

LIFT UP YOUR VOICE

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WEEK ONE

WHAT IS SALVATION?

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” John 3:3

From the Spirit Filled Bible notes we learn SALVATION means in Greek (Gk sōtēria) means “deliverance,” “rescue,” “bringing safely through” or “keeping from harm.” Already in the OT God revealed himself as the One who saves his people. The means, or process, of salvation is described in the NT as “the way”—the road that leads through earthly life to eternal life with God in heaven (Mt 7:14)

“And they came and said to him, “Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone’s opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances,[a] but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?” Mark 12:14

In order to inherit a place in God’s eternal kingdom (Heb 1:14; 6:12), we must walk the road of salvation to the very end of our earthly life.

Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Matt. 25:34

A. The one way of salvation. Jesus Christ is the way—the only way—to God the Father (Jn 14:6; Ac 4:12). God offers and provides salvation because of his grace (i.e., his undeserved favor, love, kindness, help), which he showed through his Son, Christ Jesus (Ro 3:24). God’s gracious gift of salvation is based on Christ’s sacrificial death, miraculous resurrection and continued intercession. His death paid the supreme and complete price for our offenses against God and provided the only means for us to be forgiven for that sin (Mt 26:28; Lk 24:46-47). His resurrection showed, confirmed and secured his power and authority over life and death. It also provided the means for us to be victorious over spiritual death (Ro 6:4; 8:11) and, in the end, to be raised to eternal life. His constant interceding for us in heaven (i.e., representing and pleading our case to our heavenly Father) assures us of access to God and his continued mercy and help.

B. Spiritual salvation is a gift of God’s grace that is received through faith in Jesus Christ (Ro 3:22, 24-25, 28). That is to say, salvation is extended to us by God as a result of his grace (Jn 1:16) and is received by us through the response of faith.

C. Elements of salvation

(a) Salvation includes the personal experience that takes place at a point in time when we choose to receive God’s forgiveness for sins and yield our lives to Christ (Ac 10:43; Ro 4:6-8). At this point, we pass from spiritual death to spiritual life.

The power of sin to the power of the Lord (Ro 6:17-23), from Satan's control to God's control (Ac 26:18). In this way, we enter a new personal relationship with God (Jn 1:12) and are rescued from the final penalty of sin (Ro 1:16; 6:23; 1Co 1:18), which is spiritual death and eternal separation from God.

(b) The present stage of salvation saves us from the practice, pattern and control of sin in our daily lives, through the power of God's Holy Spirit living within us. This side of salvation includes several elements: (i) It includes the privilege of a person-to-person relationship with God as our Father and Jesus as our Lord and Savior (Mt 6:9; Jn 14:18-23; see Jn 17:3, note; Gal 4:6, note). (ii) It includes the challenge to consider ourselves "dead" to sin and its influence (Ro 6:1-14) and to submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit (Ro 8:1-17) and God's Word (Jn 8:31; 14:21; 2Ti 3:15-16). (iii) It includes the invitation to be filled with the Holy Spirit and the command to keep being filled (see Ac 2:33-39; Eph 5:18). (iv) It includes the demand to separate ourselves from sin (Ro 6:1-14) and the corrupt beliefs, behaviors and lifestyles that are common among those who do not know Christ as Savior (Ac 2:40; 2Co 6:17)

(c) Salvation (Ro 13:11-12; 1Th 5:8-9; 1Pe 1:5) also includes several elements: (i) It includes rescue and freedom from God's coming wrath, or condemning judgment, against sin (Ro 5:9; 1Co 3:15; 5:5; 1Th 1:10; 5:9). (ii) It includes sharing in God's glory (Ro 8:29; 1Co 15:49) and receiving a resurrected and transformed body (1Co 15:52). (iii) It includes receiving eternal rewards for faithfully following Christ and overcoming the trials of the world (see Rev 2:7, note). This becomes the goal toward which all Christians strive (1Co 9:24-27; Php 3:8-14). All present warnings, discipline and punishment prescribed in God's Word are aimed at keeping Christ's followers from forfeiting (i.e., giving up, losing) this future salvation (1Co 5:1-13; 9:24-27; Php 2:12, 16; 2Pe 1:5-11; see Heb 12:1, note).

DISCUSSION

1. Can we be sure of our salvation?
2. How does God covenant with us corresponds with salvation?

1. LET'S TALK ABOUT REDEMPTION! WHAT DOES REDEMPTION MEAN?

The root meaning of "redemption" (Gk apolutrōsis) is to be ransomed or bought back or restored by the payment of a price. It also implies being rescued, liberated and set free. The term "redemption" points out the means by which salvation is obtained—by the payment of a ransom.

The concept and teaching of redemption can be summarized as follows:

- A. Our sinful condition: The NT describes humans as alienated or separated from God (Ro 3:10-18) because our natural tendency is to defy him and go our own way. Apart from God

we are under the influence and control of satanic and evil powers (Ac 10:38; 26:18), we are slaves to sin (Ro 6:6; 7:14) and we are in need of rescue from sin's guilt, punishment and power (Ac 26:18; Ro 1:18; 6:1-18, 23; Eph 5:8; Col 1:13; 1Pe 2:9).

B. The price paid to free us: Christ paid and secured the ransom by shedding his own blood and giving his life in our place (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45; 1Co 6:20; Eph 1:7; Tit 2:14; Heb 9:12; 1Pe 1:18-19). Sin is so opposed to God's perfect nature and character that it requires the most extreme penalty, which is death (Ro 6:23) and permanent separation from God. There is no escaping that penalty without God's forgiveness, and "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb 9:22). But only God could provide the perfect and complete payment for sin. He did so through the willing sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus' death provided the complete payment, and it is sufficient to cover all sin for all time. Those who accept his sacrifice for themselves and surrender their lives to him receive his gifts of forgiveness and eternal life (Jn 3:16; 6:40; Ro 6:23; 1Jn 5:11).

C. The result of being redeemed: By accepting Christ's sacrifice and forgiveness of sins and surrendering our lives to his authority and purpose, we are freed from Satan's control and from the guilt and power of sin (Ac 26:18; Ro 6:7, 12, 14, 18; Col 1:13). This freedom from sin, however, does not mean that we can do as we please. Since God has paid the ransom for us, we become his property. Choosing Christ's freedom from sin makes us willing slaves of God (Ac 26:18; Ro 6:18, 22; 1Co 6:19-20; 7:22-23).

DISCUSSION:

1. Lets talk about being ransomed-what payment was made?
2. How should we then live?

WEEK TWO

A NEW SONG FOR A NEW DAY

Psalm 40:3 – A new song for a new day rises up in me every time I think about how he breaks through for me! Ecstatic praise pours out of my mouth until everyone hears how God has set me free. Many will see his miracles; they'll stand in awe of God and fall in love with him!

We are entering one of God's new days and an old song just won't do. As I read this passage my mind turned back to the earliest days of the outpouring of the Spirit in our church back in 1994. We stopped singing the songs previous to the outpouring. Those were all good songs mind you, but songs reflect the season that they were written in. We were in a new day and God was putting a new song in our mouth. I feel like we are presently entering into one of God's new days.

1. FRESH MERCIES GIVE US NEW VIEWS OF GODS GREATNESS

The Lord is bringing us out into a wide place of deliverance. His new song reflects what He is doing. Here is how Matthew Henry describes this verse. **“He filled him with joy, as well as peace, in believing: “He has put a new song in my mouth; he has given me cause to rejoice and a heart to rejoice.” He was brought, as it were, into a new world, and that filled his mouth with a new song, even praise to our God; for to his praise and glory must all our songs be sung. Fresh mercies, especially such as we never before received, call for new songs. This is applicable to our Lord Jesus in his reception to paradise, his resurrection from the grave, and his exaltation to the joy and glory set before him; he was brought out of the horrible pit, set upon a rock, and had a new song put into his mouth.”**

We are receiving fresh mercies. After all, they are new every morning. Fresh mercies give us new views of God's greatness and new perspective on His plans. We will declare this new song and the result will be a season of miracles, signs, and wonders.

Psalm 40:3 - He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD.

David was probably the greatest song writer of all time. Actually, David had a very unfair advantage. He had been anointed by the Lord for that very purpose. Just like David said in today's verse, he had a new song in his mouth. The anointing on David was an anointing to worship God. He sang spontaneous songs birthed by the Holy Spirit which became songs for God's people that are still being sung today. You can tell a lot about someone by the songs they sing. After all, we sing about what matters to us.

Jonathan Edwards spoke about this spontaneous song. It flowed out of him as a result of God's touch upon his life. Here is a snippet from his book “Personal Narrative” that describes his

personal relationship with the Lord. **“After this my sense of divine things gradually increased, and became more and more lively, and had more of that inward sweetness. The appearance of everything was altered: there seemed to be, as it were, a calm, sweet cast, or appearance of divine glory, in almost everything. God’s excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love, seemed to appear in everything; in the sun, moon and stars; in the clouds, and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water, and all nature; which used greatly to fix my mind. I often used to sit and view the moon, for a long time; and so in the daytime, spent much time in viewing the clouds and sky, to behold the sweet glory of God in these things: in the meantime, singing forth with a low voice, my contemplations of the Creator and Redeemer. And scarce anything, among all the works of nature, was so sweet to me as thunder and lightning. Formerly, nothing had been so terrible to me. I used to be a person uncommonly terrified with thunder: and it used to strike me with terror, when I saw a thunderstorm rising. But now, on the contrary, it rejoiced me. I felt God at the first appearance of a thunderstorm. And used to take the opportunity at such times, to fix myself to view the clouds, and see the lightnings play, and hear the majestic and awful voice of God’s thunder: which often times was exceeding entertaining, leading me to sweet contemplations of my great and glorious God. And while I viewed, used to spend my time, as it always seemed natural to me, to sing or chant forth my meditations; to speak my thoughts in soliloquies, and speak with a singing voice.”**

When He comes down, everything does look different. Maybe it is because we become different. Maybe you too will be singing this new song to the Lord. ***SINGING AND CHANTING FORTH THE SCRIPTURE AND PRAYING IN THE HOLY SPIRIT CAUSES BREAKTHROUGH ALL AROUND US!***

2. NEW SONG FOR A NEW HEART

Psalm 40:3 - He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD.

I was shocked by the suddenness and the dramatic degree of the change I experienced in the summer of 1973. Christ came into my life and He began His amazing work just like He said. He was making all things new. One of the changes that surprised me the most was the change in the music that I listened to. For years, my life had been centered around music. I was consumed by the likes of Dylan, Joplin, Zeppelin, Clapton, Cocker and a list too long to remember. It was suddenly replaced with Barry McGuire, the Second Chapter of Acts, Love Song, and Phil Keaggy. I lost my attraction to the music of the world; it was empty and uninviting to me. This Jesus music was passionate and had a substance or presence in it that agreed with the new thing that was happening in me. I didn’t know how to say it back then, but God was transforming my life and His new song was playing a huge role in the process. Jonathan Edwards talked about how music played a huge role in their revival experiences in Northampton. Here are some of his insights about renewal and this new song.

“By this work of God in renewing the heart, the man that is the subject of it becomes a new creature or is a new man, as it is often said in Scripture. And therefore no wonder that his song is new: for we are told that “old things are passed away” and “all things become new

with him”. [The] hearts of the redeemed are new. He has a new spirit put within him. Their natures are new. In some sense their bodies are new. They have new eyes. They are renewed in the whole man. They are said to be “a new lump,” having put away “the old leaven”. They are newborn babes. They have new garments, for their filthy garments are taken away and they are clothed with change of raiment. And they have a new name. “He that overcometh I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saying he that receiveth it.” And Ch. Revelation 3:12, “I will write upon him my new name.”

Yep, God is doing a new thing and here is the best part, He is doing it inside of you. Yield to His new song and soon you will find that the song is not only all around you but is actually bubbling up from deep within your heart.

3. THE SONG OF HEAVENLY FELLOWSHIP

All that believed were together and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. Acts 4:32

“God has prepared for Himself one great song of praise throughout eternity, and those who enter the community of God join in this song. It is the song that the “morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” at the creation of the world. (Job 38:7). It is the victory song of the children of Israel after passing through the Red Sea, the Magnificat of Mary after the annunciation, the song of Paul and Silas in the night of prison, the song of the singers on the sea of glass after their rescue, the “song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb” (Rev. 15:3) It is the song of the heavenly fellowship.”— Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*

DISCUSSION

1. What examples are in the Bible where one used a song to bring about deliverance?
2. How did Jonathan Edwards change his attitude with the world around him?
3. Matthew Henry spoke of being brought into a new world by singing a new song. What does this mean?
4. Dietrich Bonhoeffer spoke of community coming together in the new song. How does this relate to us today?

WEEK THREE

SONGS IN THE NIGHT SEASONS

Psalm 40:2,3 - He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth. Praise to our God; Many will see it and fear and will trust in the Lord.

The song of the Lord becomes part of the very makeup of our souls. As a result, this song sustains us in the darkest of times. The worldly man sings songs of joy only when things are going well for him in this world. For the Christian, we have no such limitations. Our songs of joy are not even related to our present circumstances. Our songs are spiritual in nature and flow out of the relationship with Christ that burns in our souls. We have tasted His love, we have been touched deeply by His power, and we have sensed the nearness of His coming kingdom. What else can we do but sing for joy. Here is how Jonathan Edwards saw this song in relationship to our troubles in this world.

Rev.5:9 “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation”

“How great does the rejoicing of this company that John saw in his vision seem to be in singing this sweet song. So engaged were they in it, and so loud and sweet was the melody of their united voices, that John seems not know how to express it, and therefore uses various similitudes. Says he, it was “as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder,” and as “the voice of harpers harping with their harps”. The joy and praise and melody were inexpressible. This song is fit to be sung in the mournful and sorrowful times. We have always reason to sing it, whatever afflictions we may be under, and there is support and joy to be had in the melody of it in the darkest times. This is the song that God gives in the night in the night of affliction. ‘Tis very proper to sing this new song on a death bed. And many of the saints have sung it then, and thereby have triumphed over death; yea, many have sung this new song in the flames of martyrdom and have exulted in the midst of torments. The joy and sweetness of it is enough to carry the soul above pain and above the cruelty of men and devils.”

DISCUSSION

1. How did God bring you through a night season?
2. What does it mean in the scripture to “hear songs in the night”?

1. THE REALITY OF THE OTHER WORLD

This new song is a foretaste of our incredible life to come. When the reality of the other world is in us, the troubles of this present life lose their sting. This is the way Paul was able to sing from the dungeon in Philippi, this is how John endured his isolation on Patmos, and this is the strength

that kept Peter in his martyrdom. All of us face troubles in this life; only those who know the new song can actually face their troubles with joy.

2. GOD'S SONG IN THE DARKEST OF NIGHTS

“Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.” 1 Samuel 30:6

David's life was not all fun and games. He went through some very dark places in his life. His experience with God even in those dark nights of the soul is what makes his writings so attractive to us today.

We can relate to David. His relationship with God sustained him in the darkest of nights even when he walked through the valley of the shadow of death. All of us go through those dark nights of the soul. Some of those places are darker than others.

David Brainerd was a young missionary during the time of the Great Awakening. He went through some very dark times.

He was expelled from Yale because of some statements he made about the Dean of the college in relation to the revival. He was also battling tuberculosis which ultimately took his life at twenty-nine. He became a missionary to the Native Americans. It was in the battle for his health while living in the wilderness, ministering to the Native Americans that he wrote his journal. To him it was insignificant; His work seemed insignificant. Brainerd's journal is credited as playing a huge role in the birthing of the modern mission's movement. In his darkest moments, God gave Brainerd a song in the night. That song is still being sung today. Brainerd's journal has never been out of print since the 1700's. Check out a brief portion of his words.

“He is able to support the heart under the heaviest sorrows, and to give light in the greatest darkness: he can divide the thickest cloud with beams of heavenly light and comfort: he is one that gives songs in the night and turns the shadow of death into the morning: he has power to make up the loss of those that are bereaved by the death of the most eminent minister. His own presence with the bereaved is sufficient...

Persons under sorrowful bereavements are ready to go and lay open their sorrows to them that they think will be ready to pity them, though they know they can but pity them, and cannot help them. How much more is here in such a case to induce us to go to Jesus, who is not only so ready to pity, but so able to help, able abundantly more than to fill up the breach, and able to turn all our sorrows into joy!”

He is able to turn all our sorrows into joy! The power of Brainerd's life is this, the reality of God in the darkest of nights. That is the appeal of his journal. Why have missionaries like William Carey, Hudson Taylor, and Jim Elliott who attributed Brainerd's journal as one of the main tools the Spirit used in inspiring them to go to the nations? It is because Brainerd found the joy of the Lord's song in the dark night of his soul. Maybe you are in one of those dark nights. If so, listen carefully. You might just hear the joyful sound of God's Song in the Night.

DISCUSSION

1. How did David encourage himself in the Lord?

3. SURROUNDED BY SONG

Psalm 32:7 – You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah

David is probably best known for his songs. Apparently, music had been part of David's life from his childhood. He probably developed his singing, harp playing, and songwriting skills on his father's sheep. That really is appropriate in light of his most famous song of all, Psalm 23 which was written for his Heavenly Father's sheep. The words of that Psalm have effected millions of lives over the years, "the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want". Everything I have ever needed or even wanted has been found in the Lord. In today's verse David is describing the supernatural nature of these spiritual songs. He says that he is surrounded with songs of deliverance or victory. Our songs to the Lord are filled with power, actually they are filled with God Himself. The Lord is the One who surrounds us in our songs. I hide myself in Him, my hiding place and I am surrounded with the power of God. Here is how Spurgeon described this verse. ***"What a golden sentence! The man is encircled in song, surrounded by dancing mercies, all of them proclaiming the triumphs of grace. There is no breach in the circle, it completely rings him round; on all sides he hears music. Before him hope sounds the cymbals, and behind him gratitude beats the timbrel.***

Right and left, above and beneath, the air resounds with joy, and all this for the very man who, a few weeks ago, was roaring all the day long. How great a change! What wonders grace has done and still can do! Selah. There was a need of a pause, for love so amazing needs to be pondered, and joy so great demands quiet contemplation, since language fails to express it."

David's songs are so powerful because they are forged in the fires of adversity and in the very fire of God. David lived his life surrounded by trouble. He was chased by lions, bears, a Philistine giant, armies of Philistines, King Saul, and his son Absalom. In his adversity he found his place of safety, his hiding place. He is not talking about the physical caves that he hid away in, but the very presence of God that would hide him away. The hiding place is closely related to David's songs. David would worship, God would come down, and everything just seemed to fall in place.

DISCUSSION

1. Have you personally found your hiding place?
2. Pray for one another to find Christ and the hiding place He gives.

WEEK FOUR

PROPHETIC SONGS

1. GUSHING OUT IN PROPHETIC SONG

And Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed.” Luke 1:46–48

Mary’s prophetic song is a sort of prototype of our Christian faith. She can be said to represent the body of Christ as a sort of first fruit. We can learn a lot about our faith and about faith’s expression as we look at her famous song of prophecy called the “Magnificat”. Martin Luther wrote a book about this powerful song. Here is a clip from that book.

“Mary put things in the right order in this verse. First, she called God her Lord. Next, she called him her Savior. Then she proclaimed what God had done. We shouldn’t begin our prayers by selfishly asking what God can do for us. Mary’s example teaches us to love and praise God for no other reason than his goodness. We should find joy and pleasure in who he is. This is an exalted, pure, and tender way of loving and praising God. By contrast, some people are only parasites, always expecting to get things from God. They don’t love or praise God because he is good. They’re only concerned about how good God is to them, how much they feel his goodness, and how many good things they receive from him. The moment he hides his face and withdraws his goodness, leaving them in misery without anything, they stop loving and praising him. They no longer love and praise the goodness that they now can’t see or feel. By doing this, they prove that they don’t find joy in God, their Savior. They don’t love or praise the goodness when it’s hidden in God. They find much more joy in their salvation than in their Savior, in the gift than in the Giver, and in the creature than in the Creator.”

In Mary’s time, prophetic songs were non-existent. She was not following something she learned from someone else, she was responding to God’s love. Today we live in a different season. The Holy Spirit has been poured out on all peoples; everyone has access into His presence. One of the beautiful expressions of our faith and our love for God is the prophetic song. This type of worship can become part of our daily walk with God. To some, it may seem like the simple ramblings that appear to be quite childish. To others, they are the very utterances of the mysteries of God. Our worship should serve as a mirror to His greatness. As Mary reflected on her angelic visitor and considered the supernatural conception in her womb, she really had no other course to take. Joy and celebration were spilling and gushing out of her heart. Her song was just a spontaneous response to the greatness of God. Mary is describing supernatural utterance as she begins this prophetic song. She says, ‘My soul magnifies the Lord’. The prayer language is a vocal, supernatural language declaring the magnificence of the Lord. Mary was so full of God

that she too broke out in a prophetic song magnifying the Lord. This is how Adam Clarke describes Mary's song.

“This is the only way in which God can be magnified, or made great; for, strictly speaking, nothing can be added to God, for he is infinite and eternal; therefore the way to magnify him is to show forth and celebrate those acts in which he has manifested his greatness.”

Mary's prophetic song is an example of how people respond when they are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. The prayer language and the gift of prophesy is how we pour out this blessing.

Mary was a picture of the church about to be birthed through the ministry of her Son. Her angelic visitation and the overshadowing with the Holy Spirit marked her for the rest of her life. She was totally consumed, inside and outside, with the mighty presence of the Holy Spirit. Here is Clarke speaking about Mary being filled with God. **“My spirit hath rejoiced. Exulted. These words are uncommonly emphatical, they show that Mary's whole soul was filled with the Divine influence and wrapped up in God.”**

This would not be the last encounter Mary would have with the mighty anointing of the Holy Spirit. In the book of Acts, Luke lists Mary as being in the upper room when the Holy Spirit came upon everyone in the room. He said that everyone there spoke in other tongues. Here again we see Mary magnifying the Lord with her Spirit songs. The good news for us is that we can all be overshadowed with the Holy Spirit and pour out our hearts in prophetic songs.

DISCUSSION

1. *Mary said that her soul will magnify Him. What does that mean?*
2. *How can we enlarge ourselves to contain more of God?*

2. WHY DO WE SING?

They shall sing in the ways of the Lord. Psalm 138:5

You ever think about why people sing? Some sing about love gone wrong, others about a Rocky Mountain High, still others sing about love gone right. What is it that makes you sing? The song you sing reveals a lot about you and what makes you tick. One of the sure signs of real conversion is the new song that suddenly appears inside of you. It's not like you tried to change your song, it just happened. Now your song is about mercy, redemption, and God's love; it's a song the angels wish they could sing. Here is how Charles Spurgeon describes this singing phenomenon.

“Do you remember the place when Jesus met you, and said, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; I have blotted out as a cloud thy transgressions, and as a thick cloud thy sins; they shall not be mentioned against thee any more forever. Oh! what a sweet season is that when Jesus takes away the pain of sin. When the

Lord first pardoned my sin, I was so joyous that I could scarce refrain from dancing. I thought on my road home from the house where I had been set at liberty, that I must tell the stones in the street the story of my deliverance. So full was my soul of joy, that I wanted to tell every snowflake that was falling from heaven of the wondrous love of Jesus, who had blotted out the sins of one of the chief of rebels. But it is not only at the commencement of the Christian life that believers have reason for song; as long as they live, they discover cause to sing in the ways of the Lord, and their experience of his constant lovingkindness leads them to say, I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.”

So go ahead and sing. Maybe you were never a singer before, or you never really had anything to sing about. That has all changed now. **Your sins have been thrown into the depths of the sea, the love of God has been poured into your heart, and the Lord has called you to be one of His children!** Singing is part of your new life; He has put a new song into your heart!

DISCUSSION

1. How has your song changed since conversion? Is this something that needs to be improved in your life?
2. How does Jesus words apply to this? About old wineskins?

WEEK FIVE

LEARNING THE NEW SONG

Matthew 18:19 - Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.

This verse of scripture has more to it than we see at first glance. Jesus used the word *sumphoneo* (agree) when He was teaching about prayer. Obviously, this word reminds us of musical harmony. Jesus is speaking of a harmony of soul that is flowing with the song of the Lord. This harmony flows out of our relationship with the Lord and is characterized as a beautiful song. As Christ becomes our source of joy, His joy flows out of us in this song. We are in harmony with the Lord and with all others who have been captured by this song of heaven. Jonathan Edwards spoke of this song and of learning this song in his Thanksgiving Day sermon in 1740. Check out this excerpt from his message.

“These are the things that are requisite to the learning this song. They are the fruit of the redemption or purchase of Jesus Christ. Christ has purchased for a certain number that knowledge of the glorious excellency of God and Christ, and of the infinite riches of his grace appearing in the way of salvation. That excellent heavenly light that shines into the soul and gives it a view and understanding of those excellent things, is a blessing purchased at the price of Christ’s precious blood. And so that ability, that harmony of the soul and melody of the heart, consisting in holy love and joy and delight in God and Christ, is a precious benefit that is the fruit of the same purchase. This heavenly melody is dear; it costs Christ’s precious blood.”

This song is a gift to us purchased by the blood of Jesus. Once we see the power of His redeeming blood and this life of joy that it has introduced us to, the song of heaven becomes our song. This song is different than the earthly songs that we sing. In those songs we are singing of physical observations or experiences we have had. The song of The Lord is different; it is way different. This spiritual song is not only all around us, it is actually inside of us. It has become part of our very nature. Heaven has come down and entered our souls. We can’t do anything else; we have to sing.

In our corporate services at church we often experience this heavenly *sumphoneo*. The Greek word for “agreement” is *sumphoneo* and it means the following:

- To be in agreement with, in unison, in one accord
- To SPEAK together with agreement, harmonious and united
- To agree with and DECLARE statements agreed upon

Therefore, “to be in agreement” is to be “in unity, speaking and championing the same vision.” It is to stand as one, holding true to what has been agreed upon.

Agreement is **SYNERGY**. It is the working together of two things to produce an effect greater than the sum of their individual parts; an advantageous agreement that results in a greater outcome. We all begin to sing in a spontaneous heavenly melody and also in this incredible heavenly language. Singing with other Christians in the heavenly language brings us into a taste of heaven itself. Many times in our services we become caught up in this heavenly song. As we yield to the melody in our heart and the language of the Spirit flows out of us, we experience this oneness, or harmony Jesus spoke of. This is the joy all of our hearts are longing for.

DISCUSSION

1. What are some of the requisite to learning this new song?
2. How does the word “sumphoneo” relate to worship in a corporate setting?

1. SONGS WITHIN SONGS

Psalm 96:1 - O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth.

Charles Spurgeon says this about the new song:

“O sing unto the Lord a new song. New joys are filling the hearts of men, for the glad tidings of blessing to all people are proclaimed, therefore let them sing a new song. Angels inaugurated the new dispensation with new songs, and shall not we take up the strain? The song is for Jehovah alone, the hymns which chanted the praises of Jupiter and Neptune, Vishnu and Siva are hushed forever; Bacchanalian shouts are silenced, lascivious sonnets are no more. Unto the one only God all music is to be dedicated. Mourning is over, and the time of singing of hearts has come. No dismal rites are celebrated, no bloody sacrifices of human beings are presented, no cutting with knives, and outcries of lamentation are presented by deluded votaries. Joy is in the ascendant, and singing has become the universal expression of love, the fitting voice of reverent adoration. Men are made new creatures, and their song is new also. The names of Baalim are no more on their lips, the wanton music of Ashtaroth ceases; the foolish ditty and the cruel war song are alike forgotten; the song is holy, heavenly, pure, and pleasant. The psalmist speaks as if he would lead the strain and be the chief musician, he invites, he incites, he persuades to sacred worship, and cries with all his heart, “O sing unto Jehovah a new song.”

Spurgeon is describing the very heart of our Christian experience. It is our heart that has been converted. Out of the heart springs the very songs of our life. You can tell a lot about someone by the songs that they sing. What kind of song is in your heart ? After all, out of the heart flows the issues of life.

Thinking back about the meetings we have had, I am not really sure what all happened, all I know is that we witnessed a defining moment, that was unmistakable to everyone in the room. While we now see through a glass darkly, soon we will see the fruit of that prophetic night.

Keep your eyes and ears open to the next chapter in our lives. It will be incredible; we have felt the power of its song.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss just how important is listening to worship music over secular.
2. What happens when we listen or watch too much TV, Social Media, or Gaming devices?
3. Discuss what the Apostle Paul says about this.

WEEK SIX

DIFFERENT EXPRESSIONS OF WORSHIP

The King is enthralled by your beauty. – Psalm 45:11

Purpose - that we might worship God and enjoy him forever. Apart from that we have no other purpose and if we lose that purpose we walk around in spiritual disorientation.

Adam and Eve lost their purpose and ceased to exist. They forgot why they were put on this earth and where they came from. (Spiritual Amnesia)

Worship is humanity's full reason for existence. It is why we are born and born again. Worship is why there is a church. This is our first call. When we don't do this, our lives are filled with confusion and every evil work. **Our job is to tell the universe just how great God is.** God makes everything for a purpose. To live without worship is to be like clouds without water, sun that gives no heat, a bird that cannot sing.

Romans 1:21 - For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God, nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Psalm 34:1-7 - I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

1. AN EXEMPLIFICATION OF TRUE PRAISE

- A. It is thorough. There is no praise without concentration of soul.
- B. It is constant.
 - a) In every department of action – Intellectual, artistic, commercial, political.
 - b) In every circumstance of life — sorrow, joy, adversity, prosperity, bereavement, friendship.
- C. It is exultant. God is the sum total of all excellence, the primal fount of all joy; therefore let us boast in Him.
- D. It is social. The true worshipper becomes magnetic; he draws others to the shrine before which he falls.

2. A REASON FOR TRUE PRAISE

- A. Past deliverance (verse 4)
 - a) He had been "delivered out of all his troubles." His troubles were great in their variety, number, but he was delivered.
 - b) He had been delivered out of all his troubles by prayer. "I sought the Lord," etc.
- B. Constant protection (verse 7)

3. **HALLAL** is a primary Hebrew root word for praise. Our word "hallelujah" comes from this base word. It means "to be clear, to praise, to shine, to boast, show, to rave, celebrate, to be clamorously foolish."

- A. **Psalm 113:1-3 Praise (hallal) ye the Lord, praise (hallal) o ye servants of the Lord, praise (hallal) the name of the Lord.**
- B. **Psalm 150:1 Praise (hallal) the Lord! Praise (hallal) God in His sanctuary; Praise (hallal) Him in His mighty expanse.**
- C. **Psalm 149:3 Let them praise (hallal) His name in the dance: let them sing praises with the timbrel and harp.**
- D. OTHER REFERENCES: Judges 16:24; 2 Samuel 14:25; 2 Chronicles 7:6; Ezra 3:10-11; Nehemiah 5:13; Psalms 18:3, 56:4, 63:5, 150:2-4; Isaiah 62:9; Jeremiah 20:13; Joel 2:26

4. **YADAH** is a verb with a root meaning, "the extended hand, to throw out the hand, therefore, to worship with extended hand, to lift the hands." According to the Lexicon, the opposite meaning is "to bemoan, the wringing of the hands."

- A. **2 Chronicles 20:21 - Give thanks (yadah) to the Lord, for His lovingkindness is everlasting. Psalm 63:1 So I will bless thee as long as I live; I will (yadah) lift up my hands in Thy name.**
- B. **Psalm 107:15 - Oh that men would praise (yadah) the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men.**
- C. OTHER REFERENCES: Genesis 29:35, 49:8; 2 Chronicles 7:3,6; Psalms 67:3, 108:3; Isaiah 12:1,4; Jeremiah 33:11

5. **TOWDAH** comes from the same principle root word as yadah but is used more specifically. Towdah literally means, "an extension of the hand in adoration, avowal, or acceptance." By way of application, it is apparent in the Psalms and elsewhere that it is used for thanking God for "things not yet received" as well as things already at hand.

- A. **Psalm 50:14 - Offer unto God praise (towdah) and pay thy vows unto the Most High.**

B. Psalm 50:23 - Whoso offereth praise (towdah) glorifieth Me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.

C. OTHER REFERENCES: Psalms 42:4, 56:12; Jeremiah 17:26; Jeremiah 33:11

4. SHABACH means, "to shout, to address in a loud tone, to command, to triumph."

A. Psalm 47:1 - O clap your hands, all peoples; shout (shabach) to God with the voice of joy (or triumph).

B. Psalm 145:4 - One generation shall praise (shabach) Thy works to another and declare Thy mighty acts.

C. Isaiah 12:6 - Cry aloud and shout (shabach) for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

D. OTHER REFERENCES: Psalms 63:3, 117:1, 145:4; Ecclesiastes 4:2

5. BARAK means "to kneel down, to bless God as an act of adoration, to salute."

A. Psalm 95:6 - O come let us worship and bow down; let us kneel (barak) before the Lord our maker.

B. 1Chronicles 29:20 - Then David said to all the assembly, "Now bless (barak) the Lord your God." And all the assembly blessed (barak) the Lord, the God of their fathers, and bowed low and did homage to the Lord and to the king.

C. Psalm 34:1 - I will bless (barak) the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

D. OTHER REFERENCES: Judges 5:2; Psalms 72:15, 96:2, 103:1-2

6. ZAMAR means "to pluck the strings of an instrument, to sing, to praise; a musical word which is largely involved with joyful expressions of music with musical instruments.

A. Psalm 21:13 - Be exalted O Lord, in Thine own strength, so will we sing and praise (zamar) Thy power.

B. 1 Chronicles 16:9 - Sing to Him, sing praises (zamar) to Him; speak of all His wonders.

C. Psalm 57:8-9 - Awake my glory; awake harp and lyre, I will awaken the dawn! I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord among the peoples; I will sing praises (zamar) to Thee among the nations.

D. OTHER REFERENCES: Judges 5:3; 2 Samuel 22:50; Psalms 61:8, 147:1, 7

7. TEHILLAH is derived from the word halal and means "the singing of halals, to sing or to laud; perceived to involve music, especially singing; hymns of the Spirit or praise."

A. Psalm 22:3 - Yet Thou art holy, O Thou who art enthroned upon the praises (tehillah) of Israel.

B. Isaiah 61:3 - To grant to those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise (tehillah) instead of the spirit of fainting, so they shall be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.

C. OTHER REFERENCES: Exodus 15:11; Deuteronomy 10:21; Nehemiah 9:5; Psalms 9:14, 22:25; Jeremiah 48:2

DISCUSSION

1. Which of the praise methods do you the least of?
2. What does this say about the nature of God?
3. Discussion all the various methods of praise.

WEEK SEVEN

AWAKE OH SLEEPER SONGS

Time to awaken the dawn and get your praise on! Awake, my soul! Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn. Psalm 57:8

R. T. Society's Notes - "The morning shall not awake me to praise; but in my songs I will anticipate the dawn." There is nothing better than staying thankful and I am talking about having serious praise! Over twenty years ago, I had forgotten that. Everyday bled into another day of excuses, being upset, and battling anger. People, circumstances and my own short comings all overwhelmed me. David while hiding in the cave from his many adversaries learned about awakening the dawn. In other words he got his praise on!

God continues to put a "new song" in our mouth, and it starts supernaturally. **Reading his word and praying in the spirit helps correct the wrong thinking that goes on.** It's time to awaken your slumbering morn! Awake soul thou sleeps! The question is, are we still hung up with the old song? Years ago, I remember having lunch with a church member explaining how much injustice was done to me. While I was talking, I literally felt like I saw "the Lord" standing by me and imitating verbatim my little drama story! In fact, the Lord had a shovel in his hand implying the hole was just getting deeper! No, I wasn't awaking the dawn with my praises! I thank God he had me see my little pity party I was having, and it shook me to the core. Paul and Silas had quite a few injustices done to them, but at midnight they got their praise on and it set them free. Do you find yourself in a cave being chased by all your issues? Go ahead and put on a song, listen to psalms or do a dance! It's time to awaken the dawn and get your praise on!

Treasury of David puts it this way, **"He first teaches my fingers to fight, and then to play the epinikion, or song of triumph. Sound, then my Psaltery and harp, emulous of those that are around the throne above; your melody can soften my cares, lay my fears, and turn my cave into a choir."**

You have to get up early and turn off all the garbage and learn to get violent with yourself. Yes, you have to get physical with yourself and get your heart fixed or prepared on God. David learned to awaken his tongue and his heart, and his cave became a choir. I believe one has to get a grip on their belief system for your life. Are people, weather, or circumstances in charge of your joy or do you drink from the well within? Look again, maybe the Lord has more to say than meets the eye. The Lord is tired of hearing your old sorry song. It's time to get your praise on and awaken the dawn!

“GOTTA GET, GOTTA GET, GOTTA GET MY PRAISE ON! GOTTA GET MY SERIOUS PRAISE ON! HE'S WORTHY, HE'S MIGHTY, HE'S WONDERFUL, HE'S MARVELOUS, HE'S AWESOME, HE'S RIGHTEOUS, HE'S HOLY, HOLY, HOLY!” Ellen Hayes

1. THE SWEETEST OF ALL SONGS

Revelations 14:3 – And they were singing a wonderful new song before the throne, in front of the four living creatures, and in front of the twenty-four elders.

Here is how Jonathan Edwards responds to this passage. **“The singing of songs is used as a token of mirth and rejoicing. Singing and rejoicing are wont to go together. When carnal persons meet together to sing songs, it is in token of carnal mirth. But there is no joy like that which is expressed in singing this new song....The melody is pleasant to the angels, and pleasant to the Lamb of God, and pleasant to him that sits upon the throne, and most pleasant to the soul that makes the melody. The act of praise is an abundant reward to itself. He that sings it has communion with God in it, for in the same time that there flows a stream of love out of the heart towards God, there flows a more full stream of love from God into the soul. At the same time that he praises God with a sweet voice, Christ with a sweeter voice speaks peace to the soul and manifests his love to it.”**

Next time you go to church make a real attempt to hear His voice. He is present in His gatherings and He loves to minister to each of us. There is a supernatural joy that hovers in the midst of God’s people. As we sing the new song of the Lord spontaneously and corporately the presence of the Lord comes and hovers in our midst. **He is setting us apart by His love so that we can glorify God in the world that is confused and hurting.** Maybe you are the vessel He wants to use in these last days.

We live in a world of songs and melodies. From country to rock, from classical to rap music; we live in a musical world. We sing about love gone wrong and love gone right. There are songs about cars, surf boards, drug use, politics, and social issues. Everybody is singing about something. If you really think about it, song is the expression of what we feel strongly about or what we love. It is the natural vent created by God to express our feelings. With that in mind, maybe the Lord intended our best and most passionate songs to have a heavenly theme. He does say He is a jealous God. I wonder if that means He wants to be the subject of our strongest feelings? If that is true, maybe He wants to be the subject of our songs. Heaven is filled with songs. It may be that the very atmosphere is melodic. If that’s the case, when we taste heaven through the infilling of the Holy Spirit our heart is filled with heaven’s song. The melody and the lyrics become part of our makeup. We have no choice; we just have to sing. Again here are some thoughts by Jonathan Edwards on singing heaven’s song on earth.

“The melody of this song is most acceptable to God. The great God is delighted with it. ‘Tis acceptable to Jesus Christ. He accepts of such praise, and never rejects it. If we sing this new song in our hearts when we are alone and retired from the world, to spend some time in secret between God and our own souls, Christ will come to us and will as it were listen to the melodious notes and will reward us with some token of his favor. If we sing this new song in our public assemblies, it will be to worship God in the beauty of holiness and will be the way to have God delighting to be in the midst of us. In singing this new song to God and the Lamb, our thanksgiving days will be acceptable to God. This song is more pleasing to God than the offering up of thousands of rams and ten thousands of rivers of oil.”

Maybe there is a song welling up in you today. Don’t hold it in, let it out. You won’t be singing alone; you will be joining in with the angels and the redeemed singing heaven’s song.

DISCUSSION

1. Give an example of a time when you used a song of triumph over your life?
2. What did Jesus mean when he said, “you are not of this world”. John 15:19 ESV – If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.
3. What is Christ speaking to you?

2. CUP OVERFLOWS WITH JOY

Singing is a gift given to us by the Lord. Singing is obviously the release of the emotions of our heart. That’s why they always say, “you have to pay your dues if you want to sing the blues”. So singing is the release of our sorrow, our joy, faith, or really anything that we are experiencing in life. Singing the new song of the Lord is literally a taste of heaven (I emphasize the word literal). So when someone is filled with God, their cup overflows with joy. Often our joy is released in beautiful songs of joy. The heavenly song is saturated with life. Everyone who embraces this song is filled to overflowing and becomes a participant in singing the songs of the Lord.

3. DRIVING AWAY OUR GRIEFS

Charles Spurgeon says this about beginning the year with joy.

“We will be glad and rejoice in thee. We will not open the gates of the year to the dolorous notes of the sackbut (a trombone like instrument), but to the sweet strains of the harp of joy, and the high-sounding cymbals of gladness. O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise unto the rock of our salvation. We, the called and faithful and chosen, we will drive away our griefs, and set up our banners of confidence in the name of God. Let others lament over their troubles, we who have the sweetening tree to cast into Marah’s bitter pool, with joy will magnify the Lord.”

Singing is our vent for the joy of the Lord. Look closely at the songs you are singing and listening to. If these songs are not pulsating with joy you may want to sing a new song. Time is too short to sing the sad songs, *the joy of the Lord is our strength*.

DISCUSSION

1. In the story of Naomi and Ruth how did their circumstances change for them?
2. How can our cup overflow?

WEEK EIGHT

ACCELERATED PROMISES

Jeremiah 1:11,12 NASB - And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" And I said, "I see a branch of an almond tree." Then the LORD said to me, "You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it.

This is an amazing promise of supernatural harvest. The Lord gave this word of promise to me on January 1, 2000. The first part was the almond tree which was the annual indicator of the harvest in the nation of Israel. Since the almonds were the first of the harvest each year, they were a sort of prophesy or insight into the rest of the harvest. In January of 2000 we were tasting the first fruits of the Beyond the Grave harvest. The Lord said that would be the indicator of future supernatural harvest. The rest of that verse is what is getting my attention this year, the Lord says, "I am watching over my word to perform it". Here is how Calvin describes this verse.

"The Lord says that he would watch over his word, that he might execute whatever he had announced by his servants; as though he had said, "I indeed allot their parts (so to speak) to the prophets; but as they speak from my mouth, I am present with them to fulfill whatever I command them." In short, God intimates that the might and the power of his hand would be connected with the word, of which the prophets were ministers among men. Thus it is a general declaration which refers not only to punishments, but also to promises. Rightly, then, hast thou seen; he says; for I am watching."

As I was reading this verse recently, I kept thinking of the word acceleration in relation to God watching over His word to perform it in relation to all we have experienced in this last year. The Lord is passionate about His promises. The times we live in are critical. I believe the Lord is saying He will accelerate His promises because of these unusual times. 2020 was an unusually difficult year and I feel like the Lord will respond in 2021 with an unprecedented outbreak of signs and wonders. **Take hold of God's promises. Act and speak as if they are about to come to pass.** He is watching over all of His promises and 2021 will be one to remember.

DISCUSSION

1. How does the word "acceleration" apply to you?
2. What area in your life do you need breakthrough?

1. THREE WORSHIPERS

John 4:23,24 – But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.

Worship is a huge part of our Christian life. To the lost person, worship is just a style of singing. It could be called gospel music, Jesus rock, or spiritual music. To the awakened person, it is not a

style but a joy or passion that flows from a glimpse of the greatness of our God. **Worshippers are vessels that God uses to change our world.** The Lord is looking for worshippers to work through.

King David was one of those worshippers. David was known for his worship and caused quite a stir with his dancing in worship in the streets of Jerusalem.

2 Samuel 6:14,15 – ‘Then David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was wearing a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet’.

Worship was first of all, pure pleasure for David. He had glimpsed the beauty of the Lord and worshipping with the dance was his response. His unashamed worship affected others. Some hated him (his wife for example) because of his worship. Others joined in and found God’s love for themselves.

Paul was another of God’s worshippers. We find Paul worshipping in the most unusual situation. ***Acts 16:25 – “But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.”*** He had been beaten and tied up hands and feet. He began to sing songs of worship in the darkness of that jail cell. God came down and broke the chains of darkness.

You worship the Lord, and your chains will be broken too.

Another worshipper was King Jehoshaphat. He was facing insurmountable odds when Israel was attacked by some of their enemies. Jehoshaphat did not have an army capable of defeating this enemy. What did he do ? He sent out the worshippers. ***2 Chron.20:21 – ‘And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: “Praise the LORD, for His mercy endures forever”.*** Not only were the enemies scattered in defeat before the singers, they left an incredible amount of wealth behind. You may be facing overwhelming financial challenges. When you don’t see a way out, maybe it’s time to worship. You will be shocked when the Lord comes on the scene, defeats your enemies, and supplies above your wildest expectations.

DISCUSSION

1. Define the difference between singing and worship.
2. Discuss how worshipers change the world.

2. "THE LORD REGINS" IS THE ANTHEM OF OUR PRAISE!

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:18

I am amazed how long it takes me to receive revelation from the Word of God. Thank God the Holy Spirit has been given to me as the Helper, Teacher, Instructor, and Stand-by, or I would never "get it". In our living room is a 1900 century painting of Saul on the Damascus Road. It shows a horse rearing up with a man on the ground, his eyes blinded by this amazing form of Christ the Risen One. This painting has captured our attention for years and has become the focal point of our Christianity. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly". Here was Saul killing Christians and yet Christ comes to him and he is forever changed. When Paul is talking about the glory of the Lord, he is speaking present tense. Not only a crucified Savior but a Risen one filled with the Glory of God. This became Paul's mantra; Christ in you the Hope of Glory. Even the Reformation in the 1600 century was the rediscovery of the Pauline Gospel. Its justifying righteousness, it's spiritually, and it's liberty. Many today preach a different gospel than Paul's.

Expositor Bible says: **"The transformation here spoken of is not the work of a powerful imagination, which can make the figure in the pages of the gospel live again and suffuse the soul with feeling as it gazes upon it. But it is the work of the Spirit, and the Spirit is given, not to the memory or imagination which can vivify the past but to the faith which sees Christ upon His throne. Paul is not looking back, but up, he does not remember but he beholds in a glass "the glory of The Lord" meaning to him it is the present exaltation of the Risen Christ. "The Lord reigneth" that is the anthem of his praise.**

It is his glory that he shares the Father's throne, that He is head of the church, possessor and bestower of all the fulness of divine grace, the coming judge of the world, conqueror of every hostile power, intercessor for His own, and in short, bearer of all the majesty which belongs to His kingly office."

Spurgeon says, **"We should not rest contented without an experimental knowledge of the transforming power of the gospel, by the operation of the Spirit, bringing us into a conformity to the temper and tendency of the glorious gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus."** This is the glory that Jesus prayed for the Father to show us! This is the Glory that we are to become fixated on like Paul was on the Damascus Road. ***It ever changes us, conforms us and changes our whole nature.*** The veil of the law has been taken away. We can and should forever experience a living and active life transformation in Christ. It is the anthem of our Praise!

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the transforming power of Christ in your life.
2. Discuss salvation and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
3. Do you need to receive Christ today?

WEEK NINE

THE FUEL OF WORSHIP

John 5:35 – He was the lamp that was burning and was shining, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.

What makes a worshiper? Why do some people seem to get it, but others just can't seem to understand? John the Baptist was at the center of a firestorm in his day, a storm that he actually started. Why was John so out of the box? What had gotten him so disturbed? I guess it goes back to that heart thing. John's heart had been set on fire by a glimpse of the glory of the Lord. Luke said that the word of the Lord came to John out in the wilderness. It was that word that set John's heart on fire. His heart was burning with passion; his mind was lit up with revelation.

Jonathan Edwards writes, **“And hereby our ministry will be likely to be as beneficial as our office is honorable: we shall be like Christ and shall shine with his beams; Christ will live in us and be seen in his life and beauty in our ministry, and in our conversation, and we shall be most likely to be the means of bringing others to him, and of their receiving of his light, and being made partakers of his life, and having his joy fulfilled in them.”**

How are we as gospel ministers go about becoming burning and shining lights?

1. *Be diligent in study.*
2. *Be diligent in the work of ministry to which you were called.*
3. *Be very conversant with the Holy scriptures, (know the Word)*

Edwards explains, **“Ministers, in order to their being burning and shining lights, should walk closely with God, and keep near to Christ; that they may ever be enlightened and enkindled by him”.**

So maybe that's the cure for lukewarm worship in lukewarm churches. There may not be enough fuel to light a fire. What is the fuel that lights the fire of worship? It is revelation that comes from the Word of God. Maybe it's time to light the fire again.

DISCUSSION

1. How important is it to daily to study the word? How can we develop our study of the word?
2. How important is it to walk in the calling or gifts the Lord has given us? How can we improve on this?

1. CANDLES WERE MADE TO BURN

I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. John 9:4

Christ came with a mandate and in turn he gave us the same. Do you join with him in working the works of God? Candles were made to burn and built for light. The night comes my friends and the great ticking clock never stops. McClaran says, “**He that can say, as Jesus Christ did say: ‘My meat’-the refreshment of my nature, the necessary sustenance of my being-’is to do the will of my Father’; that man, and that man alone, feels no pressure. When ‘I will’ and ‘I choose’ coincide, like two of Euclid’s triangles atop of one another, line for line and angle for angle, then comes liberty into the life. He that can say, ‘Thy law is within my heart,’ that is the Christlike, the free, the happy man.**”

There is nothing like being free yet having purpose. If we don’t watch out, we lose our perspective on why we are in existence. We need to make a business of it.

Matthew Henry says, “**Shall we be willing to be loose, when Christ was willing to be bound? Christ, having laid himself under obligations to do his work, laid out himself with the utmost vigor and industry in his work. He worked the works he had to do; did ergazesthai ta erga—made a business of that which was his business. It is not enough to look at our work, and talk over it, but we must work it. Work while we have opportunity. The time of our life is our day, in which it concerns us to do the work of the day. Daytime is the proper season for work (Ps. 104:22, 23); during the day of life we must be busy, not waste day-time, nor play by day-light; it will be time enough to rest when our day is done, for it is but a day.**”

What were candles made for but to burn?

DISCUSSION

1. How does worship affect what we do for God?
2. Why do we hesitate to do the works of God in our lives?

2. WHY DO I WORSHIP

Psalm 16:11 You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Praise and worship are spontaneous, it is what we do when we see greatness. Take sporting events for example, great accomplishments are followed by exorbitant accolades. I think of greatness and I think of Usain Bolt or Carl Lewis in the Olympics, or Secretariat winning the Belmont Stakes, and for New Orleanians nothing tops the Saints winning the Super Bowl. I will never forget that night, the city was in an uproar and I was receiving phone calls from Africa, Australia, and Asia within seconds of the victory. Greatness absolutely demands a response. That

brings us back to worship. One moment in the greatness of God's presence absolutely demands a response. That's how you know for certain that someone has the real thing; worship is the unquestionable characteristic of the redeemed. Here are some thoughts from C.S. Lewis on the subject of praise. *"But the most obvious fact about praise—whether of God or anything—strangely escaped me. I thought of it in terms of compliment, approval, or the giving of honor. I had never noticed that all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise. . . . The world rings with praise—lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favorite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favorite game—praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, horses, colleges, countries, historical personages, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians and scholars. My whole, more general difficulty about the praise of God depended on my absurdly denying to us, as regards the supremely Valuable, what we delight to do, what indeed we can't help doing, about everything else we value. I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of complement that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are, the delight is incomplete till it is expressed."*

So when you see Him for yourself let it out.
Responding to His love and mercy is what our praise is all about.

DISCUSSION

1. Does breakthrough happen when we worship?
2. Does freedom happen when we learn to express ourselves into the Father?
3. Spend some time in worship!

WEEK TEN

GOODNESS AND POWER

2 Chronicles 5:13 - Indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying: For He is good, For His mercy endures forever, that the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud.

Every time I remember this powerful scene, the dedication of Solomon's temple, I immediately think of the birth of the church on the day of Pentecost. As the priests acknowledged the goodness of God, His glory began to fill the temple and overwhelm the priests. On the Day of Pentecost we see the disciples and remnant of Christ's closest followers gathered for prayer and worship and they too were overwhelmed with the presence of the Lord. This was the dedication of the true temple of God. Solomon's temple was only a shadow of the real. The church was the ultimate plan of God. This brings us to today; should we be satisfied with just a doctrinal belief that we are the temple of God or should there be more? Maybe we should have a similar sense of His overwhelming presence when we gather in His name. What are we missing? Maybe it's the sense of why we exist, to magnify His goodness and to live in His presence. Here is how Spurgeon describes the goodness of God.

“How generous, forgiving, and tender is this patient Spirit of God. He is good operatively. All his works are good in the most eminent degree: he suggests good thoughts, prompts good actions, reveals good truths, applies good promises, assists in good attainments, and leads to good results. There is no spiritual good in all the world of which he is not the author and sustainer, and heaven itself will owe the perfect character of its redeemed inhabitants to his work. He is good officially; whether as Comforter, Instructor, Guide, Sanctifier, Quickener, or Intercessor, he fulfills his office well, and each work is fraught with the highest good to the church of God. They who yield to his influences become good, they who obey his impulses do good, they who live under his power receive good.”

If you follow what happened in the church after that initial outpouring, they continued in the power of His presence as individuals. They would gather for corporate worship and teaching and then turn the world upside down with the power of His presence. There is going to be a change in His church; there has to be. Great music, helpful instruction and motivation, and efficient programs will never address the problems of our culture. It is in meltdown. ***We need His power and His goodness on full display.***

DISCUSSION

1. Why is it so important to understand the character of God in our worship toward him?
2. Discuss some of His attributes.

1. THE POWER AND THE PRESENCE

The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. 1 Samuel 16:7

Israel wanted to be like the other nations, that's why they kept demanding that Samuel would give them a king. Sound familiar? One of the first signs of a cold heart in the people of God is that they want to be like the rest of the world. I remember what Dick Mills said to me when revival first broke out in our church.

He said it was the same thing he felt as a child in the early days of the Pentecostal outpouring. He said it lasted for about thirty years. He also said that the Pentecostals got tired of being different from everybody else, that's when they lost the glory of God.

They wanted to be like the other churches and that's exactly what they got. A form of godliness without the power of God. In the same way, the Israelites got Saul, a man who stood out above everyone else. Saul was a man of human strength and effort, not a man of the Spirit. Here is how Watchman Nee describes Saul.

“Saul was of striking stature. ‘From his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.’ No wonder Israel acclaimed him: they could all see his head. Yet how often does the head of man stand in the way of the will of God! It seems David understood this—David the man after God’s own heart, who time and again set human reason aside and acted instead in simple faith. Confronted with Goliath (whose head was even more prominent than Saul’s), he declined helmet and mail, and went out against him with but a sling. One well-aimed stone from this, lodged in the giant’s brow, brought him down. That day marked David out as Israel’s king.”

What Israel needed was David, a man after God's own heart. David's strength was his heart of worship. He was unashamed of worshipping, prophesying on his instruments, and dancing with all his might before the Lord. Those three things; worship, prophesy, and dancing before the Lord, are not too popular in today's hip church world. Too many churches want to be acceptable (or relevant) to the culture of today. They may gain crowds of people, but they will lose the one thing none of us can afford to lose; the power and presence of the Lord.

DISCUSSION

1. What three things did David do in worship?
2. What was the tabernacle of David and how was it different from Moses?

2. THE ACTIVE POWER OF GOD

Ephesians 1:19,20 AMP – And [so that you will begin to know] what the immeasurable and unlimited and surpassing greatness of His [active, spiritual] power is in us who believe. These

are in accordance with the working of His mighty strength which He produced in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.

Paul is describing the importance of a personal encounter with the Lord in this passage. In the previous verses he was praying that our eyes would be opened to the greatness of our God. Then he prays that we could experience for ourselves the Lord working for us and in us. There is an infinite amount of power working on our behalf. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is now working on us and in us. **Tasting this rich, unlimited power by the touch of faith is essential if we are to walk in faith and expect to carry His rich power throughout our life.** Paul did not always believe like this. His arrogant stubbornness had to be burned out from him by the fire Of God. It happened in a flash of light and a flash of time; Paul tasted this power on the Damascus Road for himself. Here is how Wuest describes this passage.

“In these three clauses Paul leads the readers on from the hope itself which becomes theirs in virtue of their being called of God, to the splendor of the inheritance to which the hope points, and from this again to that in God Himself which makes the fulfillment of the hope and the possession of the inheritance certain, namely, the limitless efficiency which is His prerogative. This power of God working in our behalf with reference to our salvation is not thought of here as operating only in the future, but also at present. The word “exceeding” is huperballon, literally, “a throwing beyond,” thus metaphorically, “superiority, excellence.” It speaks of power here that is beyond measure, more than enough, of surpassing power.”

Why should I be afraid even in the worst of times? Our God is great and powerful, and His power is in me and on me. This exceeding, excessive power is the power of my worship and prayer. It is the power of my preaching and my testimony, and it is the power of His church. Open our eyes Lord to your greatness and send us to this generation.

DISCUSSION

1. What is the definition of Huperballon? How does that relate to our Christian walk?
2. Why is it important to understand the riches of God in our worship?

WEEK ELEVEN

SWALLOWED UP IN GOD

Galatians 2:20 - I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

There is something about the testimony of other Christians that is timeless. Whether it happened in Wales in the 1900's, Jerusalem in 33 A.D., Northampton in 1740, or in New Orleans in 2015; the touch of God is timeless. As is far too common, Jonathan Edwards experienced stiff opposition in his church to the outpouring of the Spirit. His response was classic. He told the story that was precious to him. He told of how his wife Sarah was deeply touched by God. Here is Jonathan telling his wife's story in her own words.

“Had the most ardent longings after God that ever I felt in my life: At noon, in my secret retirement, I could do nothing but tell my dear Lord, in a sweet calm, that he knew I longed for nothing but himself, nothing but holiness; that he had given me these desires and he only could give me the thing desired. I never seemed to be so unhinged from myself, and to be so wholly devoted to God. My heart was swallowed up in God most of the day. In the evening I had such a view of the soul's being as it were enlarged, to contain more holiness, that my soul seemed ready to separate from my body and stretch to obtain it. I then wrestled in an agony for divine blessings; had my heart drawn out in prayer for some Christian friends, beyond what I ever had before. I feel differently now from whatever I did under any sweet enjoyments before, more engaged to “live to God” forever, and less pleased with my own frames: I am not satisfied with my frames, nor feel at all more easy after such sweet struggling than before; for it seems far too little, if I could always be so. Oh, how short do I fall of my duty in my sweetest moments!”

I love Sarah's description of this touch, she said she had been totally swallowed up in God. I think too many of our modern-day church people know far too little of this. When was the last time you were totally swallowed up in God?

DISCUSSION

1. Have there any been a time when you felt swallowed up in God?
2. What is some of the ways we can have this out personal pouring again?

1. HE IS WAITING TO MEET WITH YOU

But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. Acts 26:16

Obviously, Paul's ears were open to the voice of Jesus. He began to clearly hear the voice of Jesus. You know, God has some incredible things He wants to show each one of us. He has mysteries in His Word that He wants to share with you. It's more than just getting information from the Word of God. There's so much treasure locked up in the Word of God for you and for your life—treasures beyond measure, more precious than silver, more costly than gold and diamonds. There are precious treasures hidden away in the Word of God. ***He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church. (Rev. 2:11) He who has eyes to see, let him see what the Spirit of God is showing His Church.***

There are things He wants to show you in His Word, there are things He wants to speak to your heart, but some of us are dull of hearing.

We can't hear the voice of God because we are breathing in the wrong atmosphere. This devotion comes from a sermon preached at Victory Fellowship several years ago. The first part was a teaching, the second part, a small prophetic word. Are you in touch with the spiritual world? Are you receiving input from The Lord? Jesus called that "having ears to hear". Christianity is more than a belief system, it's a living relationship with the Living God. Maybe He is speaking to you today, maybe He is speaking through the following word of prophesy.

If anyone is thirsty, let Him come to Me and drink. Oh, if anyone is thirsty, let Him come to Me and drink. (John 7:37) I have things to pour into you and things to show you. In My presence, in My presence, in My presence, you'll be made whole, you'll be made whole. The thing, the damage that's taken place in your past will be mended. I'll pour the oil and the wine on you, and you'll be washed, and you'll be purified, and your wounds, the wounds of past trauma, past rejection, and past disappointments in your life will be healed as you step into My presence. Allow me to wash you in My holy presence and I will begin to swallow up your past. It will be a distant memory like a shadow that can hardly be part of your consciousness. You'll forget those days and they'll be long gone as I wash you and swallow up your past. As you yield to me in sweet surrender, I'll begin to consume you just as I consumed the lambs of sacrifice. I'll begin to consume you, my son, my daughter—an acceptable sacrifice, reasonable service as you yield yourself, as you offer yourself.

Jonathan Edwards spoke often of the change that began in his life after Christ revealed Himself to him as he was reading the Word of God. Now remember, Jonathan's dad was a Puritan pastor and Jonathan had been taught the scriptures all of his life. Reading the Bible was part of his routine since he was a child. One day, as a young man, a normal time reading the scripture turned into anything but normal. Listen to what Edwards says in his own words.

“The first instance, that I remember, of that sort of inward, sweet delight in God and divine things, that I have lived much in since, was on reading those words, 1 Tim. 1:17. “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen”. As I read the words, there came into my soul, and was as it were diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense, quite different from any thing I ever experienced before. Never any words of Scripture seemed to me as these words did. I thought within myself, how excellent a Being that was, and how happy I should be, if I might enjoy that God, and be rapt up to him in heaven; and be as it were swallowed up in him forever!”

“Swallowed up?” have you been swallowed up by God? Reading the Bible can be just routine, or it can be life changing. Maybe today this invisible, eternal, immortal King will reveal Himself to you. **Open your Bible and search for the Living Word who reveals Himself in scripture.** You just might be surprised; He lives and speaks in His Word. He is waiting to meet with you.

DISCUSSION

1. How important does prophecy play in our personal life?
2. How do words such as “surrender” and “offer ourselves to God” play a part in being swallowed up?

2. MY PAST SWALLOWED UP IN GOD

Psalm 103:12 - As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

Years ago, Parris and I lived in Phoenix, Arizona. At that time we couldn't afford to buy a dog, so we went to the animal shelter and got one. This dog looked beautiful, but the poor creature was really messed up. He had some big-time baggage. I have no idea what his past was like, but often, while we were just sitting around, this dog would go into a fit. He would run wildly, spinning in circles and frothing at the mouth; then he would fall to the ground. After a few minutes of this, he would sit down and act like a normal dog again. Of course, since we had little babies in our house, we had to return the dog after a few of these episodes. There's no telling what that dog had experienced that would cause him to have those fits. Maybe some of you are a little like this dog. You look OK on the outside, like everyone else, but occasionally you just take off and have a fit. Everyone thinks you're normal, but it's just a big show. Inside you just hope you can hold it together.

The Bible says that **the blood of Jesus is able to cleanse our consciences, our memories of our past lives and the horrible things that have been done to us.** I don't know what kind of abuse you experienced or what kind of baggage you're carrying around. I don't know why you twitch the way you twitch. But I do know that when you get swallowed up by God, it will be as if that old life never happened. Sometimes people want to dig up the past

and start talking about the horrible things that happened to them. They start describing all these events in great detail. Before long, everybody is crying. I was in one service where they had an altar call for people who had been abused in their mothers' wombs. People came up to the altar and were brought through a process of so-called deliverance. They simulated being birthed and falling into a blanket, and as they did this, they were screaming out all sorts of things. This was supposed to be a renewal service, but what no one seemed to realize was that all that baggage from their past had already been swallowed up by the Lord.

DISCUSSION

1. Our past sins and failures have a way of haunting us. Just how important is it to feel forgiveness?
2. Why is covering up or hiding our sins/anger/unforgiving ways hinder us from God voice?
3. Spend time in prayer reflecting on his love and the Spirit of God brooding over us.

WEEK TWELVE

THE ANOINTING AND THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

Acts 19:6 – And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.

I think many Christians have a narrow understanding of the gift of prophesy. Many think that prophesy is always predictive, declaring the future plans of the Lord. Certainly prophecy can be that, but the gift of prophesy in the New Testament includes other things, specifically it includes magnifying or worshipping the Lord supernaturally. One example is in today's verse. The disciples in Ephesus who were baptized in the Holy Spirit responded the same way those in Cornelius's house did in Acts 10. When they were filled with the Spirit they prophesied, most likely worshipping the Lord by the Spirit. Similarly, at Cornelius's house, the new believers spoke in tongues and magnified the Lord. This is exactly what the Spirit has always done, specifically in the life of David. David wrote his Psalms by the Spirit of prophesy. David's Psalms were supernatural, a great display of the Spirit of prophesy. Here is a description from the Life in the Spirit Commentary.

“The immediate consequences of this Spirit-baptism are charismatic manifestations of tongues and prophecy. The phrase “and prophesied” must not be assumed to indicate an additional sign. It stands parallel to the phrase “praising God” in Acts 10:46. Prophetic activity is realized in the last days (cf. the events of Pentecost, which shows a close relationship between speaking in tongues and prophesying via Joel 2). Similar to the disciples at Pentecost and Caesarea, these people at Ephesus speak in tongues and give inspired praise to God after receiving the Pentecostal power of the Spirit. Like earlier outpourings of the Spirit, the initial evidence of the charismatic experience of the Ephesian believers is speaking in tongues. Paul instructs, baptizes, and lays hands on them, but through the sovereign action of the prophetic Spirit they are endowed with power for ministry.”

This gift helps us understand supernatural worship. I think that when the Holy Spirit falls on us and we experience the power of His presence, as we yield to His presence, we then experience worshipping the Lord in our heavenly language and also worshipping spontaneously in our own language. That supernatural worship is one example of the Spirit of prophesy. Understanding and yielding to this gift in private and public worship changes everything.

DISCUSSION

1. When is the last time God used you in prophecy? Isn't about time to step out?
2. How important is Bible Reading to being used in the gifts?

3. Does someone have a word for the group right now?

1. THE MUTE SHALL SING FOR JOY

Isaiah 35:6 - Then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.

The miracles of Jesus are like glimpses into man's soul. Isaiah's prophecy of the mute singing for joy paints a picture for us of the amazing works of God. One example was in Mark 7, where a deaf man with a severe speech impediment was brought to Jesus. Jesus took him by the hand to a private place, put His fingers in the man's ears and touch his tongue with saliva.

In the next few moments this man's whole being was flooded with sounds. The sounds must have sound like a magnificent orchestra of joy. How could he keep silent? He had to lift up his voice and join with the heavenly song. Here is how John Gill describes today's verse.

“the tongue of the dumb shall sing; this had its accomplishment, in a literal sense, at the first coming of Christ, Matthew 9:32, Matthew 12:22 and, in a spiritual sense, in many who before had nothing to say to God in prayer, nor in praise; nothing to say of Christ, or for him; or of the blessed Spirit, and his divine operations; but now, by divine grace, are made to speak unto God, both in a petitionary way, and in a way of thankfulness; and of Christ, and of the blessed Spirit; and of the great things each have done for them; and even to sing for joy, because of the wondrous blessings of grace they were made partakers of; and many more such there will be in the latter day, when the Spirit is poured down from on high.”

All of us spent most of our lives deaf to the song of the Lord that constantly fills our world with His song of joy. Even those of us that have walked with the Lord for a time may find our hearing dull and the song far away if not non-existent. Allowing Jesus to draw us aside Himself is essential for us to recapture the song. When He puts His hand on us, we can here the song of heaven flooding us with His joy once again. What is our response? Like the mute in Isaiah's prophesy we too have to sing for joy.

2. WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR VOICE?

And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps; And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders; and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. Revelation 14:1-3.

What has happened to your voice? Has anyone asked you that question? Maybe you were getting over a cold, or like me mumble or reach for words? But the real question to ask is, “where is your spiritual voice?” I believe throughout our lives our prophetic voice has been taken away or attempted to be taken. Like a fresh horse out of the gate running for the finish line our legs begin

to give way. Our voice fades loses its strength, and grows silent, dreams fade and our echo is no longer heard.

At our last women retreat while another speaker was sharing, I was brought back to a very painful time in my life. It was the day I gave up my baby at 15 years old. But this time in this vision I saw a hand reaching over my throat and attempting to strangle me. Then it seemed I was transported to one shameful moment to the next with the same hand over my throat. Next, I saw scriptures began to wrap around each of those times I was being suffocated. In 1974 Dick Mills spoke over me as a young wife at Gods Army with the verse “songs in the night”. Then “for such a time as this” came the day at the kitchen sink as a young mother of 3 boys when the voice of suicide and despair came. “Breakthrough-enlarge the place of your tent came at yet another crossroad. Our voice is taken through depression, despair and offenses as we grow silent in our praise, silent in our intercession, silent in our prophecy. We are to become bearers of the voice of joy uniting with the voice of the bridegroom in us. The god of this world wants our silence! I also saw that when I hang onto offense with people my voice of intercession for others is silent.

Jonathan Edwards said, **“The work of the saints in heaven doth very much consist in praising God. The saints in heaven are employed; they are not idle; they have there much to do: they have a work before them that will fill up eternity.”**

Want your voice back? Labor to praise, labor to prophecy and labor to join the voice of others in prayer! The sound of many waters is about us! The sound of heaven wants to give vent through us! I want my voice to be heard here and in heaven. Our voice is our song.

DISCUSSION

1. Do you feel heard? If not, then what steps can you take to use your gifts? Notice I didn't say your voice to complain or to be negative!
2. Do others know your testimony and or the things that God has been speaking to you? What is the danger of never sharing?

3. DO NOT QUENCH THE SPIRIT

1 Thessalonians 5:19 – Do not quench the Spirit.

This verse is a very important verse in today's church. It has become too common and too easy to stamp out the gifts of the Spirit in public worship. The gifts of the Spirit flow out of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit. The prayer language is at the center of the manifestation of these gifts. You stop people from praying in the Spirit and you will put out the Spirit's fire in that spiritual community (you know, stop the spread). Paul saw the importance of spiritual gifts; they are the very power source of the church. Here are some comments from the Fire Bible on today's verse.

“Paul equates despising and rejecting the expressions of the Holy Spirit in the church with putting out the Spirit's fire. Paul encourages the believers to let the

Spirit operate through people by his spiritual gifts (i.e., God-given abilities and empowerments to benefit the church), such as the gift of prophecy. This special gift enables a Christian to deliver a message or revelation directly from God under the impulse and prompting of the Holy Spirit. For any of God's people, to repress or reject the orderly use of prophecy or other spiritual gifts can result in the loss of the Holy Spirit's activity among a group of believers."

I often think back of the early days of my spiritual journey and the spiritual community I was part of. I was part of a Jesus Community in California in the 1970's. Spiritual gifts were part of the fabric of our culture. I can remember our pastor giving a word of knowledge about how many unbelievers were in a given service and then watching as they responded to the altar call. During those services we would worship together in the Spirit (singing in tongues in harmony together) for extended periods of time. It was in that atmosphere that the gifts of the Spirit would begin to operate. Over the years I have seen the charismatic and Pentecostal churches quench the fire of God all across the country. A restoration of these gifts is critical if we want to see an awakening in this generation. I have to agree with Paul, "DO NOT QUENCH THE SPIRIT".

DISCUSSION

1. How do you personally quench the Spirit?
2. Do you sing in the spirit in your church or at home? Do you see the benefit of it? Can you imagine if anyone sang in the spirit or spoke in tongues daily?