTED?

If you read this verse from most modern translations, it will say that the household of Stephanas was “devoted” to ministry to the saints of God. However, the original King James Version used a different word. Instead of “devoted”, they chose to use the word “addicted”! I like that because of what the word implies about the work we're called to complete in Jesus' Name. When you think of an addict, what do you think of? For most, when we think of an addict we think of someone totally enslaved to his or her addiction – whether it be drugs, alcohol or whatever. To be addicted means you can't live without your habit. It drives you, compels you, makes you do what you might not want to do, and changes you into somebody else when you're under that influence – why? Because you're ADDICTED! People who don't get their habit serviced become DESPERATE for what they're addicted to. They can't live without it, and think they're going to die if they don't get more of what they've become addicted to.

Now take that same thought, and apply it to your ministry work as a Christian. Not just to the saints, but to all men – saints and sinners alike. Are you addicted to the cause of Christ? Is it something that so controls you, you can't live unless you're doing it? Is it within you a driving, compelling force that spurs you on day after day, no matter what? It should be! And if it isn't, why isn't it? Every Christian should be absolutely and totally ADDICTED to ministry – to reaching out and sharing Jesus wherever and whenever the Spirit leads. It should be our life force, the activity that keep us sane and sober day by day. And if ever we fail to reach out, and be totally available to the Holy Spirit, we should be acting just like the junkie who can't get his “fix”! Have you ever seen someone going through withdrawals from substance addiction? Its not pretty! They shake, they sweat, they vomit, they writhe on the ground, they cry, they can't eat, can't sleep, can't do anything normal! Why? Because they've been addicted, and now can't get what they're addicted to. Now, when was the last time you were so addicted to ministry, that any extended absence from outreach activities produced similar responses from your spirit man inside? If you can't get yourself involved in regular ministry outreach, does your spirit man go into withdrawals on the inside until your “addiction” is once again satisfied? That's the way it should be – and the way it must be if we're to make any significant difference in our areas of assignment for the Lord. How addicted are you? How devoted are you? Are you to a place in your life where ministry is so much a part of you, that you couldn't live without it? If it isn't, you've got some repenting and adjusting to do before the Lord!

03/26/09

Philippians 3:10 WHAT ARE THE DESIRES OF YOUR HEART?

In this verse, Paul reveals the four basic desires of his heart. They are: 1) To know God. 2) To know the power of our Lord's resurrection. 3) To know the fellowship of our Lord's sufferings. 4) To be conformed to the death of our Lord. Wow! What a list! No wonder this man was so mightily used and heavily anointed from God. Ask any Christian anywhere about the desires of their heart, and see how many would answer anywhere close to the list Paul shares here. So many of us look at a passage like Psalms 37:4, which says that if we delight ourselves in the Lord, He will give to us the desires of our hearts – and then use it to ask and believe for the things we want in this life.

Yet, to understand that verse properly, you must understand that this is a conditional promise, reserved only for those who make it their business to find out what God's desires are for us first. You see friend, God promises to give to us the desires of our heart only if those desires line up with His desires for us. That's the key. You should always be asking yourself this question: "Are the things I'm desiring from God things He desires for me?" If the answer is yes, then you have every scriptural right to expect those desires to come to pass. If the answer is no or maybe, you need to take time to talk to God in your prayer closet, and find out why. Paul's desires were all about outreach and ministry. Everything he wanted was only to make him a better Christian, and a better soulwinner. It should be same for you and I today. In the next few days, we'll look at each of those four desires, and see what they mean for us today. But for now, step back from yourself, and do a mental check on what you've been asking for from the Lord. Are your desires in line with God's desires for you? Do you even know what His desires are for you? Many Christians don't even know that much, so how could they expect answers from God? As long as you desire what God desires, He will move heaven and earth to accommodate you. However, if your desires are unscriptural or even selfish, don't expect the hand of God to be involved in your life to any significant degree – that is of course until you make the adjustments, and bring your desires into line with God's Word, and His perfect will for your life. So it's time to do your maintenance check – analyzing your list of desires which you've put before the Lord. Do any of your desires match the desires on Paul's list? If not, why not?

03/27/09

Philippians 3:10 WHAT IS YOUR FIRST DESIRE IN LIFE?

How badly do you want to know God? This was Paul's number one desire – he wanted to know His God. His number one desire to know God intimately – more today than yesterday, but not as much as tomorrow. How about you? Do your list of desires from God start here? They should. Knowing God is what everything else revolves around in this life. The more you know Him, the more mature you become, the more anointed you become, and the more effective you become in ministry. People who know God think and act and live differently than those of us in Christ who don't know their Heavenly Father. Of course, you wouldn't expect sinners to know much about God, but truth be told – most Christians don't know much about God either. How can you tell? Just look and listen, and you'll know! And what about you? Do you think you really know your Heavenly Father? How much time do you devote to just spending time with Him, fellowshiping with Him and listening to Him talk with you?

It's just like any relationship. The more time you spend with someone, the more you're going to know them. Husbands and wives that have spent years living together can usually predict how their mate will respond to situations and circumstances – before those situations or circumstances are ever faced. Why? Because they know them. And how did they get to the place where they know their spouse so well? By living with them day after day, year after year. All that time spent together has brought them to a place where they know their spouse so well they can accurately predict their behavior. Do you know God that well? There's no excuse for you not to know Him that well, because He's always available to talk, and always available to instruct, correct, encourage, inspire, exhort or whatever else we may need at

the moment. He's never too busy for us, so if we don't know Him its totally our fault – we just haven't made it our top desire in life. Other things have ascended to the place in our life that should only be reserved for God. If that's you today, you need to make changes. On my desk in my office I have a plaque that reads: **THE TOP PRIORITY IS TO KEEP THE TOP PRIORITY THE TOP PRIORITY.** I love that statement! Getting to know God must be top priority in your life, and nothing should ever become more important. Make this the first and most important desire of your life, and nothing but good will come of it.

03/28/09

Philippians 3:10 **WHAT IS YOUR SECOND DESIRE IN LIFE?**

Paul's number two desire in life was to know the power of our Lord's resurrection. What does that mean? Its means to walk with His power as our constant, confirming witness to the things we say about Jesus. The Bible says that after His resurrection, Jesus was declared to be the Son of God **WITH POWER** (Romans 1:4). That means that not only does He possess all the powers He freely laid aside when He came to earth (see Philippians 2:5-11), but it also means He's got all the power and authority He operated with while on earth. And through the church (that's you and I and all Christians) its our Lord's desire to manifest His power to confirm the truth about the gospel – like He did when He was here in person. In Mark 16:18-20, we see the disciples going forth, the Lord working with them by confirming what they said with signs, wonders and miracles. But here's the thing: none of this will manifest in your life until you make it a daily desire which you pray over, stand in faith for, and expect whenever you witness in the Name of Jesus.

This is what God wants us to become – living representatives who accurately mirror the power of our Lord Jesus Christ. Always remember: one miracle is worth 10,000 sermons! Paul said the gospel of God was the power of God to all who believe (Romans 1:16). He also said the Kingdom of God was not in word, but power! (1 Corinthians 4:20). In other words, our witness is not complete until there's power from Heaven to confirm the things we say about Jesus! Think about that for a moment! Look around at most churches, most preachers, and most ministries. Where's the power? Where's the confirming witness? Most of them don't even believe God's power is available to them, so how effective do you think they'll be when they try to tell sinners about Jesus? Oh Christian! God wants to use **YOU** to channel His power to those who need it, but **YOU HAVE TO WANT IT!** It has to be a desire that consumes you every day. Is it in your life? One of the things I love about our summer missions tours in the Philippians is to watch how God uses those who come from the States to participate. When they first arrive, most are tentative, maybe a bit awed or even nervous. But after preaching and praying for the sick twice a day for seven days, you see such a transformation in their hearts! What's the change? Its seeing them coming to the realization that God will actually use **THEM** to produce miracles that confirm the messages they're sharing to the lost. Yes that's right! God has power He wants to channel through **YOU** to confirm the Word. But, do you desire it? It won't happen until it becomes a consuming fire within you.

03/29/09

Philippians 3:10 **WHAT IS YOUR THIRD DESIRE IN LIFE?**

This one is the desire that separates the "men from the boys". Paul had a desire to fellowship with the sufferings of His Lord. Do you? Before you answer "yes", understand what you're asking for from God. 2 Timothy 3:12 says that everyone who wants to live Godly in Christ will suffer persecution. Not maybe, but definitely. What are the sufferings of Christ anyway? They are the persecutions suffered by righteous men preaching a righteous message to unrighteous people in an unrighteous world. 1 Peter 4:12

says we should never consider it strange when fiery trials come against us for our faith. The next verse (vs.13) says we should be PARTAKERS OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS. Does that mean we have to be crucified like He was? No, of course not! It means that we should have a desire to be so like our Lord, the same level of persecution that came against Him should be coming against us. YOU HAVE TO WANT THIS if you expect to grow, and be "meet" for the Master's use.

Some Christians understand that they'll suffer persecution for their faith, but deep down inside, they really don't want it. They avoid it whenever possible because its not something they're very comfortable with. However, with Paul it was different, and it must be different for us too. He didn't just ENDURE or PUT UP WITH persecution. He actually DESIRED IT! Wow! What a difference this is to the attitude expressed by most of us in the body of Christ. How about you? Have you ever had the "guts" to come before God in prayer, and express your heartfelt desire to experience the same persecution that Jesus faced? Read the book of First Peter, and when you do, take special note of 1 Peter 4:12-19. God tells us that when persecuted like Jesus, we're BLESSED and should be REJOICING because God is GLORIFIED in our persecutions! 1 Peter 2:20 says it all. When you suffer persecution for doing good on our Lord's behalf, this is COMMENDABLE with God. That means its ok with Him if you suffer persecution in the Name of Jesus. Paul understood this, and made this one of his four chief desires in life. Have you?

03/30/09

Philippians 3:10

WHAT IS YOUR FOURTH DESIRE IN LIFE?

The last desire that Paul expressed was His desire to be conformed to the death of Jesus. That means he wanted to be as dead to this world as Jesus was. In John 14:30, Jesus said the prince of this world (Satan) was coming against Him, but had nothing in Him. That should be what you're able to say as well. Is it your desire - to come to such a place in life that the world's attractions have absolutely no allure for you. To come to the place in life where the devil knows there's nothing he has in this world which can successfully tempt you? You don't need them, don't want them, and are not seeking after them. Oh how powerful we would become if everyone in the body of Christ had that kind of mindset! Colossians 3:1-5 tells us to set our affections on things above, not on things of this earth. Paul told the Corinthians that he died DAILY (1 Corinthians 15:31). What does that mean? It means he had successfully learned how to separate himself from the world. He was in the world, but not of the world, which is what Jesus wants for all of us (John 17:14-18). Are you there yet? Are you even on the journey? You won't get there unless you want to get there!

What does it mean to die daily? It means becoming less affected, and less influenced by the world as each day goes by. Is this one of your prime desires in life? Most believers are so bound up with the cares of this life, they're in essence useless to God. Do they want more of God? Hardly! What they want is as much of the world's comforts and possessions as they can possibly get their hands on. They just go to church, and after that, blend in so well with unbelievers, no one who they are, who they serve, or what they stand for. As for me in my life, I declare better things than that! Is this what you desire for your life as well? I want to be conformed to the death of my Lord - so absolutely set apart there is NOTHING the devil has to work with in my life, and NOTHING out in the world that he can use to tempt me towards lethargy, laziness and apathy. My face is set like flint towards the things of God, and I encourage you to make that your aim today - and forever. No one can do this for you - you must want it above all else, and make it one of your basic, foundational desires that drive you towards maturity in Christ.

03/31/09

1 Timothy 6:10

BE ON GUARD!

The New Testament picture of the believer is one who is alert, awake, focused, and standing along the watchtowers of his life, scanning for enemy – ever vigilant against his subtle attacks and temptations. That was Paul’s message to Timothy, his young son in the faith. BE ON GUARD! Stay alert – and never get caught sleeping at your post! Read Romans 13:11-14. Mark 13:35-37 is another passage to meditate on regularly. Stay awake, and don’t allow the cares of this world, and the lusts of other things to choke God’s word within you, and effectively neutralize you in the great fight of faith. Of all men, we Christians must be as committed, as single-minded and as passionate for the things of God as possible. Are you?

I’m reminded of a book in my library entitled THE VIRTUES OF WAR by Steven Pressfield. Its published by Doubleday. I recommend it to you if you like to read historical fiction. It’s a book about one of the greatest military commanders of all time – Alexander the Great. Contrary to what recent movies may portray about the man, he was above all else a man who excelled at warfare - a man who understood the virtues that make war what war is. And the first virtue of war, as illustrated in this book, is the WILL TO FIGHT. Without a willingness to fight, our demise will be a foregone conclusion. Without an awareness that our enemy is out there, plotting, planning and working to launch his attacks against us. The devil is very good at what he does – to the tune that most of humanity is going to hell – and they don’t think they’re going there! Deception is his primary weapon – because he knows that we can identify him we have taken the first step towards defeating him when he comes against us. So stay alert, and keep your spiritual eyes open. The devil doesn’t always come knocking on your door wearing a red suit and pitchfork. He knows that if he can get in and go to work without your awareness of his presence, he’ll have that much more time in which to work. So be on guard! Guard what has been committed to your trust – eternal life – the gospel – the Great Commission.