

Inspiration from

Word for the week

**Written for the International Christian Chamber of
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Although written for an audience of people at work, the inspiration contained herein is applicable to all areas of the spirit filled Christian life.

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Please note God's 'dream' is for a people who will live by faith - that applies to everyone. ICCC has a particular calling to people at work – at the time it was called into being there was very little teaching or inspiration in the work sector. So these messages can be applied to every walk of life and every part of life.

God has a dream

'Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.' Hebrews 11:6

For this very purpose ICCC has been formed – 'it is an aiding instrument for instruction and inspiration, to experience release into a new dimension in which corporate goals, strategies and plans become the outward manifestation of an inward walk of faith.' We are part of God's dream! And when we understand faith and live by faith, then the wind of God's Spirit puts wind in our sails – even in business there is great blessing, even miracles.

God's New Covenant dream started with Mary who, when Gabriel announced to her that she would be the mother of the Messiah, said when fully translated, 'No word of God is impossible.' Nothing that God says to you or to me is impossible, quite the opposite. When God speaks He reveals His plans for us so we can walk in the things He has prepared for us. (Ephesians 2:10)

Such is the fulfilment of God's dream - a people filled with His righteousness because they place their trust in Jesus, walking by and following the leading of the Spirit who now indwells us. Rather like following in the footsteps of Abraham whose faith was counted as righteousness and who got up and went where the Lord instructed him to go. Abraham was mightily blessed.

Even as the Spirit hovered over the waters in the account of creation, so now He, the Spirit of God is our friend and counsellor - in us and with us, just as Jesus promised He would be, ready to lead us and to come to our aid. John 14:17.

This is God's dream - a people who choose to love Him, who choose to walk with His Spirit rather than following the ways of the world. A people He can bless with grace and mercy when we come to Him at a time of need. Hebrews 4:16. A people who will reign in life through the abundance of His grace. Romans 5:17 A people who will demonstrate to the principalities and powers His manifold wisdom - we are God's dream. Ask yourself, 'Do I love Jesus with all my heart? Am I walking by faith, - that is listening to Him and doing what He says? Or am I following the basic principles of the world and thus being cheated? Colossians 2:8

Why God is a risk taker.

'To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.' Ephesians 3:10

Think about it, the eternal purpose of God is being worked out through you and me – God is certainly taking a risk! But isn't that exactly what faith is all about - when I place my trust in another I am taking a risk. Surely it would be better to stick to the tried and tested ways of the world, the traditional ways of doing business, then I could feel on safe ground, even if it is only sand. (But see Colossians 2:13)

Only rock is safe ground everything else is just sand. When Jesus spoke the parable of the wise and foolish builders He made it clear that when the storms come the building built on sand gets washed away. Matthew 7:24-28.

In its initial foundation messages ICCC warns of coming storms. Are you ready? Are you building on rock? That is the truth of the New Covenant and the words God speaks to you.

Is trusting God a risk? Is following His voice a risk? It can certainly seem to be so! But God is always faithful – even when we are not. 2 Timothy 2:13.

In my own experience the more and more and I am in love with Jesus, the easier it is to walk with Him, to hear Him and to trust Him.

What, in the earlier days of my Christian walk appeared to be risky, is now much less risky. I know, when He calls me to get out of the boat as it were, to come across the water to Him, that His Spirit will walk with me, guide me and make supernatural provision for me, yet it still takes courage to step out.

This is what He wants – you and me stepping out, following Him and His direction and leading, being mightily blessed in the process. Why? Because that demonstrates His wisdom to the principalities and powers that have flagrantly disobeyed Him.

Are you a risk taker? Not relying on you own effort – this is called working from rest and is covered in the TWL course; stepping out when He calls and instructs even when His message seems contrary to your professional training; following the Spirit – consider Abraham, told to leave his country with no knowledge of where he was going, but his obedience eventually led to him becoming the father of many nations.

Are you getting to know the Saviour more and more intimately and ready to step out when He calls, to live by faith alone?

It's hard leaving Egypt

'Pharaoh commanded, let more work be laid on the men.'

Exodus 5:9

It's hard in Egypt, and it's hard leaving Egypt, we seem to be caught between the two – either way the going can get tough! The Israelites had actually prospered in Egypt and become a substantial people. Yes there were hardships in their work. After Moses first encounter with Pharaoh the hardship increased as the work load increased.

So let's define what we mean by 'Egypt.' We mean the 'normal' way the world works – 'normal' is difficult because one result of the fall of man was hard work. Genesis 3:17-19 'Egypt' is also infested with evil powers – the magicians could replicate some of the signs God did at the hand of Moses.

Are you comfortable following the ways of the world?
'Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, not according to Christ.'

Colossians 2:8.

Are you like the disciples, who when they returned to their 'Egypt,' fished all night and caught nothing? Jesus had a much better way, cast your net where I tell you and you will find a great catch!' It's not that they weren't expert, experienced fishermen!

We are well trained, professionally trained, and we should be excellent at what we do - that is right. Yet there is a level beyond training that yields abundant fruit – that is when we follow His leading.

That is when He tells us things we can't know by training or skill. That is when we follow a course of action because He instructs to do so. That is when we realise He is the vine and we are the branches – when we realise all the life giving, fruit producing power flows from the Vine whilst as branches we abide in Him. John 15:1-8

It is leaving the Egypt of the ways of the world by going beyond into a walk of faith with Jesus. *'Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the 'word' of God.'* Romans 10:17.

That is the same 'word' as Jesus used, *'Man shall not live by bread alone but by every 'word' that proceeds from the mouth of God.'* Matthew 4:4

Just as Jesus spoke a 'word' to the disciples, *'cast your net on the other side,'* so as we hear Him and obey Him so we will reap a full harvest. Leaving Egypt seems difficult because it is what we know and what we grew up in – it is difficult to step out of the comfort zone. Come on – step out.

I heard the Lord call my name

‘Peter I want you to give Me your life.’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ was my response. At 17 years old I didn’t realise what a good response that was! Now I know – to know the Lord is life itself

I was training to be an accountant and a bit ‘fearful’ that the Lord might send me to be a missionary – something I didn’t want! After qualification, and a few years in industry, things were going very wrong – it’s called living in the flesh, going your own way. Suddenly out on a limb, no job, family to feed, increasing debt, things were looking bleak. The Lord spoke again, ‘Peter do not worry about money, I will look after you.’ Wonderful.

Now coming back to Him. Lots of bible study – that was a new feature in my life! Back in the fold, as it were – a new job, and my own accountancy practice forming out of nothing. Time with FGBMFI followed by joining ICCC. My practice was doing well and I was experiencing the walk of faith for real – guidance from above, beyond professional training, supernatural events and people being saved around me – clients and staff.

Invited to join the ICCC teaching group we developed TWL together. We were tasked with the subject ‘Calling,’ among all the others. Bible study and my life experience confirmed two very important principles:

- 1) We are to stay in the calling we were in when we became Christians – because secular work is a totally valid calling in God – it is just as, if not more important than, some so called spiritual callings. This

principle is found in 1 Corinthians 7:20. (Except – cease illegal things like robbery etc)

- 2) Your calling in the Lord is your ‘anointed place’ - it’s the place where the Spirit of God will definitely work with you and for you. Ephesians 2:10 has it, *‘For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.’* It is the place where our life’s work can become the place where strategies and goals become an outward manifestation of the inward walk of faith. We might think some other work would be better – go my own way and miss His calling and His anointing? NO!

Many business people are tempted to go into ‘full time’ ministry in church – very frequently leading to failure and breakdown. It seems to be due to wrong thinking. Your calling to secular work, to business is totally valid and important – don’t be tempted to move out of your anointed place without clear and specific instruction from the Lord – and expect more with and from the Lord in

Spiritual diet

'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' Matthew 4:4

Hebrews 11 is sometimes referred to as the account of the 'heroes of the faith' or the 'hall of fame.' There is a common denominator - they all heard the Lord speak to them and obeyed Him. As a result the Lord was able to work mightily with them and through them.

We will benefit greatly when we understand what Jesus meant when He said *'man shall not live by bread alone.'*

In the verse '**bread**' is representing physical food - today particularly in the west we see people consuming far too much physical food leading to deteriorating health and problems for the medical profession.

Nevertheless we need physical food to sustain our physical bodies.

'**Every word**' is in the Greek 'rhema' which has the meaning 'little phrase or saying.' It does not mean the whole scripture - though the Lord may quicken a verse to us, thus using it as something He is specifically saying right now.

'**Proceeds**' from the mouth of God, is in the present tense meaning proceeding right now.

If we want to live life to the full our diet will be 'bread' for our physical bodies and 'every word' for our instruction in Christ. Like the heroes of faith the important thing is to take hold of what the Lord says and do it. The walk of faith in the marketplace is this - having complete trust in the Lord and doing what He tells us to do. Then, like the heroes of Hebrews 11 we will see wonderful results as we work together with the Lord.

So we can challenge ourselves:

Am I living on bread alone?

Do I trust the Lord completely or do I doubt?

Do I hear the Lord - which is the same as being led by the Spirit?

Do I do what the Lord tells me to do even if it goes beyond my professional training?

TWL teaching is designed to equip us for the walk of faith. The booklets and sessions 'Faith or presumption' and 'Hearing God Speak' are particularly relevant and highly recommended.

Confidence

'Do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward,'
Hebrews 10:35

Can we be confident in the Lord? Assuredly YES. He remains faithful even when we are unfaithful. 2

Timothy 2:13.

Can we be confident in our own prowess? Assuredly NOT. *'Rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.'* Philippians 3:3 (second part.)

Biblical hope is the certainty of future blessing. When we are fully on board with the Lord and fully in tune with the Lord WE KNOW He is entirely trustworthy and faithful – that is confidence and a blessed place to be! The result is hope - the certainty of future blessing. Result - we know to come boldly and quickly to the throne of grace in times of need and we obtain mercy and grace. Hebrews 4:16

Are you in that position of great confidence in your walk and position in the Lord? I wasn't until I came upon a spiritual necessity. Jesus taught it very clearly. The first commandment is to love the Lord with all your heart, soul and mind. I didn't know how to do that! So I asked the Holy Spirit to fill me with love for Jesus and more love for Jesus – and I still ask virtually daily for more and more love for Him. Result - I love the Lord very greatly which results in me having great confidence in Him and further results in me being bold to come to the throne of grace.

More results! Coming boldly to the throne of grace, receiving mercy and grace results in reigning in life – coming out on top of all those problems that seek to bring us down. Romans 5:17.

On two occasions the Lord has sent an angel to help me when there was no way humanly to solve my problem – praise the Lord, confidence has great reward – that reward is the manifestation of God's grace and mercy in practical ways in life and business.

Time for self-reflection:

Do you love the Lord with all your heart, soul and mind? Really?

Do you have great confidence in the Lord? Do you consider Him totally faithful?

Do you come to the throne of grace to find help in times of need? – The scripture instructs us to do that.

What do you think?

'I think I also have the Spirit of God' 1 Corinthians 7:40

In the Old Testament there is a statement that *'as a man thinks in his heart so he is.'* (Proverbs 23:7) What we think is therefore vitally important as it will impact our lives. Think negatively, think no good, think failure and what you think will come to pass.

Paul urges us to think on things noble, things pure, things lovely, things of good report, virtue and things praiseworthy. (Colossians 4:8) We could express Paul's advice as wisdom.

When I sought the Lord, 'what is wisdom?' His reply was, 'wisdom is what I think is right.'

So now we can understand why Paul claimed to have the Spirit of God. In my work, in your work, the Lord always knows what is right - that is the ultimate wisdom. When we just carry on in our own strength and in what we think is right we miss the mark.

You don't have because you don't ask! (James 4:2.)

Jesus promise is that the Spirit will lead us into all truth - that is not restricted to what is written for us in scripture - it includes all you need to know about your life and your business or job.

When we consult the Spirit and do as He leads us, always following also the golden rule - *'let the peace of God rule in your heart,'* (Colossians 3:15) then we will find ourselves operating in a new dimension of faith - to the point that things which are impossible with man are possible with the Lord.

The caveat is that we have committed our way to walk in what He has prepared and not fallen into the enemy's snares when he makes us think the grass is greener somewhere else.

With regret we see many businessmen leave their calling for something they consider more spiritual - and fail badly because success is found in the place God has anointed and appointed for you.

So, how is your thinking - are you in control of what you think? Or does your mind exercise control over you?

Take Prisoners

'Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.' 2 Corinthians 10:5

What went wrong for Jonah? He didn't bring every thought into captivity to obedience. Indeed he ran away in the opposite direction! The grace and kindness of God gave him a second chance, which he reluctantly followed. Still he grumbled. What do we learn? The Lord has good works for us to walk in (Ephesians 2:10). When we don't line up our thoughts with His thoughts things are likely to go wrong.

What went wrong for Joshua? Great, outstanding victory at Jericho by following exactly the Lord's direction. Then comes humiliating defeat at Ai. What went wrong? Well the children of Israel saw Ai as a small problem - just send a small contingent for the attack. Result defeat. What they did not know was that there was sin in the camp which meant they could not stand against their enemies. They did not know because they failed to consult the Lord before the attack - they were relying on their own strength.

What do we learn? If your business life is based on your own strength it is likely to fail.

If your business relies on sinful methods it is likely to fail. The Lord blesses righteousness and gives us instructions and anointing for the work we do in obedience to His calling.

The safe path - take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Don't allow your mind to control you - it will lead you astray - instead take authority over what you think.

Time to get real - the world is not our friend. *'Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.'* Romans 12:2 This is your reasonable service.

Every unrighteous thought should be refused a place in your mind. Every reliance on your own strength should be dismissed from your thinking.

?? How are you doing? Ask yourself - Do I allow wrong thoughts? Do I take captive every thought that is unholy, not of the Lord? Do I consult the Lord about opportunities offered to me?

Three Kingdoms

Whose Kingdom are you building?

His Kingdom - The coming Kingdom of Jesus Christ – manifesting now by faith with full manifestation when He returns. To work in this kingdom requires self-denial, we seek Him, His desires and strategies for us as described in Ephesians 2:10 – good works for us to walk in. His way not my way! For His glory not my advancement. His Kingdom is eternal.

My Kingdom - Setting my own agenda and goals instead of His agenda and goals. Looking for self-advancement rather than fruit of the Spirit. One of the richest people ever, Solomon, son of David, did exactly that. He was seduced by things of this world and eventually concluded – ‘Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.’ (Ecclesiastes 12:8) The things of this world are temporary.

The Kingdom of the Prince of this world - Jesus spoke of satan with this description - he is the prince of this world. This kingdom features all sorts of evil, bribery, manipulation, dishonesty, trickery and the like. We dabble in this world at great risk both to ourselves and to others. In some places it might seem that bribery is the normal way of business, but we cannot engage in it. When we stand for righteousness the grace and mercy of God will come to our aid. When in Uganda teaching TWL I heard great business testimonies testifying to this truth - when we refuse to use bribery God delivers us in other ways by His grace and mercy. Our big danger is in being double minded in any way. It is easy to doubt that placing total trust in the Lord in life and business will bring blessing when the world screams at us with it's ‘benefits’ and methods. So it is easy to become double minded, using the world's methods instead of trusting - James makes it clear that a doubting and double minded man should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

Following our calling in the Lord is the place where His anointing will manifest, bringing blessing and results in our lives and businesses – such as Gunnar shares in his book ‘Business Unlimited.’

So - the big question we must all answer – which kingdom am I working in, which kingdom am I building? Is my life evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit?

He will rejoice over you (Zephaniah 3:17)

In biblical context this is a statement about the Lord rejoicing over Israel after the great 'Day of the Lord.' Meanwhile, before that time, we have a better covenant - so we can be sure the Lord is rejoicing over us, in our callings, right now.

Yes - even in work and business, even in no job, as a housewife, as a retiree, in every walk of life as we seek to walk by faith He is rejoicing over us. Why? Because His great plan for believers is that they demonstrate His manifold wisdom to principalities and powers. (See Ephesians 3:8-12 where Paul describes this as 'God's eternal purpose.') This is exactly the calling of ICCC, and of every believer - that we become a people whose working lives demonstrate the outward manifestation of an inward walk of faith.

So how are we doing, how are you doing? Is His leading evident in your working life? Is His power evident in your working life? Or are you low on expectation and hope?

Hope is the certainty of future blessing - that certainty comes from two main things -

- a) A good, well grounded understanding of God's character through scripture - the TWL course is a great place to get work related truth. Have you studied it right through?
- b) A close relationship with the Lord through time spent with Him. We can ask the Spirit for more.

Trust and hope go hand in hand. When we understand that He is for us and not against us (Romans 8:31-39) and that He will bring good out of every situation for us (Romans 8:28) then we have hope –the certainty of His blessing, and we learn to trust Him who is faithful even when we are not. (2 Timothy 2:13) What a wonderful Saviour!

Who, then would want to go his or her own way when God, Himself has prepared good works for us to walk in (Ephesians 2:10). That surely is the place where His anointing and His presence will manifest for us and with us.

Jesus put it like this, *'I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, bears much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing.'* John 15:5

In verse 7 Jesus linked fruitfulness to hearing God speak and retaining His word – 'if My word abides in you' Word here is rhema – that which God is speaking to you and to me. Listening?

Into the spiders web

Flies are amazing insects – they have capabilities which are quite stunning. But, it seems that for many of them the spider's web traps them and wins the day. Why? Well maybe the fly that is caught is just careless. Maybe it wasn't looking where it was going? Maybe it didn't see – perhaps blinded by the light or loss of focus. Maybe it was ignorant of the danger posed by a spider's web.

Why are so many people in business and in life caught out?

Have we lost sight of the fact that we have an enemy intent on capturing us by one of his wiles? Have you? (See Ephesians 6:11 and Revelation 12:17)

Are we reaping the result of going our own way instead of following our God ordained calling. Have you? (See Ephesians 2:10)

Do we lack the confidence that says 'God is for me who can stand against me?' Do you? And do we realise it is in and by grace that we stand? Do you? (See 1 Peter 5:12)

Have we lost sight of taking authority over the works of the enemy? Best to do this at the beginning of each day - 'Satan, I take authority over all your works and forbid you from attacking me, my family and my business, in Jesus name. And Father I ask you for your leading and guidance in every aspect of what I do today, in Jesus name.'

Have we lost sight of the 'golden rule' of guidance -
'*Let the peace of God rule in your heart.*' (Colossians 3: 15)
Have you? No peace no do - that deal or opportunity
might appear to be very good, but that is how the insect
eating plants catch their prey, by appearing desirable.
Repeat No peace no deal.

Jesus has provided us with the perfect solution - the
Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth. All truth includes
all truth - so that includes every aspect of life and
business. Perhaps we don't ask, thinking we can do
everything in our own strength.

The call of the New Covenant is to walk by the Spirit -
that means we have a working relationship with the
Spirit of God - we can call that intimacy. How is your
relationship with Him?

NB Spiders reside even in King's palaces! Proverbs
30:28

Two sources of wisdom

First we must define wisdom: When I sought the Lord for a definition He said to me, 'Wisdom is what I think is right.' The Lord is therefore the source of all real wisdom.

So how do we get this wonderful wisdom?

'All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.' 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (Every good work includes business and secular roles)

When we read scripture we come face to face with two covenants - called the Old and the New. We find the New described as the 'much better' covenant and the Old annulled, set aside (Hebrews 8:6 and 7:18). So we diligently study the terms of this New covenant. Don't we? Our bible study equips us with a great understanding of God's character and the nature of holiness - true wisdom for us to set our lives by.

We also read that no one is justified by trying to keep the law - that is to try to be justified by the flesh, our own effort. Rather justification is by faith alone. (Galatians 3:11 and 24)

This leads us to our second source of wisdom that is faith. Our bible study will have told us that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17) Jesus tells us that we are not expected to live on bread alone but by the things God is speaking to us now. (Matthew 4:4)

This is wisdom for action - words we can receive and act upon and see all the power of heaven deliver the result. As Mary said (when fully translated) '*no word of God is impossible for Him.*' (Luke 1:37 - the word 'rhema' is in the Greek text but often not translated.)

When God says it and we receive it (See John 15:7 - the word received from the Lord is to abide in us) then we see His hand at work.

So two questions arise 1) How is your bible study going, do you understand the terms of the New Covenant? 2) Are you receiving words from the Lord and having them abide in you - or do you dismiss them?

Stick to it

It is easy to become unsure even disillusioned in our calling as people of business and secular occupations. Largely this is because almost everybody in churches and Christian organisations don't see our calling as being of any value or even from the Lord. It is easy to fall into the trap of agreeing with that heresy!

Our Lord wants His witness in every walk of life and scripture teaches that we should stay in the same calling as when we first believed – only changing by direct word from the Lord.

It becomes easy to assume that the Lord leaves us to our own devices because He is not interested or less interested in us than He is in those in 'spiritual' callings. Nothing could be further from the truth! In my own business life as a practicing accountant I have seen the Lord's blessing in both general and specific ways – to the extent of receiving specific instructions resulting in the Lord's hand moving in supernatural ways.

However, we must not forget that we have an enemy who wants to frustrate us as much as he can – so that we become unsure and disillusioned.

Jesus gave us a parable teaching us to *'proseuchomai'* that is speak out loud and not to *'ekkakeo'* that is not to turn cowardly. The parable goes on to teach that we can and should demand our rights from the unjust judge (satan and his demons) at the same time as we call on the Lord for deliverance. The unjust judge refuses at first but as we persevere he gives in because our demands *'hupopiazō'* him – beat him black and blue. The moral of this parable is 'stick to it' – the victory has been won and by perseverance we can enforce it.
(Luke 18: 1-8)

When I was warned by the Spirit that satan was going to try to rob me of part of my business I responded by taking the authority we have over satan's works and demanded of him (out loud of course) that he not rob me – in Jesus name. As events unfolded it was clear that robbery was intended but now had no power and I was not robbed.

Let's be sensitive to the Spirit and act boldly as led by Him, thus demonstrating to principalities and powers God's manifold wisdom – this is His eternal purpose.
(Ephesians 3:8-13)

This is Christmas

Peace on earth, goodwill towards men ... batteries not included.

A joke coined by the comedian Bernard Manning – but also a serious message!

Peace on earth – yes we look forward to when Jesus returns to reign in person from Jerusalem. Meanwhile, we who believe and have placed our trust in Jesus completed work have peace with God. Romans 5:1 We are urged to let that peace rule in our hearts Colossians 3:15. We are also urged to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:3. Are you at peace with God this Christmas?

Goodwill towards men – yes absolutely. Jesus came so that man could be saved. The Lord God doesn't want any to be lost. This is goodwill. As believers we are grafted into the root of God's blessing and goodwill – described in Romans 11 as '*the fatness of the olive tree.*' In this goodwill we are invited, yes invited, to come to the throne of grace to find help in times of need. (Hebrews 4:16) Have you been to the throne of grace lately or do you struggle in your own strength?

Batteries not included. Praise God we don't need batteries! Instead we have indwelling power. '*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.*' Acts 1:8

Been baptised in or filled with the Holy Spirit? Still experiencing His presence and power? Perhaps Christmas is a good time to remind ourselves of the wonderful gift and to stir up the gift - *'Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you.'*

2 Timothy 1:6

Let us be stirred to a closer walk in the Spirit, to more love for Jesus, and more love for one another.

With every good wish for Christmas and every blessing for what looks like being a very interesting 2019.

Come aside

Jesus said to them, *'Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while. For there were many coming and going.'* Mark 6:31

Life is so very busy now that we can find it very difficult to take time aside – time when we can relax in His presence, time when we can worship, time when we can communicate in prayer and in listening.

There was a man who was deaf and who also had a speech impediment. Jesus was going to speak with him and to heal him. So He took him aside from the multitude. Matthew 7:33.

As we come to the beginning of a new year it is an excellent time to come aside with Jesus. Time to commit our way ahead, time to listen for His voice, time to rekindle our love for Him.

Time to remind ourselves of the wonderful principle of working from rest, instead of just carrying on regardless. We are urged to remember that 'life' is intended to be lived in the Spirit and not in our own flesh, ambitions and actions. This is pictured for us in Hebrews 4 where God's word, the logos, is described as being sharper than any two edged sword, able to distinguish between soul (our actions that come only from our own minds and bodies) and Spirit (our actions that come from His direction and guidance.) It's compared to distinguishing between joints and marrow. Joints look like action whilst the marrow produces the very source of life – blood is produced in the marrow.

What do we learn - is what you are doing all action coming from your own volition - just 'joints'? This would be worthless as the flesh produces no good thing. Or are you walking with the Spirit - that would be walking in unity, walking in love, walking in light and walking in wisdom as Paul instructs the Ephesians in chapters 4 and 5.

The definition of wisdom is 'what the Lord thinks is right' - so listening to His guidance is imperative. His guidance never contradicts the truth - so a love of the truth is also an imperative.

My own resolution for 2019 is found in my favourite and frequent prayers - 'Holy Spirit fill me with more and more love for Jesus.' 'Holy Spirit lead me into all truth just as Jesus promised You would.' What about you - what does 2019 hold for you?

Be very blessed in your walk with Him.

In the New Year

Bearing Gifts

In the account of the first Christmas we read of Maji (wise men) from the East bearing gifts to worship and acknowledge the new born King of the Jews. Jesus, King of the Jews, came with a message of hope for all who would believe and place their trust in Him.

He also came with instructions for His followers – Go into all the world. Go with the message of hope for mankind, go in the power of the Holy Spirit. Just like Me go with healing and deliverance.

Have you considered this, as an ambassador of Jesus Christ, you represent Him to all you come into contact with. In your business life, in your everyday life, at home at work, wherever you are – you represent Jesus to all you come into contact with.

Ask yourself - what do the people I deal with in business and in life think. Do they think they have had dealings with an ambassador of Jesus Christ or do they feel something different? In the world market places people often feel cheated in some way and often are.

We are different.

The bible calls it fruitfulness and describes fruit as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23) Is this what your customers, friends and colleagues receive from you?

Wise men came to seek out Jesus. Wise men still do. Wise men also recognise their calling in Christ - the calling to be a blessing, first to the Jew and then to everyone. Ask yourself - am I a wise man in my business and everyday life; and, very importantly, do I represent Jesus to my spouse?

Wise men are also generous. Wise men know that the way they give is the way the Lord will give to them - the same measure, yet more - pressed down, shaken together, blessing from the Lord. Generosity is one part of fruitfulness. Am I generous? Is a good question to ask yourself.

As we enter the New year you could reflect on these issues and in prayer seek to be more and more fruitful - both in business and in everyday life.

With my prayer and my hope that you will be greatly enhanced in your life and in your fruitfulness for 2019

I am the Lord God who teaches you to profit

'Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the holy one of Israel: I am the Lord your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you by the way you should go.'

Isaiah 48:17

This is the wonderful promise the Lord made to Israel as His chosen nation. Regretfully, the scripture goes on to say that Israel failed most of the time to appreciate God's promise, and to experience the richness of His blessing.

We have a much better covenant, for Jesus has, *'obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.'*

Hebrews 8:6

So this promise for Israel is magnified into a greater and better promise for you and me. How does it work? How will it manifest in my working life?

- 1) *Do the things God has prepared for you – 'For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10.*
- 2) *Don't eat just bread – 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word (God is saying right now) that proceeds from the mouth of God.'* Matthew 4:4
- 3) Realise that when you fulfil 1 and 2 above you are operating in an 'anointed' environment, and expect to see the Spirit at work with you.

This is the wisdom of the Lord for you and me - He has prepared the best way for us and He will guide us by His voice - He will teach us to profit and lead us the way we should go!

We are the most blessed people on earth - but we have an enemy who robs, kills and destroys. So often we ourselves and our brothers and sisters are robbed - just putting it down to natural causes instead of seeing the potential that our enemy is behind it, and learning to overcome his wiles.

As we enter into this New Year let it be a time when the blessings of God and His presence with us and in us is are greater than ever.

Be very blessed in your walk with Him.

Have you thought of this?

God's ways are entirely different. We start our day in the morning whereas He starts His day in the evening. Look at the account of creation - *'So the evening and the morning were the first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth day.'* Genesis 1:5,8,13,19,23 and 31

Israel followed suit with the day starting at 6pm – the beginning of evening.

Here is a vital message - the day starts with relaxation and rest before morning when we go about our endeavours and work.

Our Lord has designed things so that we learn to work from rest and not be reliant on our own strength and wisdom. Rather, as Paul says to the Romans, *'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.'* (8:14) And to the Corinthians, *'For we walk by faith, not by sight.'* (2nd letter 5:7)

The world we live in is not our friend, *'Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world and not according to Christ.'*

Colossians 2:8

Of course we have to work in the world and here is a key thought, *'We do our work as unto Jesus, our Lord.'* Our work is part of our witness to those around us, our work should speak of the Kingdom of God - no room for poor quality or performance.

How will our work have this quality – when it is accomplished in the Spirit. What does that mean? It means we are engaging in the plans God has prepared beforehand for us (Ephesians 2:10) and it means we undertake our role being led by the Spirit.

We commit our way to Him and we listen for His guidance.

This is working from rest – relying on His strength and wisdom in the jobs and roles we undertake. I have found, in my role as an accountant, that Jesus can and does, when asked, provide technical understanding beyond learning, provide guidance to answers to difficulties, provide clients, provide staff, provide opportunities to witness, indeed everything we need to know and do is ‘hidden’ in Him.

This does not mean that we don’t study, that we don’t do our best – it means that we have an anointing available to do much better in every situation. James said, *‘You do not receive because you do not ask.’* 4:2 and when you do ask it is only for your own benefit 4:3. We have the opportunity to walk with Him in everything we do and in doing that we demonstrate His Kingdom. Are you working from rest?

Be very blessed in your walk with Him.

Alert, alert

We are the most blessed people on earth – but we have an enemy who robs, kills and destroys. So often we ourselves, and our brothers and sisters are robbed – just putting it down to natural causes instead of seeing the potential that our enemy is behind it, and learning to overcome his wiles.

Jesus warned us, *'The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.'* John 10:10

Peter warned, *'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.'* 1 Peter 4:9

John warns, *'Beloved do not believe every spirit.'* 1 John 4:4
The antidote:

- 1) Develop sensitivity to God's voice. He can warn you of enemy activity, as He did for me on one occasion when the enemy plotted to rob me of some business. Forewarned I was able to take authority over his works and so his plot failed.
- 2) Learn the 'golden rule' of peace. *'Let the peace of God rule in your hearts'* Colossians 3:15 This is simple -if you find you lack peace over a proposed deal or action – then don't do it. One of my clients suffered bankruptcy by not following this 'rule.'
- 3) Be sure to be righteous in your dealings - giving no room for the enemy to stand.
- 4) Do the works God has prepared beforehand for you and expect to be blessed more abundantly.

Bear in mind the enemy is cunning (Genesis 3:1) - he prefers to work in the dark. He likes to create trouble in every and any way he can. So, having learnt the lessons, now I take authority over his works every day at the beginning of the day. Going to a meeting - again take authority over his works beforehand - forbid him from affecting the meeting or any person attending. You have the authority over his works because *'He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.'* 1 John 4:4
Are you using the authority you have over the works of the enemy?

Be very blessed in your walk with Him.

What's the rush?

Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He will strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord. Psalm 27:14
 We live in a time when things move along very quickly. As soon as I bought my computer or my phone it was out of date! We can easily be caught up in an ungodly rush – because that is the way and the spirit of the fallen world. Decide, decide you must make a decision!

Contrary to the way of the world our Lord calls us to a place of rest where we can be led by His Spirit in peace and in the joy of knowing Him whose name is above every name. A place where we can tap into His wisdom providing the answers we need, as a word from Him is so precious and valuable.

So this is the way – walk ye in it! Find that place of rest in Jesus as we are instructed in Hebrews 4. It is not afar off. Find that word from the Lord – the rhema – *'it is near you in your heart and in your mouth.'* (Romans 10:8)

We can train ourselves to take a quiet place and to listen for His word to us. It means calming the flesh which is often eager and pressing, urging us to ill-considered action. It means learning to recognise that still small voice that comes from the Holy Spirit within us. It means 'listening' with the innermost being and not just the mind.

Of course it requires a fundamental decision – the decision that we want above all things to be obedient followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The decision that the Lord has better plans for us than we could have for ourselves. The decision that the Lord knows my work and business better than I do – regardless of my professional training, He still knows more. I experienced this with a technical question regarding pension funds. The Lord gave a word concerning what action to take to achieve my client's aims– I discovered later that even the experts at one of the big 4 accountancy firms did not know how to do it! The Lord knows our business much better than we do, than experts do!

Ask yourself – am I in that place of rest, understanding how to wait on the Lord? Do I find the Lord strengthening my heart in life?

Restore, restore**Ever think or feel that you have completely blown it – the Lord won't hear me now?**

It is common to mankind that sometimes we fail. Think of David – King of Israel. He could not have got it more wrong than he did! Adultery with Bathsheba and then arrange for her husband to be killed. What went wrong? He followed the lusts of his flesh, which as James describes leads to sin. (James 1:14-15)

Think of the Apostle Peter. Jesus warned Peter that he would deny Him three times. Even though warned Peter still denied Jesus. What went wrong? Peter was challenged by his circumstances and he failed.

Think of Israel. Over generations Israel has a history of denying the Lord and following foreign Gods even though the Lord sent prophet after prophet to warn Israel.

Now think again. David restored to his place as King of Israel. Peter restored and becomes a very powerful minister of the gospel. Israel restored as a nation in 1948, although still in unbelief – yet with God's promise that in the future it will be the chief nation on earth.

God restores. He knows man inside out, He knows the struggles and the problems. He has put His Holy Spirit within us, and even when we are unfaithful He remains faithful because He cannot deny Himself. (2 Timothy 2:13)

So we can stand up, repent of our sins and failings and be cleansed from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

Hopefully having learnt from our mistakes!

This is part of the wonder of the gospel - the Holy Spirit is in the process of changing us from one degree of glory to the next. We are in the process of being changed more and more into the image of Christ. The road is strewn with obstacles and difficulties because we live in a fallen world - but be of good cheer, Jesus has overcome the world. (John 16:33)

Born again? - you have overcome the world. (See 1 John 5:4-5)

So take advantage of the cleansing power of the blood sacrifice of Jesus and be restored. Stand up and become a wiser believer. Stand up and do not give in to sin or to the prince of this world. You are a son of God, loved, and whenever necessary restored into full fellowship with Him.

We are on God's agenda

I know the thoughts (plans) that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.' God's word to Israel in Jeremiah 29. As God is always faithful His promises to Israel will be fulfilled.

The better covenant (Hebrews 7:19,22) is ours - it's built on better promises, specifically, 'Christ in you the hope of glory.' As God is faithful it will be completely fulfilled. In our covenant the good works we are expected to fulfil the Lord has prepared beforehand for us to walk in.' Ephesians 2:10.

We are on God's agenda to walk in that which He has prepared - to be obedient to His calling. Another way of saying it is like this - ICCC has been formed It is an aiding instrument for instruction and inspiration, to experience release into a new dimension in which corporate goals, strategies and plans become the outward manifestation of an inward walk of faith. ICCC sounds a call to fall in line with God's plan. It's all about obedience to His leading which comes in two ways. There is the 'general' leading provided by the scripture and the 'specific' leading when He speaks to us by His Spirit. It is His specific word to us that produces faith. (Romans 10:17)

It was lack of obedience that led to the fall of our enemy, Lucifer, who became satan when he fell. His problem was that he got above himself, wanting to be the same as God. (You will find more in Isaiah 14:13-14 – known as the ‘5 I wills’ of satan.)

So obedience to the will and word of the Lord is of vital importance - indeed our obedience is God’s eternal purpose; for it demonstrates God’s manifold wisdom to the principalities and powers. Ephesians 3:8-12. Our obedience shows satan and the principalities and powers where they went wrong!

All my working life I was an accountant because I was an accountant when I was saved, and the scripture tells us to stay in the calling we were in at salvation 1 Corinthians 7:20. My obedience was well rewarded – with the presence of the Holy Spirit. We change if and when instructed by the Spirit.

Have you seen your life in the light of God’s eternal purpose? Is your life one of obedience to New Covenant scripture? Or are you a ‘cherry picker?’ ‘I will believe this scripture but not that scripture.’ – that is putting yourself above God’s wisdom. Is your life one of following the specific directions God gives? Or do you plan and go your own way under your own wisdom?

What you choose is important

Every day we make choices, some seemingly small and unimportant, some much bigger matters and therefore seemingly important. But have you considered - the choices we make are important in God's eternal purpose?

Mary made the right choice recorded in Luke 10:42 - to sit at Jesus feet rather than busy herself. Moses made the right choice - choosing to suffer affliction with his fellows rather than the passing pleasures of sin, Hebrews 11:25.

Choice is very important - the enemy of God's people, satan, made the wrong choice - he wanted to set himself up as God, and all the fallen angels made the wrong choice in following him rather than the Lord. We are called to demonstrate God's manifold wisdom to these principalities and powers - Ephesians 3:10. How do we do that? By making the right choices in our day to day lives and business activities.

Right choices 1 - Choosing to be righteous in what we do - that is choosing to align our activities with the written word of the New Covenant. ICCC seeks to make the right choice in the TWL teaching materials, booklets and videos. ICCC seeks to make the right choice towards Israel, by recognising that God has plans to make Israel the chief nation on earth when Jesus returns to rule, and by being a blessing to Israel now.

Right choices 2 - listening to the word of God that proceeds from His mouth and doing what He tells us. See Matthew 4:4 Consider Abraham - God said get up and leave your country and your family and go where I will show you. So he did! He only had God's word and the witness of Noah and Shem (Abraham was 58 when Noah died and when Abraham died age 175 Shem was still alive.)

Why is it so important to make the right choice and to do the right thing? - because it demonstrates to principalities and powers where they want wrong. Our righteousness is in place to show that God's judgement of evil is fully justified. Of course we get it wrong from time to time - but His faithfulness to His word and promises means that His grace is poured out. His grace is powered by the blood sacrifice of Jesus and we are restored to all righteousness. 1 John 1:9

What you do and how you do it has eternal significance - how do you shape up?

Whizz bang – she beat him up

So it was according to a parable told by Jesus –with a vitally important message.

Luke 18 has the parable of the persistent widow which carries this vitally important message – so let's understand it! Jesus told the parable for a purpose and that purpose is described as – 'so that men might always pray', as in speak out loud and 'that we may not lose heart,' as in become cowards.

This widow (husband not present) had been robbed and was demanding that the unrighteous judge give her justice. Unrighteous judge - not God, not man - has to be from the demonic realm.

The unrighteous judge says – No. But after a while gives in because the widow troubles him – that is troubles as in has the effect of beating him. So the unrighteous judge says to himself - I will avenge her lest by her continual coming she weary me –that is weary as in beat me black and blue. (Please note the 'as in' comments are taking the literal meaning of the Greek text which is rather stronger than the translation.)

The unrighteous judge proclaims that God will not avenge those who cry to Him day and night - so the widow was also calling on the Lord – just as we do. But Jesus said, *'I tell you He will avenge them speedily.'* What are we learning - -it is our enemy who robs and destroys. We are to like the widow – resist him, the enemy, and demand our rights. At the same time call on the Lord. Persist – don't give up.

I could recount a number of testimonies to demonstrate - but here is one to illustrate. Corinne (our daughter) was in the last section of training as a mental health nurse. She passed 6 out of 7 sections with 'flying colours.' The seventh she was failed by the assessor. We immediately felt this was wrong so we started and persisted in demanding her rights from the enemy and calling on the Lord. In a few days she was called into the office of the course leader who could not understand how Corinne could have failed. So, with Corinne in the office, the leader phoned the assessor who broke down in tears on the phone saying, 'I failed her because if she passed she would be more highly qualified than me.' A full first class pass was reinstated.

It is God's eternal purpose that we demonstrate His wisdom to principalities and powers like this - how are you doing?

Superior guidance

Where do we look for guidance?

Moses challenged Israel – choose life. *‘He said to them, ‘this commandment which I command today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say who will ascend into heaven and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it? Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it. But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it. See I have set before you today life and good, death and evil - choose life’ Deuteronomy 30:11-15 and 19.*

Paul picks up the same message in Romans 11 where we understand that it is the rhema word of God that is in our mouths and in our hearts. This is the word Jesus spoke of when He said, *‘Man does not live by bread alone but by every rhema that proceeds from the mouth of God.’* Now we know, it is not far off – it is near in our mouths and hearts.

Where to get superior guidance? - right here in your heart and mouth. The heart (human spirit and soul), we are told, brings forth good and bad – so obviously the word of God will come from the good part. The good part of our heart is the human spirit indwelt by the Holy Spirit rather than the human soul (mind, will and emotions).

We learn how to recognise the Holy Spirit speaking within our innermost being rather than in our minds. Then, according to John, when the rhema word abides in us (we don’t reject it) nothing is impossible.

This superior guidance is able to move problem mountains right out of the way - this is the 'sword of the Spirit' that Paul mentions in Ephesians 6. It is the only offensive item in the armour of God, the one that is death to our problems and life to the promises of God. When God speaks, nothing is impossible - to bring forth great blessing and to destroy the works of our enemy. The rhema word can be the 'thought' that comes from deep within, or the scripture quickened to us at a point of need or ... see 'Hearing God Speak' in the TWL series.

Have you learnt to listen to the Holy Spirit dwelling in your heart and then to express His message through your mouth? Have you? It is the way of superior guidance - God's wisdom! Or do you rely on what you think is best?

Choose life!

Hey YOU**Listen to My word and listen for My word.**

It's all there – the wisdom of God for us and our generation written in the New Covenant scripture. This is how to live life and do business ...

Do everything as unto Jesus. Set this standard – my work has to be acceptable to Him. Therefore: No short measures, no bribery, no second best, no dishonesty, nothing lacking in any way – in everything only the best. When we live and work like this we are witnesses to God's kingdom and people will notice.

'Aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside and that you may lack nothing.' 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

Do it this way and let Jesus build His kingdom by His Spirit in us and through us - not our effort, rather our obedience Him. The scripture lays down God's wisdom. But He has more for us ...

Listen for His voice. God speaks. What is He telling you in a time of need? A time of need is when you come to the throne of grace where you will find grace to help. How is God leading and directing your paths? Jesus put it like this, *'man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'* Matthew 4:4 God speaks.

We are doubly blessed – we have the scripture and God speaks to us as well. The two are always in agreement, His voice never contradicts the God breathed New Covenant scripture.

It comes down to our thinking – do we submit and agree with the Lord or do we stand as judge over what we read and hear? Do we say, I believe this scripture but surely things have moved on and I don't believe that scripture (the one I don't want to accept!), and so we disobey so easily. Did God really say 'this' to me? I don't want 'that.' So we disobey so easily.

This is why Paul describes our reasonable service as, not being conformed to this world but by being transformed by the renewing of our minds. That is taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. I remember an occasion when one of my clients business had failed due to a serious bad debt. Even though God had warned him my client went ahead with what turned out to be a very bad deal – and went bust. He didn't take his thinking captive unto Jesus. Another potential client came for advice - he was going to set up a business to fund a Christian school. Our discussion centered around hearing God's direction and being obedient. Had God told him to do this? He thought it was a good idea but could not tell me of any guidance from the Lord. I advised him only to do that which the Lord instructed. He went away. Over two years later I heard he had gone ahead with his plan and it had failed – he lost his house and everything. Where do you stand on all of this - - on the rock? Or on only sand? - See Matthew 7:24-29

If

In our bible the word 'if' can mean; if and it is so, if and it is not so, and if - maybe it is, maybe it isn't. It can be quite important to know which is which! Let's quote one example - John 13:17 says, 'If (assumed as a fact) you know these things, happy are you if (maybe you will maybe you won't) you do them. The context is servant leadership - the passage is all about Jesus washing the disciple's feet. [The meaning of 'if' depends on the word used, the tense and the following mood - i.e the indicative mood, present tense, means 'if and it is so.:' past tense 'if and it is not so.']

With the Lord, however Yes is Yes and No is No - which is very helpful to our trust in Him, and our calling in Him. We know where we stand with the Lord. The gift and calling of God are irrevocable according to Paul in Romans 11:29.

In life we are called to be servant leaders - that means we do not lord it over our brethren, rather we seek to serve them in humility and in the Spirit. Peter explains it like this - with diligence add to your faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. (2 Peter 1:5-11) No one teaches this in secular business school and it is not always easy to put into practice in the world of commerce and business - but there is reward both earthly and heavenly. The earthly reward is that you grow and grow in the certainty of your calling and faith; the heavenly reward is an abundant entrance into the heavenly kingdom.

ICCC rightly takes responsibility towards Israel very seriously, serving that nation whenever we can. This is abundantly right in the eyes of the Lord who promises His favour, *'I will bless those who bless you.'* (God speaking to Abraham. Genesis 12:3)

So how about me and you. Am I taking the concept of servant leadership seriously, being a blessing whenever I can? Are you taking it seriously, are you being a blessing whenever you can? Or do we fall into the trap of the world's way of life and of business - the world's philosophy, empty deceit, traditions and principles - which can be summed up as focused on money and focused on my importance. On one occasion I was with a man from Hong Kong, a supplier to one of my clients, and had the opportunity to talk openly for over an hour. We talked about faith and Christianity. I asked him, 'who do you worship in Hong Kong?' He thought for a few seconds and answered, 'we worship S 2.' He went on to explain that S2 was the US dollar. A nice enough chap but you can see where his priority and motivation lay.

Where does your priority and motivation lie? What type of leader are you?

Take off your shoes

This is what the Lord said to Moses when He was going to speak to him for the first time. When the Lord is speaking it is a moment of holiness because God is holy. Have you considered your life, your business, your place of work as holy ground?

'Take off your shoes,' is to become a mind-set. A mind set which says, 'I can't walk on for I have no shoes.' This is exactly what it is meant to be! We may think we can achieve great things and maybe great things for God. We may even think that those shoes we made out of fig leaves will do the job!

No, no - we are advised, even instructed to have our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. (Ephesians 6:15.)

The preparation of the gospel of peace. Preparation is readiness - be made ready to walk by the gospel of peace. The gospel of peace tells us this - stay in the calling in which you were called - do the works which God has prepared beforehand for you to walk in. You won't find peace anywhere else!

Moses was going about his business of tending the flock when he saw the burning bush. He was at work when the Lord was going to speak to him. It was a holy event - hence the 'take off your shoes.' We too can have these holy and awesome moments at work.

Moments when the Lord God speaks to us - to bring us His message. It is unlikely to be as dramatic as the message He had for Moses, but it will be for His purposes and our good.

It is unlikely that we will see a burning bush at work - much more likely our experience will be like that of Elijah. Elijah had fled from Jezebel in fear for his life after the slaughter of the 450 prophets of Baal. The Lord's re-instatement of Elijah was not in strong winds, earthquakes and fire, it was in the still small voice. The still small voice of the Lord was just as important - Elijah was to go and anoint the King of Israel! It can be easy to ignore or to deny the still small voice of the Lord, in so doing we miss His purposes for us and we miss His blessings for us. It is well worthwhile learning to listen and being aware that the Lord will speak in your place of business as well as anywhere else.

Have you thought of your place of business as potentially holy ground where God will speak to you?

Blow the house down

Have you considered the parable of the wise and foolish builders? What does it say - it says the wind blew so strongly that a house without the right foundations could not withstand it, resulting in its suffering a great fall.

How does Jesus warn us? - *'in this world you will have tribulation.'* (John 16:33)

The wind will certainly blow, in this world there will certainly be tribulation. The good news is that Jesus has overcome the world. More than that the great message of the gospel is *'Christ in you the hope of glory.'* (Colossians 1:27) - giving access to enormous inner strength.

So, with Christ who has overcome the world in us, how can we fail? Back to our parable - the two builders had different building techniques. The one who built on the rock - his technique was obedience. He obeyed the teaching of Jesus. That can be 'hard' work. It requires humility - the humility that says, 'not my will but thine be done.' Its 'work' that submits itself to the word of God and the Spirit of God. The result is it is making a building that can stand when the inevitable difficulties in this world are manifest.

The builder who built on sand - his technique was disobedience. He did not obey the teachings of Jesus. He took the easy way, the ways of this world. His house could not stand when tribulation hit.

It comes down to this, do we revere the word of God as being perfect and as being good for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness? (2 Timothy 3:16) And if so, do we apply it to our day to day living? Or do we think, it's just good advice which we can take or leave at will, thus actually being disobedient?

TWL teaches us to dig down to the rock, making our foundation Jesus Himself, setting our course to become more and more like Him. Following His instruction to live by every word that comes from the mouth of God in addition to 'living by the book,' in the full knowledge that what God speaks to us will never contradict the New Covenant but will add specific instructions to live by.

This is the meaning of building on the rock! Study to show yourself approved, (2 Timothy 2:15) and be attentive to the leading of the Holy Spirit as He brings us words from Jesus. (John 16:13)

So, what is your building technique? Do you live 'by the book' and 'by every word proceeding from the mouth of God?' Or will your building collapse when the storms blow hard?

Filled

Sometimes I read a word in scripture and it strikes me that I would like to know its full meaning.

So it happened yesterday - '*And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit,*' from Acts 2:4 What does it mean

'filled?' Word study tells us that the Greek '*pimplemi*' means 'to become full.' That's straight forward so we have to look at other uses of the word for more detail.

The way Jesus called some of His disciples will enlighten us. Simon and his fellows had toiled all night fishing and caught nothing, not one fish. Now it was day and not the best time for fishing! After teaching the multitudes from Simon's boat Jesus told him to put out a little and cast his net for a catch. Here comes the meaning of 'filled.' They caught so many fish that Simon's boat and his partner's boat were so full of fish that they were beginning to sink. Simon fell at Jesus feet in awe and everyone was astonished. Luke 5:1-11

Time for review - You and I have been filled with the Holy Spirit. Have we understood that filled means FULL! Do our lives demonstrate the fullness of the Holy Spirit? Very challenging in the commercial realm where the ways of the world seem to rule.

I remember a time in Uganda teaching TWL A very big problem for the brothers and sisters was corruption. It seemed that everyone expected to be bribed. Christians are expected to refuse to pay (or receive) bribes because our Lord hates bribery. One sister was able to tell her testimony - how a man had approached her and offered to bring some business if she paid him a bribe.

Her business involved the distribution of mail and parcels. She refused. A little later the very contract she was offered in return for bribery, which was with a major airline, was given to her fair and square - no bribes.

Knowing that you are full of the Spirit and acting in that way - full of the Spirit, gives us the ability to stand in righteousness in a corrupt business world and to experience God's input into our lives.

Now we can raise our expectation - I am full of the Holy Spirit, that means FULL, full to breaking point. And that is the point, our human strength has to be subjected to the far greater strength and anointing of God - we, our own strength, become 'broken.' That means giving up on our own strength and ability and subjecting ourselves to His love and guidance - it reaps a very rich reward as we experience His supernatural input.

Are you full? Do you keep full of the Holy Spirit?

Grab it

Yes, the scripture invites us to grab hold of it - Hope.

Yes, hope - grab hold of hope!

'That by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.' Hebrews 6:18

This important verse seems rather complicated at first so we have to unwrap it. Two immutable (unchanging, not capable of being altered) things - these are God's oath and God's promise. Strong consolation - that is the comfort and encouragement of being called alongside our Lord, such that we have fled from the ways of this world, which are steeped in sin. We have fled to take refuge in laying hold of the hope which is our inheritance.

Biblical hope is the certainty of future blessing, not a wishy washy hope, but a certainty. We have this certainty because God's oath and God's promise are unalterable. We most certainly have an inheritance - see 2 Peter 1:2-4.

That's not all. Hope is an anchor for our souls - it keeps us safely rooted in times of trouble.

That's not all. When hope is linked with faith we see the evidence (or the foundation) of things not yet seen - this is of great importance in life and business. Faith comes by hearing God speak to us (Romans 10:19). When we hear God speak and we take hold of that, then we have the certainty of future blessing - hope.

We are absolutely certain that what God has said will come to pass. In Hebrews 11 that is described as *'faith is the substance (or title deed) of things hoped for.'*

So for every day we have this amazing and unalterable promise – *'Christ in you the hope of glory.'* This is the gospel. Every day, in everything we do, by His Spirit Christ is in us.

The conclusion of the matter is this – are we going to go through life relying our own skill and cleverness, and our own ideas, with no or little hope? Or are we going to go through life in close fellowship with the Holy Spirit, being led into the works God has prepared beforehand for us to walk in and be full of hope?

'He, Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say, *'The Lord is my helper, I will not fear. What can man do to me?'* Hebrews 13:6

Time to stand up strong in the certainty of Christ in you. *'Come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.'* Hebrews 6:14

'And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.' Philippians 4:19

Where is your certainty of future blessing?

24 degrees C

I am on holiday in beautiful Cornwall enjoying unseasonably lovely weather. Today, 'Good Friday' we, Marion, myself and Sam (the Appenzeller), enjoyed a cliff top walk. The scenery was sublimely beautiful. The azure sea crashed with foamy whiteness onto the golden sand of the beaches. Everything seemed right with the world.

Then I remembered it is 'Good Friday' and my thoughts went to my Saviour, crucified that I may enjoy life more abundantly, and I became very thankful. But everything is far from right with the world at large - indeed in many ways it seems to sink further away from righteousness.

My thoughts considered judgement - yes it is right that 'good' is blessed and rewarded and that 'bad' is judged and punished. How wonderful that Jesus took the punishment due to me and due to all who believe.

Truly this is forgiveness on a massive scale.

God's own character was showing through - God, Himself forgiving man his iniquity and paying the price. So then the challenge - what about me? Do I forgive those who come against me and in some way persecute me?

Jesus taught about forgiveness in the parable of the unforgiving servant. This servant owed his master a very large amount and the master forgave him the debt. But another servant owed this fellow a small amount.

The unforgiving servant would not have pity on him and instead had him thrown into prison. When the master heard about it he was angry - *'you should have had compassion on your fellow servant as I had pity on you.'* Then the unforgiving one was handed over to the tormentors until he should repay in full. Matthew 18:21-35

Jesus gave a warning - *'So My heavenly Father will also do to you, if each of you, from his heart does not forgive his brother his trespasses.'*

In life everyone comes across times when there is the need to be forgiving and compassionate. People, either consciously or unconsciously upset each other. Some cheat. Some steal. Some are violent. Some are selfish and uncaring and so on. And especially so in the world of commerce and business. So we are all going to be challenged to be forgiving.

It's vital to forgive - the alternative is to be tormented - many things going wrong in home and business.

Torment of the soul - that is the mind, the will, and the emotions.

Give yourself a quick check - have you forgiven everyone for everything?

Check list

Transformed working life covers a lot of essential biblical understanding for life and business – here are some of the main points as a check list:

- 1 I am born again and filled with the Holy Spirit.
- 2 I understand that God has prepared good works for me to walk in.
- 3 To the best of my understanding I am walking in them – it's my calling.
- 4 I am not seeking a more 'spiritual' job or career that the Lord has not called for.
- 5 I know it is impossible to please God without faith.
- 6 I know faith comes by hearing God speak to me.
- 7 I know I cannot work up faith from my own endeavours.
- 8 My working life demonstrates that it is the outward manifestation of an inward walk of faith.
- 9 I experience the anointing of God at work – like a following wind.
- 10 I have entered His rest at work so do not strive in my own strength.
- 11 I understand that our enemy will try to rob and to kill and to destroy.
- 12 I have learnt to overcome all the works of the enemy – I have the testimonies.
- 13 I know how to come to the throne of God to find grace to help in time of need.
- 14 I am generous in every way.
- 15 I am honest and trustworthy in all my dealings.

- 16 I do not pay or receive bribes.
- 17 Prayer is almost second nature to me - I pray frequently.
- 18 I have strong hope and confidence in my Lord.
- 19 I keep my mind free of all unholy and unhelpful thoughts by taking such thoughts captive.
- 20 I am called to be fruitful - so I expect my life and business to be fruitful in both material and spiritual ways.
- 21 I understand that wisdom is what God thinks is right and He will give it when I ask.
- 22 My motive is to be pleasing to the Lord.
- 23 My life is full of praise for the Lord.
- 24 I understand that Israel is very special to the Lord and that He has good plans ahead.

My list is not exhaustive. How are you shaping up? Areas for improvement? Have you lots of testimonies of the Lord working with you in life and business?

Are you getting good measure?

It all depends on the measure you use. *'For with the same measure that you use it will be measured back to you.'*
 Luke 6:38

This is Jesus speaking to His followers about being generous in that well known 'Sermon on the mount.' The sermon on the mount is all about abundance of blessing – part of it being called the beatitudes. Jesus audience was made up predominantly of Jews, and they would have immediately recognised the concept of blessing for obedience from Deuteronomy 28. But here in Luke the message goes on to be focused on attitudes.

Generosity, give, give, give – the way you give is the way it will be given to you.

Give what? It is not specified but will obviously include money and physical resources. But let's get a wider vision. How about give time to those around us? How about giving grace to those who in some way upset us? How about giving attention to the needs of those we come across?

Husbands how about giving attention to your wives, and seeking for them the *rhema* word of God. How about adopting a generous nature? In business there are many opportunities to be generous, to go the extra mile – let's take them.

'Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not and you shall not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and, running over will be poured into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.'

Let's note that generosity is highlighted after we are instructed to clear away wrong attitudes - do not judge or condemn and definitely forgive. This provides a vital foundation upon which to build generosity.

Let's be generous in everything, for surely this is the message! A generous life style will in itself speak of our Saviour. Witnessing to the wonderful work of the Holy Spirit already achieved in our personalities and being further achieved as we are changed from one degree of glory to another by the Spirit. Our generosity is fuel to the process of becoming more and more Christ like. Sometimes just a word of encouragement here or even a small act of kindness there will be a great blessing to the recipient. Listen in to the Holy Spirit and respond to His 'nudges' as He shows where our generosity with praise, our generosity with time can really bless someone. Exercising the gifts of the Spirit will bring blessing - let's do that more and more.

Well, we all need help on this one. 'Lord, I pray keep changing me and make me generous in all things for your glory.'

38 years

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to sit and wait for 38 years hoping to receive the blessing you long for? In John 5:1-15 we find just such a man. There he was by the Pool of Bethesda waiting for the water to stir, for the first one in when the water stirred would be healed. When Jesus found him he asked, *'Do you want to be made well?'* *'Yes but, 'Sir I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, while I am coming another steps down before me.'*

Let us understand the sign. The five porches around the pool represent God's grace. The stirring of the water by an angel was another representation of grace. The 38 years of waiting represent Israel's time wandering in the wilderness after their refusal to go into the Promised Land. Jesus arrival on the scene changes everything and will do so again for Israel at His second coming. This is the meaning of the sign. *'Rise take up your bed and walk,' and immediately the man was made well, took up his bed and walked.'*

What a wonderful thing to be those who have, by belief in Jesus, been born again into the New Covenant, the wonderful promises both of eternal life and of help now in a time of need. We don't have to wait 38 years in a vain hope. We have a certain and sure hope in what Jesus has achieved for us. And we access the benefits of His sacrifice by faith. We have a wonderful Saviour who speaks to us. Faith rises when He hear His voice.

In scripture we are told that faith comes by hearing and that we inherit the promises of God by faith and patience. The key always is God's strategy - for He knows the end from the beginning and He has the power to deliver what He says He will deliver, when and how He desires to do so. *'Every good and perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.'*

James 1:17

Love the Lord with all your heart, soul and mind. Pray, praise, worship and listen. Co-operate with the Holy Spirit as He changes you from one degree of glory to another, drawing us closer and closer to Jesus. Come to the throne of grace to receive help in a time of need, listen for God's strategy in your circumstances - or are you sitting by the pool, waiting and waiting for many years?

Defeat or victory

It is a famous saying, that there are two certainties in life - death and taxes! But Jesus warned that in this life we will have tribulation – so, by the word of the Son of God, that too is a certainty.

When tribulation hits the important thing is reaction. How do we react? Do we fall apart with fear, anxiety and trepidation? Or do we find strength and endurance, exercising trust in the Lord?

When Israel faced huge multitudes of enemies, in the days of Jehoshaphat, they were fearful. But they came before the Lord, faces to the ground, and worshipped. Then the Levites stood to praise the Lord with voices loud and high. So when it came to the battle Jehoshaphat sent the singers and those who praise the beauty of holiness out ahead of the army. Then God intervened and there was a mighty victory without Israel even having to fight. Their enemies had turned on each other and not one had escaped. 2 Chronicles 20.

This is the reaction when trouble strikes! Our God is greater. He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world. (1 John 4:4) Let us not be subdued, *'we know that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.'* Romans 8:28
Got a bit depressed by circumstances – put on the garment of praise it is the antidote to heaviness. Isaiah 61:3

This is the way to defeat the power of circumstances and tribulation. Take courage and inspiration from Israel – worship, stand and loudly praise the Lord, see the deliverance of the Lord. How will that deliverance come - sometimes, rather like the example above, God just does it! Other times He will give a word of wisdom which will turn the situation around. Other times He may send help – *‘come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in times of need.’* Hebrews 4:16

The salvation we have, bought for us by Jesus, is eternal and it is also temporal (relating to worldly affairs.) *‘Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful who also will do it.’* 2 Thessalonians 5:23-4

‘Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.’ Hebrews 10:35

Next time tribulation strikes – don’t forget!

Finding favour

The scripture tells of people like David and Joseph finding favour with God. (Acts 7:9-10 and 7:46). Of course that was in Old Testament times. Now we inherit a far better covenant in Jesus. (Hebrews 7:7, 19, 22 8:6)

His favour for mankind has always been God's desire and intention, and is pictured in, and represented by, the Olive Tree. Paul tells us that the root of the Olive Tree is fatness – that is becoming replete with blessing. It was, of course, Israel's natural inheritance, having been chosen as a nation to represent the Lord – so Israel is referred to as 'natural' branches (not the tree itself and not the root). Their unbelief, which bore the fruit of disobedience, resulted in the branches representing unbelieving Israel being broken off - to the great benefit of Gentiles, who by faith, though 'wild' branches, are grafted in to the blessing of the root. Finding favour with the Lord starts with hope, the certainty of future blessing. Hope rises the more we realise the truth – we are grafted into to a stream of blessing from the root which is intended to make us fat – replete.

This is His desire for me and for you – be abundantly blessed. In fact so abundantly blessed that Paul put it like this, *'Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that ask or think, according to the power that works in us.'* Ephesians 3:20

Have you noticed, *'according to the power that works in us?'* That is the Holy Spirit dwelling and working in you and in me.

How will we be more abundantly blessed? By walking and living in and being led by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. In life, at work, in business, being led by the Holy Spirit. So for our part what is required? *'As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, be holy for I am holy.'* 1 Peter 1:15-16

Know that we have favour, yes we have favour beyond measure. For that favour to flow to the maximum level, be holy in your walk through life, and by faith receive from the Lord much more. We could liken a holy lifestyle to eating bread – Jesus said, *'man does not live by bread alone.'* Bread is essential and excellent. But there is another level of blessing received by faith – the faith that comes by hearing God speak to us.

Christianity is not a religion, it is a relationship. A relationship in which the Lord wants to bless and bless. How is your relationship? Are you living a holy lifestyle? Are you hearing God speak to you? Are you seeing the Lord intervening on your behalf in life by faith? Bread and more?

Urgent – calling all businessmen

There has to be a demonstration of righteousness in the market place. It is essential, and only God's people can fulfil that requirement because we talk now of righteousness that comes through faith.

'And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.' Romans 13:11-12.

Look about and see - the world is ungodly, unreal, unstable, unspiritual and unsustainable. But, we are redeemed, we are filled with the Holy Spirit of God. We represent the only hope. *'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.'* Matthew 5:16

Urgent – *'In the last days perilous times will come.'* 2 Timothy 3:1 So now is the time to be found righteous in Christ. And to live life in righteousness and holiness in the power of His Spirit within us, as He progressively changes us from one degree of glory to another.

Our calling is to rise above the encroaching tide of increasing darkness by experiencing for ourselves, each one, the outward manifestation of an inward walk of faith. This we do by falling in line with God's plans which is the key to blessing and development needed in order to rise victoriously above that encroaching tide.

We are still in the age of grace, and abundant grace at that. Here is the call to all in business, come be among those who, *'much more receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness and who will reign in life through the one Christ Jesus.'* Romans 5:17

Come, speak to your Father in heaven, be led by His voice, let Him direct you in the works He has prepared beforehand for you to walk in. Ephesians 2:10

Why not read Psalm 23 as your business plan. Have the Lord as your shepherd, you won't lack, He gives you rest as He leads you in the paths of righteousness. When times are tough He is there preparing a table for you even in the presence of your enemies. He anoints you and your cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life.

What a plan! Are you fully on board – to be a good and faithful servant – trusted with 10 talents to do business till He comes? Luke 19:11-27

The divided heart

It is physically true - our hearts are physically divided into two sections. The bible also tells us that there is a further division, spiritually discerned, which, when we understand it helps in our journey to maturity.

Hosea 10:2 *'Their heart is divided.'*

Jesus speaking in Matthew 15:19 *'For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.'*

James 3:10 *'Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter water from the same opening?'*

We have established that from our innermost being, called the heart, we bring forth both blessing and cursing. Something is wrong.

When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus He said you must be borne again Spirit to spirit because flesh could only bring forth flesh. (John 3) So what do we learn? The rebirth of our human spirit is essential for eternal life - rebirth by the Holy Spirit. Now we have the promise of everlasting, eternal life - verse 16.

So now we can define our innermost being more accurately. First our human soul - mind, will, emotions - all part of the flesh, and secondly, our human spirit, now reborn and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Now we can see ourselves as tripartite - body, soul and spirit, as confirmed in 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

But now there is a problem --the flesh (body and soul) lust against the Spirit and lead us astray -- so that from part of our innermost being, our soul, come all sorts of evil and bad things -- manifesting as wrong thoughts in our minds. (Galatians 5:17)

So we enter into a lifelong time of salvation and refinement, that is deliverance from danger for our souls. We are being changed from one degree of glory to another by the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18.

Progressively, as we become more aware of, and in communication with, Jesus our Lord and Saviour, we are changed. His amazing love and His amazing grace draw us closer and closer resulting in increasing desire within us for holiness in our actions and lifestyle.

Have you got it -- your innermost being is the source of both blessing and cursing -- the blessing comes from your born again, Spirit filled, human spirit; the cursing comes from your mind, will and emotions, your soul. A lifelong process of change is underway -- let's co-operate with it!

When heaven is silent

We talk of walking by faith and, as faith comes by hearing God speak, we expect to hear Him communicate with us. We pray and we expect an answer. This is what the New Covenant teaches us and expects us to follow – fulfilling our calling and the Father’s will.

Then it happens - we pray and pray over something and heaven is silent. This is not what we expected! So we pray again and still heaven is silent. But the issue is pressing and a decision has to be made – what do we do.

Step 1

‘Commit your way to the Lord. Trust also in Him.’ Psalm 37:5

‘Commit your works to the Lord and your thoughts will be established.’ Proverbs 16:3

‘In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.’ Proverbs 3:6

Step 2

Consider your proposal with care, and as you do so, how is your spirit within you responding? Do you have peace at the level of your innermost being? Or are you disquieted?

'Let the peace of God rule in your heart.' Colossians 3:15
This is so important. One time a client came to me with a sad story - he had completed a building job and his customer refused to pay. He was being cheated because it turned out that this man had a history of refusing to pay his bills and commitments. My client, Howard, is a born again, spirit filled Christian, so I asked him, 'Howard didn't the Spirit warn you about this?' 'Funny you should mention that,' he said, 'I felt very uneasy when I was signing the contract.' Howard had not let peace be the decider, the ruler, the umpire, in his heart to his own significant loss.

Step 3

Stop if there is no peace. Proceed with care if there is, always being alert to your innermost being where the Holy Spirit dwells - He will guide you. Let peace be the ruler. A deal or opportunity may look good - but if there is no peace it will turn out to be bad.

Trust the Lord, for the Lord loves you with a love beyond measure. Paul prayed for the Ephesians, *'that He would grant you according to the riches of His mercy to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man'* - listen to the Spirit within and be guided and strengthened by peace. Then Paul went on to describe the immensity of God's love for us so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:16-20.

Dear brothers and sisters be mightily blessed and walk in peace.

God hates mixture

'You shall not let your livestock breed with another kind. You shall not sow your field with mixed seed. Nor shall a garment of mixed linen and wool come upon you.' Leviticus 19:19

A feature of God's character is revealed – He hates mixture. In the New Covenant we have the very clear statement, *'Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No' be 'No.'* James 5:12

Paul castigated the Galatians for turning back to the Law. They were bewitched. *'Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh.'* 3:3 They were under pressure because of their brethren who assiduously followed the Law instead of seeing it as a tutor leading to Christ.

And so we can apply a principle to the scripture – don't mix the covenants. We are children of the wonderful New Covenant – which is all about a new heart and a new mind. It's a covenant of blessing through faith. It's a covenant of being changed through the power and work of the Holy Spirit in us. There is no place at all for the work of the flesh!

What's the point? Live in the glorious freedom – *'Therefore if the Son makes you free you shall be free indeed.'* John 8:36 and *'all things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.'* 1 Corinthians 6:12

Here is the issue - what are you doing in your freedom? Is it helpful? Or are we like Paul who said he found himself doing things he didn't want to do? When you recognise something that is unhelpful, or sin, do you try to overcome in your own strength instead of repenting and seeking the Holy Spirit to make the necessary change inside? Man is not justified in any area by either his own efforts or by keeping any part of the Law, he is justified by faith, faith that calls on and relies on the Lord to transform us into His image through the Spirit. Heart management by the Spirit.

So do you find yourself living in complete freedom and so changed by the Holy Spirit within that your life and actions look good and smell good because you have become more and more Christlike? Or are you struggling? Are you mixing the covenants in some way? Trying to keep some part of the law?

'For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those being saved and among those who are perishing.' 2 Corinthians 2:15 Do your life and your finances smell good by reflecting generosity from a changed heart?

Does God have a plan for you?

There is a 'business plan' for your life recorded in one of the most well known passages of scripture. But often we read it as nice comforting words rather than seeing it as the plan for life.

It goes like this:

The Lord will look after you in the same way a shepherd looks after his sheep.

His guidance will mean you will not lack and you will be led into places of peace and provision where you will find your soul restored.

Your way will demonstrate righteousness - because you belong to Him.

There will be dark and difficult times of course, but in those times He will be right there and you need have no fear. He will strengthen and comfort you.

In fact as you walk through any valley of darkness He will prepare a place for you even with your enemies around.

He will provide an anointing over you such that your cup overflows and goodness and mercy will be with you all the days of your life.

You will dwell with Him forever.

What a great plan for life and business. Sounds really good doesn't it. Psalm 23.

Our day to day life can look very different, as though this plan either does not work or is not for me – and it won't be reality for us if we rely on ourselves and 'walk in the flesh.' The plan becomes reality when we learn to live and walk in the spirit – where the power and provision of God is exceedingly abundant, beyond anything we can think or ask. (Ephesians 3:20)

Of course God has a specific plan for each one - it is our calling. We are instructed by scripture to stay in that calling we were in when we were saved. (For me that was accountancy, I was an articled clerk at the point of my salvation and an accountant until my retirement.) In your calling you can expect to see the hand of God working with you and around you – that is certainly my testimony.

Sometimes we think that there are better opportunities doing something else – now we need to be careful. The anointing of God is maximised in our calling. Is God leading me to change role? Or is it my 'good' idea. Time to pray, time to listen, time to know and understand from the Lord who has bought us at a price – 'what is your will in this matter Lord.' Bear in mind Ephesians 2:10 –

'We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them' That is the place of calling. That is the place of anointing. That is the place we read about in God's business plan - Psalm 23.

May abundant blessing be yours.

Agape = love = service

Preachers often refer to 'agape' as God's type of love. That needs unwrapping because we are called on to have 'agape' love for everyone and its full meaning is not obvious.

So on seeking the Lord for understanding I received the meaning from Him, 'agape love is love by choice.'

This is the type of love God has for us - He loves us by choice! When we look on the life of Jesus what we see is how He laid down His life even unto death for us. He came to serve mankind with the opportunity of eternal life, and more, for all who will believe. *'Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.'* Matthew 20:28

So my life and your life is not about me or you - it is about serving others. We can serve one another in many ways, both 'natural' and 'spiritual.' The gifts of the Spirit are there for the purpose of serving others as well as being a blessing to us. Our practical abilities can be used to bless others.

In a world that is increasingly focused on ME, ME, Me, we will stand out all the more as we seek to be a blessing to others. When we see someone in need it is time to serve. *'For when I was hungry you gave Me food; when I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in.'* Matthew 25:35 - and read on!

When we take this on board - that is we understand we are here to serve and that is what we do - then another spiritual 'law' comes into play. Part of serving is being generous. That is generous in a wide sense - generous with time, with money, with resources, with whatever fills a need.

The way we are generous is the way the Lord will deal with us. *'Give and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.'* Luke 6:38

And so a virtuous circle - the more we serve, the more we are generous, the more the Lord deals with us in the same way, the more we have to be generous with, the more we are generous and so on and so on.

Just as Jesus came to serve, we are here to serve - that is our choice and that is agape love in action, in life, in business, at work, at home.

Be blessed.

The theology of cups

The Scribes and Pharisees were likened to cups - the outside carefully cleaned but the inside full of extortion and self indulgence. (Matthew 23:25) We are not like this, are we?

Jesus had a cup to drink - an extremely painful cup. *'O My Father, if it is possible let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless not as I will, but as you will.'* Matthew 26:39

The Pharisees act of cleaning of the outside was just human works trying to obey the Law. Something much more, much, much more was needed to equip us for relationship with God. Sin had to be thoroughly dealt with once and for all - that was the extreme pain in Jesus cup. He was to take the penalty of all our sin.

Jesus cup did much more - the shed blood empowers the New Covenant - righteousness now given to you and me and to everyone who believes in Jesus, as a free gift.

Here we see agape love - love by choice, working to its fullest extent. Jesus didn't have to give His life a ransom for us but He choose to at extreme cost.

What is the relevance to us in daily life? We have been made thoroughly righteous in our human spirit. That leaves the other elements of what we are calling our cup - our bodies and souls - our minds, our wills, our emotions. Are we increasingly righteous and holy in all we do?

Remember the Pharisees – they were accused of extortion and self-indulgence – how about you and me in all our dealings? Are we thoroughly clean? We certainly are called to be thoroughly clean in every way. We have the promise of the Spirit changing us from glory to glory – how is the process going with you?

Our calling is to live by faith. That is to hear what the Father is saying on a personal basis –in all of life and business. Like Abraham and all the hall of fame in Hebrews 11 we are to act on His word and apply what He says – in business, as in life, this can be very rewarding. Discerning His voice and differentiating between that which God is saying and that which our own flesh and the enemy is saying – this is walking in the spirit. This is our calling.

Walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh and you will find your cup overflowing, just like David. *'You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.'* Psalm 23:5

How is the inside of your cup?

Be blessed, I hope your cup overflows.

Tall trees - deep roots

In ICCC we talk of tall trees, meaning mature Christian men and women who understand the vision and have implemented it in their business lives.

We don't usually have hurricanes in the UK but in 1987 the southern part of England suffered a major hurricane. Literally millions of trees were blown over - in my own garden over 50 trees were lost. Our village was completely cut off as every road out was blocked by fallen trees.

Massive trees were just blown completely over - the root ball now being completely exposed. Many of the trees were so large it would take at least two people with arms outstretched to reach round their trunk.

What is the message? Roots are very important, no matter how tall the tree may be and look. Indeed the taller the tree the deeper the roots must be if it is going to stand in the storms.

So we should consider our roots. Paul writes to the Ephesians (chapter 3) - teaching them that Christ dwells in their hearts through faith. Acting in faith and running all of our lives by faith is one of the major messages of ICCC and is taught through TWL. Paul goes on to show the most important aspect of a life of faith - that is bring rooted and grounded in the love of God.

When we are deeply rooted and grounded in this love and we begin to comprehend just how high, deep, wide and long is this love of Jesus – then we are beginning to know the love that passes knowledge. A love that fills us with all the fullness of God.

We have come or are coming to a position of great confidence in the Lord because we know we are the recipients of His very great love. In another passage Paul likens us to wild olive branches grafted into the Olive Tree where we become partakers of the root and fatness of the Olive. Here we see pictured the grace and the favour of God which like sap is always flowing – we become replete.

We have become or are becoming tall trees. But be warned, the same Ephesians that Paul wrote to are told in Revelation (chapter 2) that, although in many ways they are going well, they are in danger because they have left their first love.

So here is the question – how deep is your love relationship with the Lord? Could you be more in love with Jesus than you are right now? Time to get roots down deeper!

Holy Spirit fill me with more and more love for Jesus,
Amen

Might

A word in English with two very different meanings!

Might - maybe. Perhaps I will, it's a possibility. On the other hand maybe I won't. Fortunately our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ are not like that.

'For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.' 2 Corinthians 1:20.

With the Lord let your 'yes' be 'yes' and your 'no' be 'no.'
(James 5:12)

Discovering God's 'yes' for each of us, for our lives, for our work, for our sphere of influence is a path to fruitfulness. Where the Lord is saying 'yes' that is the anointed place, that is the anointed activity, that is where we want to be. It means being humble - putting aside our own ideas and following the Spirit in the good works the Lord has prepared for us in advance.
Ephesians 2:10

Might - abundant strength. Paul prayed for the Ephesians that they would be strengthened with might in the inner man. (Chapter 3:16) If we are going to fulfil all the Lord has for us we need the same strengthening - because Jesus warned us of tribulations and opposition in this world. We are not promised an easy path through life on earth!

Nevertheless we are equipped to overcome in every situation by grace. That is the grace that puts the Holy Spirit dwelling inside us. That is the grace we find at the throne of grace in a time of need. (Hebrews 4:16) It is the grace that gets the job done – Zerubbabel found that when he was rebuilding the Temple - *not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit says the Lord of hosts. With shouts of grace, grace to it.* Zechariah 4:7.

So our inner strength emboldens us to know who we are in Christ. To know that God is for us and not against us. To know that we are overcomers. To know that the Lord has a strategy for everything. To know that the grace of God abounds towards us. To know we have authority over all the works of the enemy. To know Him.

To know Jesus in the deepest sense – that was Paul’s prayer. To know Him in immense love – to comprehend the width and length and depth and height of that love He has for each of us.

How does Paul conclude this prayer – *‘now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.’*

God’s promise is not ‘if’ ‘but’ and ‘maybe,’ it is Yes and Amen in Jesus Christ.

According to a fish

The fish can tell us a lot about our faith!

There was Jonah in complete rebellion. Clearly told by the Lord to go to Nineveh he deliberately sets off in the opposite direction. Severe storms on the sea voyage see him thrown off the ship. One would have thought that the Lord would leave him to his fate as he was so disobedient. But NO! A large fish is sent to rescue him and after a couple of days deliver him onto dry ground. This is the faithfulness of God even when we are unfaithful. (2Timothy 2:13)

We are called to the specific work the Lord has prepared beforehand for us. (Ephesians 2:10) Doing the right thing in the right place at the right time – that is one way of saying being led by the Spirit – is vitally important. You can struggle all night and get nothing, but when Jesus comes on the scene His leading, His advice brings a large catch. (Luke 5:1-11 John 21:6)

In the hands of Jesus, a few fish, the very little we have, can be turned into a feast for many – enough for 5,000 + and plenty left over. (In all the gospels e.g. Mark 6:30-44)

Made a mistake? Peter wrongly 'committed' himself and Jesus to pay the Temple tax. The Son does not have to pay, the sons are free! Jesus told him to use his calling – go catch a fish, and in the first one you catch there will be a coin to pay the temple tax. Peter's mistake turned into an example of Jesus majesty over all creation. (Matthew 17:24-27 and Romans 8:28)

Ask. If you ask the Father for a fish, will He give you a serpent? Certainly not! (Matthew 7:10 Luke 11:11)

All despondent, Jesus had been crucified, perhaps disillusioned, the disciples had gone back to fishing. No luck - all night caught nothing. Then the man on the beach tells them to cast the net on the right side of the boat – an enormous catch of 153 great fish. It is the Lord!! There is great meaning here. Out of the sea, which the bible uses to represent mankind, 153 great fish are uplifted and taken to Jesus. Here the numbers tell the story 10 and 7 together represent the full number of the spiritually perfected church taken by 9 being the last single digit represents the end of the age. 153 is 17 times 9 – here is the church at the end of the age taken out of the world to Jesus. This is our great hope, when Jesus returns we will rise to meet Him in the air. (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

No wonder then that the early church adopted the sign of the fish! Don't forget the humility!

Are you a master builder?

In TWL we talk about building on a sound foundation and, of course totally rightly, we see Jesus Himself as the only sound foundation. Then...

Jesus used the analogy of building on sand compared to building on rock. He was saying if we do what He says then we are building on rock and if we don't we are building on sand. The storms of life and business blow down the house built on sand whilst that built on rock survives. In the text Jesus uses the word 'logos' which has the inclusive meaning of the scriptures and the specific words the Lord speaks to us. Matthew 7:24:28.

Then Paul describes himself as a wise master builder in his first letter to the Corinthians, telling them the foundation he has laid is Jesus Christ - there is no other. However he brings a word of caution about how you build on the foundation.

Build with the right materials - gold silver and precious stones and not wood hay and straw. The judgement of believer's works will test and approve the former and destroy the latter.

So now the questions have to be asked -
Are we building on the right foundation - Jesus Himself? Then are we master builders - building with the best materials?

Do we know what the best materials are? We have to go deeper into the scripture to find out!

Don't build with the world's ways and wisdom - see Colossians 2:8.

Don't build with what you think is right. These are hay straw and stubble.

Do build with the right approach to the scripture:

It is profitable for thoroughly equipping master builders - see 2 Timothy 3:17

It is God-breathed. Given by inspiration of God

Be prepared for the scripture to bring correction to our human opinions - it is good for what we believe

(doctrine) for reproof (that is testing what we believe), correction (that is putting us back up straight when we go wrong) and for instruction in righteousness. 2

Timothy 3:16

When God speaks something specific be sure to do it.

Jesus said man does not live by bread alone but by every word (rhema) that proceeds from the mouth of God. Matthew 4:4

Building like this, testing against the ultimate truth is building with gold, silver and precious stones. It is vital therefore to obtain a full understanding of truth - not what we want to believe and think but what God gives us. My constant prayer for over 40 years - 'Holy Spirit lead me into all truth.' Jesus said He, the Spirit, would and I want full measure. How about you?

Do I need to remind us - there are storms in life and prophetically we see major storms ahead.

Mind your p's and Q's

It's an English language expression, an idiom, with the meaning 'be very careful.' It can be applied to what you say, to what you write, to your behaviour and so on. Its origin goes back to when the printed word was typeset. Every letter was formed in a small steel block and the letters put together to make words – a time consuming process. Mixing up p and q, was easily done as the typesetter saw a mirror image, and it could mean having to reset a whole page! (page)

In our Christian faith p and q have great importance:

P for patience as we inherit the promises of God through faith and patience. Hebrews 6:12

P for perseverance – the ability to stand and keep standing as we wait on the Lord. Romans 8:25

P for peace that should be the decision maker in our hearts. Colossians 3:15

P for praise – an essential in our relationship with the Lord. Psalms is the place to look.

P for power. We receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon us. Acts 1:8

P for prayer another vital ingredient in the Christian life. In Greek 'proseuchomai' speak out loud and 'deomai' make your request. Prayer is simple - any time and any where.

P for presence – refreshing comes from the presence of the Lord. Acts 3:19 – privately and corporately.

P for possible. Things that are not possible for us are possible for the Lord. Mark 10:27.

AND P for practical. These things are part of the normal Christian life. Each one a vital ingredient in learning to reign in life, which is our objective. Romans 5:17.

The 'oil' that makes all things possible is the wonderful grace of God without which, in our human strength, we would fail miserably. Grace is that unmerited favour which freely flows from Jesus – abounding towards us. Ephesian 1:7-14.

Q for quench. On the positive side the shield of faith quenches all the fiery darts of the enemy. Ephesians 6:16

On the negative side beware Q for quench the Holy Spirit. *'Do not quench the Holy Spirit.'* 1 Thessalonians 5:19. Easily done. The still small voice of the Holy Spirit is easily ignored and easily rejected, when we think we know better, to our cost

This is perhaps an unusual way of considering things but what a great self-check list. Check every line - how are you on your p's and q's ?

Out of nothing, out of nowhere

Where does a miracle come from? Let's define miracle. 'Power, inherent ability, works of a supernatural origin and character, such as could not be produced by natural agents and means.' (Definition from Vines expository dictionary.)

In the scripture miracles can also be described as signs or as wonders. For example the gospel of John has 8 'sign miracles.' (e.g. See John 2:11) Every miracle is a sign of God's inherent power – some carry extra meaning for us to discern. Every miracle is a wonder – something to marvel at. Not everything called a wonder comes from God - see Matthew 24:24 and don't be deceived.

For us, in daily life, our Lord God is a miracle working Father who invites us to come to Him in times of need to find mercy and grace in times of need. (Hebrews 4:16) His miraculous help comes by grace not by right. We know when something comes from the Lord by two measures:

- 1 It will not in any way be contrary to scriptural truth.
- 2 It will fit this description in James 1:17. *'Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.'*

In times of difficulty we need two responses:

- 1 Humility – to come to throne of grace and seek His grace and mercy with patience.

- 2 Courage – to stand firm against the works of our enemy. (Ephesians 6) with the discernment of his involvement where appropriate.

The parable of the persistent widow shows both these aspects. (Luke 18) The widow railed against the unjust judge, clearly a reference to satan or his minions. (Verse 3) She persisted and did not give up. (Verse 5) At the same time she was calling on the Lord day and night. (verse 7)

The unjust judge says, in effect, that's a waste of time but Jesus says He will avenge us speedily. In the same breath Jesus asks the question, *'when the Son of Man comes will He find faith on the earth?'*

So this is the challenge for us. Will Jesus find faith in us? Faith, we remember, comes by hearing Him speak to us. (Romans 10:17) When He speaks to us nothing He says is impossible as Mary states in Luke 1:37.) Are we listening? Are we hearing? Are we acting on what we hear, having checked it is the Lord speaking?

Then, our answer will fit the description - a work of power of supernatural origin, such as could not be produced by natural means – a miracle out of nothing but not out of nowhere – it comes from His throne of grace. Every born again Christian experiences the miracle of being saved – but are you experiencing more in your everyday life?

Israel, My Israel

When Jesus returns, as He surely will, it will be to establish His reign from Jerusalem - we see Him returning with His bride in Revelation 19. As He comes to reign in Jerusalem Israel will become the chief nation on earth - coming into her inheritance. A glorious period of time, said in the book of Revelation to last for a thousand years, begins.

Right now we are still in the period of regathering as more and more Jews return to the land. Scripture is being fulfilled in front of our eyes. (Ezekiel 36:16-28; Ezekiel 20:33-42)

The Lord God is always faithful to His promises - which is excellent news for us, for if He was not faithful where would our salvation stand? What certainty could we have?

So, as we understand the Lord's plans to some degree, we support Israel, knowing that His plans for that nation will surely come to pass. In so doing we also partake in the promise God gave to Abraham, *'I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you. In you all the families of the earth will be blessed.'* Genesis 12:3.

Having a positive attitude of blessing towards Israel flies in the face of the increasing anti-Semitism in the world - so we too might be reviled as we stand together fulfilling God's word.

Remember Jesus warned, *'If you were of this world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of this world, but I choose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.'* John 15:19

Time to reconsider where we stand. Do we support Israel? - Yes most certainly. Is there increasing anti-Semitism, particularly in Europe? - Yes indeed. Is it likely that we, as born again Christians, will come under increasing intolerance - both from the world and from our enemy? Yes, it is very likely.

Forewarned is forearmed. Do not be surprised. Stand firm in your faith in Jesus Christ. Support Israel to the best of your ability. Remember God's plan for the future will elevate Israel to the chief nation on earth. Any difficulties, and intolerance we face now is temporary. Look up deliverance is coming - the promised return of Jesus comes closer and closer. Meanwhile be faithful, be listening, be ready to do everything the Lord commands.

The time ahead is exciting as we see God's plan come into fruition.

Thoroughly equipped - keep training

First I pose this question – are you thoroughly equipped. The definition of being thoroughly equipped is found in our attitude to scripture. All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine (what we believe), for reproof (testing what we believe), for correction (putting it right when we get it wrong), for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17. We are thoroughly equipped when we have the right attitude to scripture, have studied it diligently, and live by its truth and light. How are you doing?

The Hebrews (that is Jews who had become born again - converted) needed correction. They had advanced significantly, enjoying the powers of the age to come – they were into miracles! But they had slipped back, fallen away – and whilst they continued in slipping back into Judaism they could not be renewed again to repentance. They had to repent first and then be renewed again otherwise they would be unfruitful - indeed bearing only thorns and briers.

Training is very important. The athletes for the Greek and the Roman games (the games were the principle entertainment for the people and held frequently) trained extensively. In training one's diet is very important if one is going to achieve the maximum result.

For us 'solid food,' not milk is required. 'Solid food belongs to those who are mature, that is those who have by regular use exercised (literally trained as for the games) to discern both what is worthy, good, beneficial, (*kalos*) and that which is unworthy, useless, unprofitable, evil (*kakos*).

Teaching is vital - we must know what is right.

Training is vital - being led by the Spirit in all we do.

Training is the regular use of the gifts and the leading of the Holy Spirit - enjoying the powers of the age to come. This the Hebrews had done until they stopped and then they slipped back - falling away.

It is very easy to do the same! Sometimes we start of well. We see answers to prayers. We see God's hand moving for us and around us. Then somehow it falls away. We have opposition. We have temptations. We have difficulties and it is easier to 'give up' than it is to 'stand up.' Perhaps there are gaps in our understanding, our teaching, leaving weaknesses. Perhaps we have stopped exercising (training) our 6th sense - the leading and the guiding of the Holy Spirit.

So here is the challenge - are you like the Hebrews - stopped training, stopped being led by the Spirit, stopped enjoying the powers of the age to come?

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