

INTRODUCTION

I heard these Words “Have you imprisoned the Spirit of God?” one day in the early months of the year 2004 while in prayer. I knew that the Lord was about to bring a message to the body of Christ through this question. As the weeks and months went on and I continued to pray and mull this question over in my spirit the following teaching came out and I typed the ‘skeleton’ to this message in one day by the grace of God.

The ‘meat’ of it came later with much opposition. Opposition meaning I don’t think I’ve ever written anything that has required as much pressing through to put on paper what I felt the Lord wanted to say through this vessel. I’m not going to glorify the devil, but like the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church: “For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries” (1 Corinthians 16:9).

The greatest detriment to the devil and his kingdom is revival: God working freely through His people, setting the captive free. Free of the bondages the realm of darkness has brought into their lives.

The Lord spoke this Word to me some years ago: “I’m releasing the spirit of Elijah.” I knew exactly what He meant, He was about to release the ministry (message and the power to back it) of what would usher in the coming of the Lord Jesus; preparing the way of the Lord, through the body of Christ, not just any one minister or group—but, through those who will cooperate with what He wants to do, in whatever way He wants to do it.

There are many voices speaking in the world today. Some are expressing the mind of God, others are not. If you’ve been born of the Spirit of God you have the witness in your spirit letting you know what is truly of Him (what He is involved in).

The following may be a hard Word, but if we’ll take it to heart and make the necessary changes I believe we’ll experience *BY OUR OWN HANDS AND TONGUES* the greatest move of God’s Spirit this planet has ever seen!

The literary-style I’ve written this book in might be different than the reader may be used to, for this message was written the way I would preach it. If one proceeds with that in mind, I believe they’ll understand its flow. ML

It’s been just over ten years since the release of the original book, and the Lord has put it in my heart to expand it—more commentary and more scripture inclusion (not just mentioning where a scriptural reference is, but actually quoting it). Plus, the conversion of this rendition into PDF format for the purpose of making it available for download off of my website, cspub.org. Be blessed! ML

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must thank and acknowledge my pastors: David and Nicole Muns, who are a tremendous encouragement and inspiration to me! Your integrity and character in life and ministry have been an example to me of how life and ministry are supposed to be done!

Joyce Meyer, whose ministry has been paramount to the inner-healing I've experienced...the Lord has truly given me beauty for ashes! Thank you, Joyce, for your practical (open and personally revealing) messages!

Last, but certainly not least, my father in the faith: Kenneth Copeland. I cannot put into words what you, your life, family and ministry have meant to me! Yours was the first ministry I ever listened to teaching tapes from. May God reward you, sir!

HAVE YOU IMPRISONED THE HOLY SPIRIT?

I ask this question in that manner because in recent times the Lord has laid it on my heart to investigate the reason for the lack of power in the body of Christ here in America; particularly the United States where I live. It's come into my heart that we (His true body) are the ones preventing the hand of God from "stretching forth to heal" (see Acts 4:30). We are the ones responsible for the spiritual state this country has developed into.

The abortion issue, prayer being removed from our public schools, the homosexuals gaining the voice they have in our political arena, etc. We've sat back and done nothing while these issues brewed right in our faces and became normal policy.

What does this have to do with imprisoning the Holy Spirit? Everything! He was sent by our Lord Jesus to enable us to live the quality of life He did as He walked the shores of Galilee. Free of sickness – yes! Free from the dictates of the ungodly people AND religious leaders of His time, walking right through their midst *from* their empty judgments against Him; commanding the works of darkness to release their captives!

TRUTH CAN NEVER BE BOUND BY OR SUBJECT TO THE OPINIONS AND RULINGS OF MAN OR THE REALM OF DARKNESS *EXCEPT THROUGH IGNORANCE, UNBELIEF AND WILLFUL DISOBEDIENCE!*

IGNORANCE

Ignorance by definition is simply a lack of knowledge. The Word of God says we are destroyed for this lack of knowledge. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6a). In fact this scripture goes on to say: "Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children" (Hosea 4:6b).

Wait a minute! God said He would reject us from being priest for Him just because WE have rejected knowledge? ABSOLUTELY, WITHOUT A DOUBT! If we reject God, what is there that obligates Him to invade our life, heal our body, bless our finances and so on? IS HE A SLAVE TO US OR ARE WE TO BE BOND-SLAVES TO HIM?

Isaiah puts it this way: "Therefore my people *have gone into captivity*, because they have no knowledge" (Isaiah 5:13a italics mine). Yet Jesus said He was sent to "preach deliverance to the captives and to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (see Luke 4:18).

Now if you simply don't know of His will and ways for your life, that's one thing; but this planet and the human race on it has for over the past fifty years been flooded with KNOWLEDGE of God – of His will and of His ways! We are without excuse (I'm talking especially to the body of Christ right here in America)! We've allowed so much division called denominations, and discord that even us non-denominational churches have become a denomination unto ourselves!

BARS OF HIS PRISON

When I talk about imprisoning the Spirit of God, I'm speaking of things that have been established unwittingly which result in limiting Him or preventing Him from manifesting. I say unwittingly because I don't think anyone who really wants to be in relationship with God will purposely cause His Spirit to be hindered from manifesting in any way. These things we'll call prison bars.

Our lack of knowledge has become a prison bar that holds the Holy Spirit back from manifesting in our midst. It takes faith to tap in to the realm of God, and faith begins where the will of God is *known*. Jehovah said He would watch over His Word to perform it and that His Word would not return to Him void:

- “I watch over my Word to perform it” (Jeremiah1:12b, ASV).
- “I am alert and active, watching over My Word to perform it” (AMP).
- “So shall My Word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11).

This tells me that if we want made available to us what we see in God's Word, then we'll have to return it to Him, giving Him something to watch over to perform. Mark 16:20 tells us “And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with *them* and confirming the Word through the accompanying signs. Amen.” In the King James Versions of the Bible the translators added Words to help us understand the Scriptures. These Words are in italics. However, in this passage, I believe we better understand what the Holy Ghost is saying if we remove the added Word (them). Doing so would render this verse this way, “And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with and confirming the Word through the accompanying signs. Amen.” Did you catch that? The Lord works with and confirms His Word! In another place the Lord said to “Put Me in remembrance” (Isaiah 43:26a). In other Words, return His Word to Him.

Psalm 103:20 says: “Bless the Lord, you His angels, who excel in strength, who **do His Word**, heeding the voice of His Word.” So we see that even angels, who have

been sent to minister for those of us who are inheriting salvation (Hebrews 1:14), are kept idle until the Word of God is released (spoken in faith).

God does everything He does by speaking His Word. The creation of all things, the calming of a stormy sea, the casting out of a demon or the healing of the sick; it was all accomplished by His Word being spoken. Yet we have turned speaking His Word into a religious tradition, making it ineffective, because it became a formula to us to get what we wanted; not for releasing the will of God in the earth!

TRADITIONS OF MEN

Religious traditions have become another bar to the Spirit's prison. God grants a great 'move' of His Spirit, we catch on to what He's doing and certain ways He's doing things and decide to camp there expecting it to be the way He's going to manifest (bless) and it becomes a law (tradition) to us. We tag it with some sort of name and propagate OUR TRADITIONS instead of the pure Word of God, when all the while the 'cloud' or 'pillar of fire' has moved on from that place. [Read in the book of Exodus how the Lord led the children of Israel through the wilderness by the cloud by day and pillar of fire by night.]

Unfortunately, we've been so caught up in our own ways of doing things that for the most part we haven't even realized the Lord is no longer manifesting in our midst! One man of God put it this way: "If the Holy Spirit were removed from the Church in America, 90% of her activities would continue." That tells me we've placed greater importance on *our programs* than on His Presence in them.

Jesus rebuked the religious leaders of old for holding so tightly to their traditions, saying: "So for the sake of your tradition (the rules handed down by your forefathers), you have set aside the Word of God – depriving it of force and authority and making it OF NO EFFECT" (Matthew 15:6, AMP, caps mine for emphasis).

Look at that verse! The religious leaders:

- Set aside the Word of God (which)
- Deprived it of force and authority (and)
- Made it of no effect (ineffective)

The Lord through Isaiah warned: "Inasmuch as these people draw near to Me with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, BUT HAVE REMOVED THEIR HEARTS FAR FROM ME, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men" (Isaiah 29:13, caps mine for emphasis). Commandments of men being the traditions of a denomination or group rather the pure Word of God! Jesus went on to

say in Matthew 15, “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And IN VAIN THEY WORSHIP ME, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (vv. 8-9, caps mine for emphasis). I don’t know about you but I’d rather not have the Lord view my worship of Him vain (“empty, having no real value, futile, *having an excessively high regard for one’s self*” [Webster’s dictionary])!

“Therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work among the people, a marvelous work and a wonder; For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent shall be hidden” (Isaiah 29:14). The “wise men” being the religious leaders (pastors, etc.) and the “prudent” being those who have been around for a while (deacons, ‘pillars’ of the church – older saints) *who know just what the Lord is going to do and how He operates*, so you can’t tell them anything, and the waters of life have all but dried up from them!

Please don’t misunderstand me! I’m not being belligerent or disrespectful of the elders who have truly walked a long time with the Lord, nor of the men and women of God called into the service of the Lord! But I am addressing the issue of limiting God in this day and hour by boxing Him in (or imprisoning Him) with our expectations of how He’s done things in the past as opposed to what He would like to do now.

The prophet Haggai said: “Who is left among you who saw this temple (house; margin) in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is it not *in your eyes* as nothing?” (Haggai 2:3, italics mine). How we *see* or *perceive* what God is doing can either hinder or cooperate with His working. It is God who does the work, but He does it *through* a yielded vessel; as though He were to animate someone like a puppeteer animates a puppet. The puppet is seen but the puppeteer is the ‘life’ of it.

God manifests through the avenue of faith. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Hope is the picture (blueprint / vision) in our heart. If we cannot ‘see’, or detect God at work then we can hinder His ‘move’ (another prison bar). 2Corinthians 4:18: “while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” God works in the unseen realm where our physical senses cannot tell if He’s at work or not. That’s why we need faith! “To believe, regardless of what we see,” is what the Spirit of God just said inside me.

The seasoned saints of Haggai’s time were murmuring, passing their judgment on the *new* thing God was doing, and would not recognize His hand at work. Yet the judgment of God was: “The glory of this latter temple SHALL BE GREATER THAN THE FORMER!” (Haggai 2:9a, caps mine for emphasis).

Pride wants to glorify the ‘work’ we were involved in, and when something new or different comes along the natural tendency is to reject it. Let’s get something straight: God can work in whatever way He so chooses. Our primary job is to be sensitive enough to Him to allow Him to freely work in whatever way He desires.

The prophet Joel prophesied: “And He will cause the rain to come down for you – the former rain and the latter rain” (Joel 2:23b). In plain English, that’s the old glory and the new glory; the ‘moves’ of the past and what He wants to do RIGHT NOW! He wants to reap the harvest of this earth – souls! That’s what the Father is waiting for: the precious fruit of the earth! “Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain” (James 5:7). REVIVAL! Moves of God! Spiritual outpouring! However you say it, it stands for one thing: God working in the earth touching lives, mending them and bringing them into relationship with Him, so He can close out this age and bring us Home to Heaven, “And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1Thessalonians. 4:17).

If this is coming as a rebuke to you remember: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent” (Revelation 3:19).

DIVISION—DISCORD

Besides ‘boxing’ in the Lord by our traditions, we’ve imposed them on others who have their own traditions, and copped the attitude that because they don’t see things the way we do we can’t fellowship with them. Dividing from the rest of the body into our own little group and sowing discord amongst ourselves (within our own groups and the body of Christ as a whole), fragmenting the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ! This speaks of another bar to the Holy Spirit’s prison – division.

Jesus said: “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand” (Matthew 12:25). The Body of Christ is His house. Paul wrote “but if I am delayed, *I write* so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1Timothy 3:15, underline mine for emphasis). There’s only one body, one Spirit, one Lord (Ephesians 4:4-5). There isn’t a different Jesus for the Baptists than there is for the Pentecostals or the Episcopalians or Methodists or whatever group one may be part of.

In the book of Proverbs we find a list of six things the Lord hates: “These six *things* the LORD hates, Yes, seven *are* an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness *who* speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren” (Pro 6:16-19). Did you notice the third thing the Lord

hates? “Hands that shed innocent blood” – that’s abortion, my friend. America needs to repent of this heinous crime and sin against the Lord! Notice how this list ends: “one who sows discord among brethren” (v. 19). Now do you think that when a group is involved in something God hates He’s going to bless that bunch with His presence and work miracles in their midst? NO! A thousand times no!

HARDNESS OF HEART

I know that I’m emphasizing the negative a lot, but it’s time (actually far past time) to step back and take a sober look at our behavior and why we’ve become so hardened to the Holy Ghost (another bar – hardness) and to His dealings.

Paul, writing to Timothy said: “Now the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times (we’re in them now) some will depart from the faith (the pure Word of God), giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared (hardened) with a hot iron” (1 Timothy 4:1-2, parenthesis are my commentary). So could we say that these commandments of men (traditions) we’ve been talking about are actually DOCTRINES OF DEMONS? You decide.

Paul later wrote to Timothy: “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come (times of stress; margin): For men will be lovers of themselves (no comment), lovers of money, boasters, proud (another thing God hates), blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong (another way to say hardened), haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, HAVING A FORM OF GODLINESS BUT DENYING IT’S POWER. And from such people turn away” (2 Timothy 3:1-5, caps for emphasis, parenthesis my commentary). Yes, godliness will be conducive for the power of God to manifest, but a form of it will *not*! If you don’t want to be guilty of these verses just practice their opposite!

Paul wrote of the condition of the world in the last days, yet James wrote: “whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4b). Friends imitate each other. So to imitate the world is to make oneself its friend and God’s enemy. We’re to “imitate God as dear children and walk in love” (Ephesians 5:1b-2a). I believe the Spirit is saying a good place to check is our love walk! We’ll talk more about walking in love a little later on.

Let’s now read what Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus about this hardening of the heart: “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk (conduct your manner of life) as the rest of the Gentiles (world) walk, IN THE FUTILITY OF THEIR MIND, HAVING THEIR UNDERSTANDING DARKENED, BEING ALIENATED FROM THE LIFE OF GOD, because of the

ignorance (lack of knowledge—a prison bar) that is in them, **BECAUSE OF THE HARDENING OF THEIR HEART**; who, being past feeling (seared / hardened – another prison bar), have given themselves over to licentiousness (morally unrestrained; Webster’s dictionary) to work all uncleanness with greediness” (Ephesians 4:17-19, caps and parenthesis mine).

In other words someone who lives their life by the dictates of a futile mind (or a mind that’s not been renewed by the pure Word of God) will have their understanding darkened (blinded / ignorant / seared), their heart hardened and be alienated from the life of God! That sounds to me like someone who won’t experience much of the power of God (if any). Prison bars.

Romans eight says: “For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (v.6). So we could say that a futile mind is the same as being carnally minded. Then Galatians says: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh (one who is carnally minded or has his mind on carnal/fleshly things all of the time) will **OF THE FLESH** reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit (spending more time on spiritual development and issues) will of the Spirit reap everlasting life (the anointing – Holy Ghost power!)” (Galatians 6:7-8, caps for emphasis and parenthesis mine).

Paul, writing to the Colossian church said: “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2). To set something is to purposely place it somewhere; it also is the hardening of glue or cement. Paul was telling the church at Colosse (and those of us who would read his instructions later) not to be carnally minded because he knew that a carnal mind would be a prison for the Holy Spirit (something that is set or immovable...Selah).

You see, mankind is a triune being. You and I are spirit beings, we have a soul (our mind, will and emotions) and we live inside a body made of flesh. Each part of us has a voice that speaks its will. For instance, the voice of our body may say something like: “I need some chocolate” or “I want more sleep.” Our soul may say something like: “I need stimulation, let’s watch...” or “Let’s call so-and-so and talk about...” All the while our inner-man (the real person inside – “the hidden man of the heart” [1Peter 3:4]) may be wanting to pray or read the Word of God or something like that. The response (action—what we end up doing) is what we decided to sow to. That’s why Paul said to set your mind on things above; the majority will rule (two against one).

The mind is the deciding witness. If it’s set (fixed, positioned) on the things of God, then it will side in with what our heart wants to do. That’s where the Spirit of God is, in our heart (spirit, inner-man). The decision we make will either release Him through our tender heart or imprison Him by hardening our heart! “Therefore

we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away” (Hebrews 2:1). The Authorized King James Version says: “lest at any time we should let them slip.” We are leaky vessels, my friend, and the hour is late! Demonic influences are all around us trying to sway our lives unto destruction. We must keep the Word of God in our eyes and ears continuously to ward off such influences.

The Holy Spirit came to live inside our spirit-man when we were born-again. To always be tuned in to the flesh by catering to it instead of listening to and obeying the promptings of the Holy Spirit inside will cause one to become calloused to Him, thus creating a prison that He cannot flow from, or through! Jesus said: “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart (spirit) will flow rivers of living water.” Then John further wrote: “But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive” (John 7:38-39a, parenthesis mine). So our spirits are to be channels for the Holy Spirit to flow through, not reservoirs that imprison Him! A carnal mind and a hardened heart will stop the flow of the Spirit of God through any vessel He’s housed in, making it a prison for Him.

We could say that our body (flesh) is our house or earth-suit. One day we are going to put off this body of flesh, which is corruptible, and put on incorruption when the Lord transforms our bodies to His glorious image:

- “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Philippians 3:20-21).
- “And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1Corinthians 15:49-52).

So, why would we focus our attention on that which is going to be destroyed or replaced? Plus, our citizenship is in Heaven—why would we act like a citizen from anywhere else?

Now the balance is this, a truly spiritual person will take good care of their body; after all, it is the temple of the Living God: “do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1Corinthians 6:19-20).

The Septuagint Version (Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) says in Proverbs 18:9: “He who does not use his endeavors to heal himself is brother to him who commits suicide” (as recorded in the Amplified Old Testament brackets). This verse reveals the responsibility of the individual to use whatever means necessary to take care of the house of flesh they live in!

I’m not talking about ignoring our bodies; let’s just keep them in the place of serving *us* (the spirit-man inside), not us catering to their unholy desires and appetites; “For those who are according to the flesh and controlled by its unholy desires, set their minds on and pursue those things which gratify the flesh. But those who are according to the Spirit and [controlled by the desires] of the Spirit, set their minds on and seek those things which gratify the (Holy) Spirit. Now the mind of the flesh [WHICH IS SENSE AND REASON WITHOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT] is death – death that comprises all the miseries arising from sin, both here and hereafter. But the mind of the (Holy) Spirit is life and soul-peace [both now and forever]. So then those who are living the life of the flesh – catering to the appetites and impulses of their carnal nature – CANNOT PLEASE OR SATISFY GOD, or be acceptable to Him. But you are not living the life of the flesh, you are living the life of the Spirit, IF the (Holy) Spirit of God [really] dwells within you – DIRECTS AND CONTROLS YOU” (Romans 8:5-6 & 8-9a, AMP, caps mine for emphasis).

Scripture says there are seraphim (angels) standing above the throne of God crying out to each other: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!” (Isaiah 6:3). The prophet Habakkuk wrote, “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14). Just how is the earth going to be filled with the glory of God? By our releasing the Spirit of God, Who is the Glory of God, from His prison: the body of Christ’s denominationalism, division and discord plus our individual carnality and hardness of heart, making His plans and purposes our pursuit!

LAZINESS AND UNWILLINGNESS

The flesh can be a weight to the spiritual man who wants to move forward with God, always wanting convenience and ease, never made to push forward or go through anything hard (like eating right and exercising). It will try to convince us of its need to rest and just how hard it is to change our eating habits; trying to convince us to put off to a later time the pressure we’re wanting to exert on it. But, it fails to mention that *that* tomorrow never comes!

This laziness becomes a bar of the Spirit’s prison because not everything He talks to us about will pamper our flesh. So, we’re faced with another decision whether we’re going to follow His promptings and press through the pain of

discomfort, or quench His voice one more time; the discomfort of less sleep and more time in prayer (if that's what He's telling us to do); the discomfort of talking to someone about Jesus, or praying for and laying hands on someone our flesh may consider undesirable.

Let's not be a wave tossed to and fro with every spiritual idea that comes down the pike. We should all lead our own lives based on the convictions that develop in our hearts *through fellowship and communion with our Heavenly Father and His pure Word!* Romans chapter 14 speaks clearly of these things. It's always right to read the Bible every day and to pray. There are certain ministries that will speak into our lives and we are blessed by listening to their messages. That kind of thing is part of our spiritual development. But, it's the instructions that ring in our heart, that bear witness to us (in our knower, the inner-man) that we need to focus on and implement in our everyday life; for therein we'll find ourselves walking the path the Lord has ordained for us to walk, and His plan for our lives will unfold. Then and only then will we be in the place the Lord Himself has ordained, and we'll experience His joy and peace. In no other place can this security be found!

The body of Christ is deficient and suffers when the members are out of place because: "to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift, from whom the whole body (is) joined and knit together BY WHAT EVERY JOINT SUPPLIES, according to the effective working by which every part does it's share" (Ephesians 4:7 & 16, caps and parenthesis mine).

You see, we all have a measure of the Spirit of God to operate in this earth as the body of Christ—Jesus being our pattern. We now are working in His stead (He actually working through us). Collectively, we are "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13b). In other words, together we are to function in the same measure of the Holy Spirit Jesus operated in (and He had the Spirit without measure [see John 3:34]). Properly connected with each other we provide a network for the Holy Spirit to flow through, but fragmented and unwilling to connect we cut-off the flow which results in imprisoning Him.

I've noticed in my own life that sometimes it's easier to remain *in* a situation: like a mediocre marriage or relationship; working at a job that doesn't really fulfill my desires or dreams; or, even putting up with a condition in my body, like a disease or sickness, rather than buckling down and applying the necessary steps that will lead me out of that circumstance. That's laziness! Such laziness will keep the Holy Spirit imprisoned if He's dealing with us to make a change (His dealings for change are always to release Him through us to bless us and be a blessing to others).

Let me explain: as we grow and develop in life we encounter many situations that contribute to our personalities and shape our ways of thinking. Some of these experiences can cause us to hurt and close-up, shutting out others from our hearts so

we don't get hurt again. If not addressed early this can (and often does) result in creating a root within our soul. In time, this root will manifest fruit that becomes part of our personality; usually an ugly part, one we're ashamed of. Improper understanding of this will lead to hopelessness and self-hatred; or, viewing everyone else as having a problem, which results in denial. When we deny the existence of any problem, we won't exert any necessary changes to rid ourselves of it.

Any issue in one's life that has a negative fruit will remain by the strength of pride. Only when we humble ourselves and *admit we have a problem* can the Holy Spirit begin the deliverance process. If we don't face these issues and receive deliverance and healing of them we'll carry their fruit into marriage or other relationships; walls are erected (prison bars) that we become so used to we don't even realize they're there. The result is: our relationships suffer; a marriage becoming mediocre or ending up in divorce; a best-friendship being dissolved; parents and children not talking to each other, etc.

We humans don't like change, so it's easier to remain in the pain of a hurting soul rather than applying whatever is necessary to up-root the cause of our ugly fruit. The Holy Spirit will deal with us about the need of these changes, but ultimately He needs our cooperation to accomplish any change.

This unwillingness to obey what the Spirit of God is telling us to do will eventually cost us dearly. It will cost the blessing the Lord had waiting on the other side of our obedience. It may cost the deliverance He wanted to bring into the life of another (or ourselves). You see, Jesus is not going to come down off of His throne and walk the shores of this planet to get the job done; it's going to be accomplished *through* those of us who choose to be animated *by* Him on a *daily basis*; who refuse to give place to the persecutions or gainsaying of others; and who refuse to give in to the dictates of their unsanctified flesh! Unwillingness is also called willful disobedience.

WILLFUL DISOBEDIENCE

I said earlier that truth could not be bound (imprisoned) except by ignorance, unbelief and willful disobedience. Willful disobedience is when someone knows the will of God and chooses to *not* obey it! Isaiah says: "If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured..." (Isaiah 1:19-20a). This scripture is pretty self-explanatory. For the purpose of this teaching, eating the good of the land would be the blessings of God in our midst; the Spirit of the Living God manifesting (flowing freely) *through* each one of us!

Notice, when one refuses and rebels they're devoured (consumed). Sounds just

like the one who rejects the knowledge of God. Again, we are without excuse. God has gone to great lengths recording His thoughts and desires for the human race. It's called the Holy Bible! But, He's not going to dust off yours or my copy, make us read it, make us listen to recorded messages of anointed ministers and walk us into church each week. Each of us has a will of our own and it's up to us to obey His Word. The flesh may not want to, but to obey the conviction of our hearts will be accounted as willingness, for "the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 15:7b).

James wrote: "But be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves...(for) he who looks into the perfect law of liberty (the pure Word of God) and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:22 & 25 parenthesis mine). Notice that if one only hears the Word of God but does not do it, they are *self-deceived*! If we're self-deceived we think we're okay and do not see any need to change. This, too, can imprison the Holy Spirit. It's called pride!

Allow me to do a Mike Leach paraphrase of these two verses: "Become a vessel for the Spirit of God to flow freely through, obeying His directions instead of just hearing them (which will only result in religious deception), looking into (studying) and continuing in the pure Word of God (without forgetting what it teaches) which will bring liberation (deliverance and healing) to yourself and those you minister to." Disobedience has another face: Unbelief.

UNBELIEF

I touched on faith a little bit earlier in this teaching. The opposite would be unbelief; to just not believe. Thomas chose to not believe when the other disciples told him they had seen the risen Lord: "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I WILL NOT BELIEVE" (John 20:25, caps mine for emphasis).

To believe their report or not was a choice Thomas made as an act of his will. "I *will* not believe" was what he told the others. Eight days later, Jesus appeared again to His disciples; this time Thomas was with them. After satisfying his carnal requirements Thomas' reply was "My Lord and my God!" But Jesus responded: "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:28-29). It takes faith to please God: "for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). In fact, the first part of that verse says that it's *impossible* to please God without faith!

The life of faith is a life of rest: "For we who have believed do enter (God's) rest" (Hebrews 4:3 parenthesis mine). So a life filled with unbelief would be a life

full of unrest. Hebrews 3:18-19: “And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.” God equated the disobedience of the Israelites to unbelief.

Think about it, if one really believes what God said, they’d obey it, wouldn’t they? I’m not pointing any fingers; I’ve been just as guilty as the next guy. The unseen, non-perceivable-with-the-physical-senses-realm is difficult to stay hooked up to. It takes a lot of work and effort; feeding on the Word of God; fellowshiping with Him over it; confessing it and talking with others about it; attending a church that preaches the uncompromised Word is a big one. Included in this vein of thought would be things we feed on. Things like the music we listen to, the movies and television shows we watch. These are all contributors to our spiritual growth and strengthening, or things that will deplete us of spiritual strength and cause us to be weak in our walk with the Lord. “The strong spirit of a man sustains him in bodily pain or trouble, but a weak and broken spirit who can raise up or bear?” (Pro 18:14, AMP). These are a few things we can do to keep our hearts and minds on the right track.

Let me put it this way: the Word of God is black and white for us to gain an understanding of certain ways God wants things done: church government, attitudes toward life in general and so on. Jesus said: “If you abide in My Word, you are My disciples indeed” (John 8:31b). In other words, if we use the Word of God as our standard by which we conduct your lives *then* are we truly His disciples (disciplined followers).

To not obey the Word of God that is plain on any issue would put one in the category of the disobedient, which, in God’s eyes, equates to being an unbeliever! The second letter written to the Corinthian church reveals that Satan, who is the god of this world, blinds the minds of those who believe not (see 2 Corinthians 4:4). Coupling that with the choice Thomas made to refuse to believe, you could say that one places themselves in a position to have their understanding darkened (blinded) by the enemy of our souls through disobedience (unbelief)!

Let’s go a little deeper. There are things God has spoken to our hearts regarding His specific plan for our lives. Things like what job to take, mate to marry, church to be involved in and so on. If we override those promptings and go in any other direction, we’ll be miserable and thwart the plan of God for our lives, which will result in another form of prison for the Holy Spirit.

Now don’t get in a ditch and think I’m talking about predestination here. The Bible teaches we’re predestined to be conformed to His image and to adoption as sons to obtain an inheritance – *only!*

- “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of

His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29)

- “having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will” (Ephesians 1:5, 11).

God’s Word also teaches He has a good plan for our lives and He has set each one of us in the body where He pleases.

- “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’” (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV).
- “But now God has set the members, each one of them (us), in the body just as He pleased” (1Corinthians 12:18, parenthesis mine for emphasis).

Jesus said: “When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you” (John 16:13-15).

The Holy Spirit leads (guides) us into *all* truth; truth being the will of the Father. First and foremost the Word of God is truth: “Thy Word is truth,” Jesus said (John 17:17b). But secondly, our specific ‘truth’ would be the things the Spirit of God witnesses in our hearts to be the will of God for our lives (or we could say the truth of God for our lives). He’ll speak the will of the Father to our hearts, to discard what He’s saying by ignoring it is the same as walking in disobedience to the truth. This creates prison bars for the Holy Spirit which limits Him from moving in the earth and our lives.

“How often they provoked (rebelled against) Him in the wilderness, and grieved Him in the desert! Yes, again and again they tempted (tested) God, and limited the Holy One of Israel” (Psalm 78:40-41, parenthesis are margin renderings). “‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.’ For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?” (Hebrews 3:15-17).

This is not a group of people God was well pleased with – they:

- Rebelled against God (which tempted [tested] Him)

- They hardened their hearts (which grieved Him)
- Resulting in limiting the Holy One (imprisoning the Holy Ghost, which angered Him).

Jehovah called it *sin*! Sin grieves the Holy Ghost and quenches Him from manifesting. Quenching the Spirit of God will prevent us from experiencing His Presence and what He wants to do (another way of saying imprisoning Him). “Do not quench the Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:19). To quench something is to put it out, extinguish it, like water does to fire. So to quench the Spirit of God would be to put Him out (of what we’re doing instead of what He wants to do). To be sensitive to Him, allowing Him to flow freely in our midst, requires faith and keeping a tender conscience.

KEEPING A TENDER CONSCIENCE

I believe keeping a tender conscience is the greatest avenue the Spirit of God can flow through. Our conscience is the voice of our spirit-man. It will manifest (speak, or transmit God’s direction) in many different ways, such as a red light or green light. Red light meaning: “don’t do this or don’t go that way.” Green light meaning: “it’s okay; go ahead with what you’re doing.”

Sometimes there will be a ‘velvety’ feeling inside, a good sensing or smoothness – that’s a signal to go ahead in the direction you’re going (or what you’re doing). When I say ‘feeling,’ I’m not talking about a fleshly feeling, but a spiritual feeling. We can feel things in the spirit just like we can in the flesh. Depending on which one we’ve spent the most time developing (feeding or catering to) will determine the one we’re the most sensitive to.

Anybody living on this planet will grow-up developing sensitivity to their flesh, that’s automatic. The fall of man opened *that* door. Spiritual development is something you have to make a decision to do. Spending time in the Word of God, praying (primarily in other tongues) and putting into practice (actually doing) what the Word says to do is paramount to spiritual development.

The opposite of this ‘good’ or ‘velvety’ feeling would be a troubling, kind-of sickening feeling inside; the waters of our spirit are disturbed or upset (uneasy): that means to stop immediately what we’re doing or the direction we’re going in. “Deep calls to deep” (Psalm 42:7a). When our ‘deep’ is restless – we need to stop what we’re doing and pray; wait on the Lord “until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your heart” (2 Peter 1:19b, KJV); revelation (direction) from the Spirit of God. We all have the assurance in scripture of being led by the Spirit of God.

- “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Romans 8:14).

Brother Kenneth E. Hagin used to say that he went as much by what the Spirit of God didn't say as what He did. In other words, if he were heading in a specific direction, and the Holy Spirit didn't arrest him (give him that 'red light' or troubling waters), then he would keep going that way.

“Follow peace...” (Hebrews 12:14a, KJV). “Let the peace (soul harmony which comes) from the Christ rule (act as umpire continually) in your hearts – deciding and settling with finality all questions that arise in your minds” (Colossians 3:15, AMP). This is the most prominent way we'll know what our conscience is saying (the leading of the Spirit of God): the peace of God. If you're not at peace about a thing, then don't do it; if you have God's peace, then go ahead.

Scripture also calls this the witness of the Spirit:

- “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Romans 8:16).
- “He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself” (1John 5:10a).
- “I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 9:1).

We also have the promise from Jesus Himself that we would hear and know His voice (see John 10:4 & 27). Proverbs 20:27 says: “The spirit of a man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the inner depths of his heart.” It's our heart or spirit-man that God will illuminate (gives understanding to, or instruct). Like a radio receives what a radio station transmits, so our heart (spirit) receives what God is transmitting by His Spirit to us. To hear clearly what He's saying we need to be 'tuned in'. That's what keeping a tender conscience will do. When He transmits a command, we need to do it! Don't put it off! Delaying provides time to be talked out of God's transmission, and ultimately will result in searing our conscience to His instructions, which ends up imprisoning Him.

For instance, if the Lord pricks our heart about something (like forgiving someone) we need to be swift to act on it. A scripture may arise in our heart (and come up into our thinking), we need to obey its instruction! That's God talking and is just as supernatural as an audible voice (in fact, we're not promised an audible voice, but we are told we *have* the witness of the Spirit). There's always a reason behind God's instruction, we may or may not know what it is; it's the obedience *to* the instruction that will keep our heart tender. A tender heart is a great avenue the Holy

Ghost can manifest through!

Paul said: “I myself always strive to have a conscience without offence toward God and men...I have lived in all good conscience before God...I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience...my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit” (Acts 24:16 / 23:1 / 2 Timothy 1:3 / Romans 9:1b). Paul knew the value of keeping his conscience tender.

“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God...Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake” (Romans 13:1, 5). Why? Because a tender heart will flow *in* the blessings of God, a hardened (calloused) heart will cut them off! Prison! *Prison!* PRISON!! If our hearts are imprisoned by an un-renewed mind, rebellion and so forth, then guess what? – the Holy Ghost (who lives in there) is imprisoned!

My encouragement at this point is to make a daily practice of keeping our conscience clear. If we’re sensing that God wants us to do something, then we need to do it! We may miss it, that’s okay; we just keep trying. Even if we *think* we’re hearing from God, we need to just step out in faith and do it. We all make mistakes. God’s big enough to make up for our intended obedience to Him that results in error. It’s the ones who aren’t afraid of making a mistake who will step out and end up being used by God to be a blessing to the human race. In time and after much practice we’ll refine our hearing (like fine tuning that radio) and the leading of the Spirit will take us right into the will of God for our lives. We’ll be blessed and a blessing to others!

The greatest lifestyle to keep our conscience clear is to walk in love toward mankind!

OUR LOVE WALK

I said earlier that we’d talk more about walking in love. Everything in God’s existence operates by love, because “God *is* love” (1John 4:8b). Galatians chapter five verse six says that faith works *by* love. If we want to experience God and function in His realm at all, then we’ll have to walk in love. Paul wrote to the church in Rome that love was the fulfillment of the law: “Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love *is* the fulfillment of the law” (Romans 13:10). Think of it, every command of the Old Covenant given to curb sin is exercised by walking in love toward one another.

Jesus said: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (John 13:34). “*As I have loved you!*” How did He love us? “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life

for his friends” (John 15:13). “The Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” Paul wrote to the Galatian church (2:20b).

How does He love? “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren (each other). But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart (where the Holy Ghost resides) from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in Word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (1John 3:16-18, parenthesis mine for emphasis).

James says it like this: “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? So also faith if it does not have works (deeds and actions of obedience to back it up), by itself is destitute of power – inoperative, dead” (James 2:14-16 [v.17, AMP]). “If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well” (James 2:8).

These verses we’ve just read are a call to action! Love will respond to a world in need. Love will lay down its life for another. If that means our agenda is interrupted to take care of the need of someone else; then so be it! The “good Samaritan” was on his way in the course of his day, but he stopped to help a stranger who fell into trouble:

- “But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’ Then Jesus answered and said: ‘A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to *him* and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave *them* to the innkeeper, and said to him, “Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.” So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?’ And he said, ‘He who showed mercy on him.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’” (Luke 10:29-37).

Jesus implied this was the fulfilling of the law.

From Genesis to Revelation the Bible is clear on God's heart toward those in need; the fatherless, poor, widowed and strangers. Jesus was constantly moved with compassion. *Driven!* Compelled by Love Himself to minister light, life and love to anyone who had ears to hear what the Spirit was saying. That same Spirit of love is moving on me to write this book. He so longs to touch the lives of everyone in our world, through us – *unhindered!*

“Jesus answered and said to them: ‘Take heed that no one deceives you. (For) many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved’” (Matthew 24:4, 11-13 parentheses mine to tie thought together). This warning is to the *church*. There are false ministries in the earth right now spreading deception, causing the body of Christ to grow cold toward the needs of others; resulting in the Spirit of God *departing from* their midst (imprisoned because of false doctrine being propagated and believed; plus, selfishness, not regarding the needs of others).

ICHABOD

The glory has departed. That's what Ichabod means. I had a vision one afternoon, in 1987, while praying in my bedroom: I was in the parking lot of the church I had left to go to bible school facing the entrance. All of a sudden I saw two very large angels in the air coming from behind the right of me, flying toward the entrance with a banner between them which read ICHABOD. They fastened the banner above the entryway, then immediately I was inside the building – the sanctuary to be exact. Streaming from the pews to the walls were cob-webs and there was a thick layer of dust on every pew. The outside portion of this vision was in color, but the inside portion was in black and white.

It didn't dawn on me until these nineteen years later that the vision applied to the church (body of Christ) in America (and around the world, for that matter – wherever the Holy Spirit has been placed in some box—imprisoned!). I mentioned earlier about 'seeing' or 'perceiving' the hand of God at work. It takes sensitivity to Him to cooperate with what He wants to do. But one might recognize God's direction and not want to offend people or confront something, so they end up quenching the Spirit of God and His dealings. This action results in imprisoning Him. Whole groups of people have bought into this mentality and have called *their move* “Seeker Friendly.”

SEEKER FRIENDLY

Of all the religious activities that have robbed the Church of the Presence of God, this one, in my estimation, is the worst! I realize that initially the purpose of being ‘seeker friendly’ was to draw more people into church. After all, if you didn’t offend anybody with the pure Word of God being preached, then perhaps they’d come in to see some multi-media presentation and hear some little talk that does nothing more than itch their unrighteous ears!

- “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2Tiothy 4:3-4)

This one didn’t even start by a move of God. I believe it was spawned by the devil himself. Watering down the Word of God so much that there’s no conviction of sin is nothing short of a doctrine of demons! And as I have said before it’s far past time to be rid of these things!! I’m not against using various tools to get across the message of God in this hour; we should use whatever is available to us to portray the Word of God – just don’t leave Him out by *not* saying anything about the blood of Jesus or addressing the sin in our midst! These things have imprisoned the Holy Spirit.

The day mankind has no remorse for the sin they’ve allowed in their lives is the day the glory has departed! The day abortion is no longer viewed as murder but is accepted as a form of birth-control rather than ABSTINENCE, is a day when the preachers (who are supposed to have the fire of God in their bellies) have died on the vine and are proclaiming hearsay!

I know these words are stout, but judgment is coming to America and it takes a *shaking* Word from the Lord to escape it! “At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, ‘Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens’” (Hebrews 12:26, NIV). He said that “if we would judge ourselves we would not be judged” (1Corinthians 11:31). The Lord spoke through Isaiah saying “If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword” (Isaiah 1:19-20). In other words, if we refuse and rebel (choosing to stubbornly hang on to what God is putting His finger on for us to change) we’ll suffer loss. Let me put it this way: if we were on a boat that is on fire and sinking, yet we won’t jump off – we’d go down with it!

Let me ask this question, are we so proud and unwilling to admit and submit to the dealings of God (which may mean humbling ourselves and asking forgiveness from some people for the wrong we’ve done to them) that we’re willing to take the chance of being turned over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that our spirit

may be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus? Paul had to address an issue of sin in his first letter to the Corinthian church:

- “For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1Corinthians 5:3-5).

He also had to deal in this way with a couple of individuals named Hymenaeus and Alexander who were blaspheming the work of God, “whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1Timothy 1:20b). Someone might respond to this type of church discipline as barbaric and that God would never do such a thing. My response would be, don’t be so sure He won’t! God is cleaning house in this hour, for judgment must begin at the house of God (1 Peter 4:17). The Lord spoke this Word to me some time ago: “How can I judge the world of what My body is guilty of?” Selah.

Let’s not be guilty of “kicking against the pricks” like Saul (Acts 9:5, KJV). A prick (or goad) is a sharp instrument used by a shepherd to prod their sheep forward. Jesus accused Saul (who later became Paul) of kicking against what He was prodding to move forward! God is at work in the earth right now and desiring cooperation from His body to work with Him. Are we listening? Let’s join the psalmist David and ask the Lord to: “Search me, O God and know my heart; try me and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23-24). Plus: “Let the Words of my mouth and meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer” (Psalm 19:14).

ESTEEMING THE ANOINTING

Primarily the way the Lord began this message in me was a few years ago when I read the scripture in Hebrews eleven which spoke of Moses: “when he became of age, (he) refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, *esteeming* the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt” (Hebrews 11:24-26, parenthesis and italics mine for emphasis). Wow! Think of it! He was in line to be extremely rich and influential!

At this same time in my life the Lord was using Brother Copeland to bring out

the meaning of the Greek Word for “Christ” to be: “the anointed One and His anointing.” He taught us to “translate and meditate” when we read a scripture referencing who we are in Christ. For instance, here are a couple references:

- “To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).

Now, here’s how we would translate that and meditate it: “To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is the anointed One and His anointing in you, the hope of glory.” *The anointed One and His anointing in you (which is) the hope (confident expectation) [we have] of glory (the Holy Spirit)!*

Here is another one we can meditate on:

- “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually” (1Corinthians 12:27).

Let’s translate and meditate. “Now you are the body of the anointed One and His anointing, and members individually.” *We are members of the anointed One and His anointing!* Read the entire passage and understand that you and I are members – just like your hand is part (or, a member) of your body – we all are members that make up His Body! What He has, is, and can do; we have, are, and can do!!

So, when I read that scripture, it meant to me that Moses esteemed the reproach of the anointed One and His anointing on him, in him, and operating through him *greater riches* than all that was available to him in Egypt! To esteem is to “value highly” according to Webster’s dictionary. So he placed a greater value on the anointing and what God wanted to do through him than on the “passing pleasures” this world has to offer (Egypt being a type of the world).

A lot of times the Lord will begin a message in me to preach to the body of Christ that He first deals with me about. What I mean is: I have always had a great desire for the anointing of God to flow through me to bless others. I’ve studied, prayed about, read books on and listened to messages from others about the anointing; the Holy Ghost (Who is the Person of the anointing) and the workings of God throughout history, ever since I’ve been born again and filled with the Holy Ghost; I have no greater desire in life! This is what I mean when I say I want to ‘affect and infect’ others with a desire to walk with the Lord.

So, the Lord ambushed me. What do I mean? I mean, the Lord used my intense

craving and desire for Him and His anointing to start putting His finger on things in my life that hindered the flow. He knew that even though they were strongholds (parts of my personality and things I thought I wanted there) I would endure the pain of their removal in order to become “a vessel of honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work” (2 Timothy 2:21). Yes, pain! Spiritual surgery can be just as painful as physical (sometimes even more, depending on how deep the root is!). But when you *really* want a change, you’ll endure it.

Look again at Moses: “for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:26b-27). He looked to the reward (God using him mightily to deliver His people out of bondage)! He knew there was something of greater value on the other side of his obedience to the dealings of God! The anointing! The Presence of Almighty God!

Once you’ve tasted even a little measure of the anointing; once you’ve experienced the slightest bit of the Presence of the Almighty, you’ll be completely wrecked for anything else! What I mean by wrecked is: there is nothing else that compares to (or with) the manifest Presence of God! And the idea that He wants to use you and me to touch the lives of others with His Presence by being a channel of His anointing instead of a reservoir is almost overwhelming! It’s the single most humbling thing on this planet; while, at the same time, it’s the single most exciting and important task as well! The psalmist David wrote: “Oh, taste and see that the LORD *is* good; blessed *is* the man *who* trusts in Him” (Psalm 34:8)! David had ‘tasted’ God’s Presence. He knew first-hand that God could (and would) deliver him; preserve him, and do for him what no other could do! It was his relationship with Jehovah that led him to write things like:

- “Give us help from trouble, for the help of man is useless. Through God we will do valiantly, for *it is* He *who* shall tread down our enemies” (Psalm 108:12-13).
- ““Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God”” (1Samuel 17:36).

David knew he was in covenant-relationship with the Almighty God! He was acquainted with His power and ability to deliver. So, to him Goliath was no different than the lion or bear he had once faced. The point I want to make is the deliverances he experienced in the past with God, he was **now expecting** to accomplish for his entire nation! – God working with, and through him to bring about deliverance, not

just for himself, but for the whole nation of Israel! That's what he meant when he called Goliath an "uncircumcised Philistine." He knew Goliath had no covenant with Jehovah; therefore he had no provision of protection from Him. Through Jesus we are in covenant with Almighty God, and have been commissioned by Him to "go into all the world and preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15). Gospel means "good-news." What is this 'good-news'? That all of mankind has already reconciled to God:

- "Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2Corinthians 5:18-21, underline mine for emphasis).

That's *good-news*! God has already reconciled us to Himself through Jesus the anointed One and His anointing. Now, you and I have the ministry of spreading that reconciliation to the world around us. And He's not left us powerless to do it, either! He has provided every-bit of equipment to accomplish the task – it's called the anointing – the Holy Spirit – Who, in turn, manifests through the gifts of the Spirit!

REPENTANCE AND HUNGER

How do we get back the power? What's it going to take to see God manifest in America? I believe the first step is to repent of all the wickedness we've talked about in this book! That means we have to admit we've gotten it wrong, that we've gotten off track with God and ask Him to forgive us. But then we have to turn loose of our hindering ways and hunger after God. I don't know what that means for you, I'm not to be your judge – you are, using God's Word as your Standard, and the personal dealings He communicates *to your heart*.

I mentioned earlier of 'Deep calling unto deep' (Psalm 42:7a). That speaks of God from His depth (deepest yearnings) calling out to someone in communion with Him, unto their deepest yearnings: "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him" (2 Chronicles 16:9a). Notice the Scripture says "loyal to Him", not performing perfectly. If God had to wait for His Body to get everything perfect, He would never get anything done! He's looking for you and me! I believe the loyal heart spoken of here (among other things) is our 'deep' that's calling to His 'Deep'.

Hunger! There's a hunger that cannot (and will not) be denied! The 'voice' of this hunger is spoken in prayer.

PRAY

The next step is to pray. "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and forgive their sin and heal their land" (2Chronicles 7:14). That sounds like revival to me!

Here's the equation: If My people will

- Humble themselves and pray (it takes humility to ask for help)
- Seek My face (Jesus said to seek *first* the Kingdom of God)
- And turn *from* their wicked ways (stop doing the wrong thing; the definition of insanity is to keep doing the same thing expecting different results).

Here's the result: Then (and only then)

- Will I hear from heaven (if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us [1 John 5:14b])
- And forgive their sin (which will open the closed avenues)
- And heal their land (Holy Ghost outpouring!)

Let's ask the Lord to show us where we've missed it. It's not God who's holding out on us, we're the ones who have gotten off track. I know this, we have got to stop pointing the finger at others and blaming them for why things are the way they are and look diligently into the perfect law of liberty (the pure Word of God) and begin to judge whether *our* lives line up with it or not. We will not be held responsible for anybody but the one we see looking in the mirror back at us.

Next: We'll have to unify (come together).

UNIFYING

One of the signs of spiritual maturity is the unity of the faith. "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints *for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*, till we all come to *the unity of the faith* and the knowledge of the

Son of God, to a perfect man (this is the ‘be ye perfect’ Jesus spoke of in Matthew 5), to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, *tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine*” (Ephesians 4:11-14a italics and parenthesis are mine for emphasis).

It takes the unity (which is the opposite of being fragmented) of the faith to walk in the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (the anointed One and His anointing). The ‘faith’ we’re to unify on is found outlined in 1John 3: “And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment” (v.23). All else is personal convictions developed between the believer and the Holy Spirit (read Romans 14).

Jesus said that a “house divided against itself will not stand” (Matthew 12:25b). We must come together (unify) in this last hour and be about our Father’s business. Notice the ministry gifts were given to equip the body of Christ *to do the work of ministry and edify each other in love*; that’s how we’ll unify! If we’re busy building each other up, we’ll have no time to tear each other down! Selah.

If you’ve read these pages and the prominent portion of this message doesn’t apply to you then I’d like to thank you. But we have got to realize that we are one body and what is permitted individually will affect us all as a whole, and the overall work of the Lord in the earth. We must come to a place of unity. Our primary focus must be what is in the heart of the Father – souls! The precious fruit of the earth! HARVEST!

KEEP IT SIMPLE

We live in such a fast-paced society today, constantly demanding of our time, so much so that we sometimes feel like we meet ourselves in the doorway of our houses coming and going through it! Going to this meeting or taking the kids to that event. We don’t even eat meals together as a family anymore. Fragmented! This life-style has become a prison to the Holy Spirit. Why? Because we’ve gotten so programmed to hurry, hurry, hurry, that we no longer get quiet enough to hear His still small voice. Prison!

The devil cannot steal the anointing from you and me, for he’s not the author of it. But if he can prevent us in some way from walking in it then his job is already done. Imprisoning the Spirit of God within the believer is one of his greatest moves in the war between Light and darkness. This book is designed to address some of these issues.

LAST WORDS

I've shared all that's in my heart regarding this subject of imprisoning the Spirit of God. I realize we could go on and on, but enough has been said to at least 'get the ball rolling.' I pray that a great restoration from the Lord comes to the church in America (and around the world).

My greatest desire (after loving on and ministering to the Lord) is to experience God moving in our midst – not just in isolated locations, but ALL OVER THE PLANET!!

I strongly believe healing the sick, casting out devils, raising the dead and working miracles is the greatest way to show the goodness of God (which leads men to repentance [Romans 2:4b]) and the number one way to “lift Jesus up” (which will draw all men unto Him – *salvation* [John 12:32]). I submit to you, through the following handful of Scriptures, that the proclamation of the true gospel will have accompanying signs: God validating the message preached. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Rom 1:16, underline mine for emphasis).

1. When John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to Jesus to ask if He were the One to come (the One John was sent to precede), Jesus' response was “Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that *the* blind see, *the* lame walk, *the* lepers are cleansed, *the* deaf hear, *the* dead are raised, *the* poor have the gospel preached to them” (Luke 7:22).
2. The Gospel writer John records Jesus saying “I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me” (John 5:36). Jesus testified the works He did *bore witness* that the Father had sent Him, which brings us to Acts 10:38:
3. “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him” (Act 10:38). This corresponds with the words Jesus spoke in His first sermon “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me...” (read Luke 4:18-19).
4. On the Day of Pentecost—in the first Gospel sermon preached after Jesus arose from the dead—Peter said “Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know” (Acts 2:22). The point I wanted to make

here was that God attested to Jesus by the miracles—signs—and wonders He did! This is the pattern of the true gospel message!

5. The writer of the book of Hebrews states that the gospel message, “which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will” (Hebrews 2:3b-4).
6. Paul and Barnabas preached Christ in Iconium (Acts 14) who “stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands” (v.3). When Christ was boldly preached God validated the message with signs and wonders! [I submit: He’s the same God today, and will show Himself strong on behalf of those who will boldly proclaim His message!]
7. Then, Paul, writing to the Romans, testified: “For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient—in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ” (Rom 15:18-19). [Notice the purpose of preaching the gospel and the demonstrations of the power of the Spirit of God were to solicit actions from the Gentiles – that they may believe in Him Whom God had sent (see John 11:45 and 12:11)!]

Look at the recurring language: “God bearing witness”, “attested by God”, “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit *and with power.*” Let me put it in plain English: when the true gospel is being preached; if Jesus is proclaimed truthfully, then there should (will – *must*) be accompanying signs!!

Scripture teaches that Jesus is waiting for His enemies to be made His footstool and the Father is waiting for the precious fruit of the earth. I believe the Holy Spirit is waiting to be released from behind the prison bars addressed in this book, to reap that harvest! Let’s beat our swords (of ill-spoken words against each other) into plowshares (harvest reaping instruments), and our spears (things that have pierced unto division) into pruning hooks (that which cuts away dead and unnecessary things [Isaiah 2:4])! The fields are white for harvest (John 4:35)! Even though it’s the last hour we’ll still receive a full reward if we’ll repent and return to our first love (Matthew 20:16 and Revelation 2:5). “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Revelation 2:29). AMEN!

All scripture quotations are taken from the *New King James Version* of the Bible. © 1979, 1980, 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc., unless otherwise quoted in the obvious *Authorized King James Version* language.

Scriptures marked “AMP” are taken from *The Amplified Old Testament Part One* © 1964 / *Part Two* © 1962 by Zondervan Publishing House; *The Amplified New Testament* © 1958 by The Lockman Foundation.

Scriptures marked “NIV” are taken from *The Holy Bible, New International Version* © 1973, 1978 by International Bible Society, Zondervan Bible Publishers.

Scriptures marked “NAS” are taken from the *New American Standard Bible* © 1978 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. and © The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977 La Habra, California.

Webster’s New World Dictionary, Compact School and Office Edition.
© 1982, 1977, 1974, 1971, 1970, 1967 by Simon and Schuster.

HAVE YOU IMPRISONED THE HOLY SPIRIT?

A Practical Guide to Releasing the Spirit of God Through Your Life; Revised and Expanded

© 2017 by Michael Leach [Call of the Spirit Publications]

www.cspub.org

Printed in the United States of America. All rights reserved. No portion of this work may be reproduced in whole or in part in any form without the expressed written consent of the Publisher, except to make brief reference to.