

PREVAIL

MARCH 2009
FREE!

M A G A Z I N E

AMID THE FINANCIAL CHAOS...
BLESSED BE
THE NAME OF
THE LORD

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

What is Our Desire?

And what are the results?

**Seven Attributes of Highly
Successful Christians (Pt. II)**

Prayer and Obedience

When Your Hope is Hanging by a Thread

What to do when you feel like giving up

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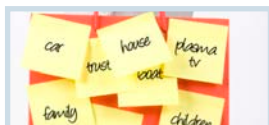
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PREVAIL

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Have you heard the news lately? Do things seem to be getting worse? Are you hearing of more unemployment and economic woes, more violence and more tragedy? The world is spiraling out of control. People are losing hope. Murders and suicides are rising. Terrorist attacks are imminent. Intense economic uncertainty inevitably leads to war. What can you do to ensure you have hope and meaning in your life?

Since Adam and Eve, mankind has been trying its best to live without God. Educational institutions embrace the scientific method which excludes the supernatural. God is beyond the scope of their understanding and therefore, they conclude, He does not exist. They have built a society that does not acknowledge God. That society is now unraveling. The best minds can do nothing to stop the impending global economic collapse and the violence that inevitably follows. When you read of others suffering in tragic events, do you feel safe? Jesus Christ warns you that without His protection, you are at risk of suffering the same fate:

"There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay:

but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:1-3)

Where is your hope? Is it in men or are you beginning to realize that only God can help you? If you want God's help, He makes it clear that you must repent. Unless you repent, God will not extend His grace toward you. But what is repentance?

The word repent' in Luke 13:1 is translated from the Greek word *metanoeh* which means to think differently, to reconsider, to feel remorse or regret for doing wrong. Quite simply, it means to change direction. Stop sinning! Make a U-turn! Stop distancing yourself from God. Turn away from sin, which is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4) and start a new life of overcoming sin. Sin is the enemy. Sin leads to death.

Finally, realize there is only one way:

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Jesus Christ is the only path to eternal life. Repentance begins by acknowledging that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour for all humanity.

From the Editor:
Horane Smith



What is Our Desire?



by Adrian Davis

Oniomania is a medical term describing the compulsive desire to shop. It is generally considered a pathology. However, given our current economic crisis, governments and corporations alike wouldn't mind if we were all stricken with a little *oniomania*.

How about you? Have you felt the desire to shop lately? Do you feel a patriotic duty to do your part for the economy? Before you rush out to buy another shiny new object, consider this question: what is the role of desire in a Christian's life?

DESIRE

Desire is fundamental to being human. We are made in God's image and God Himself has desires. Our very existence is a function of His desire. God's desire to have children was so great, He and Jesus Christ were willing to endure great suffering (John 3:16; Luke 22:15; Heb. 5:8).

Like God, as a result of our desires, we are moved to action. Nothing happens without desire. The world runs on desire. The problem with the natural man is he is riddled with desires but lacks wisdom to guide and direct those desires. He is, therefore, governed and buffeted by impulses.

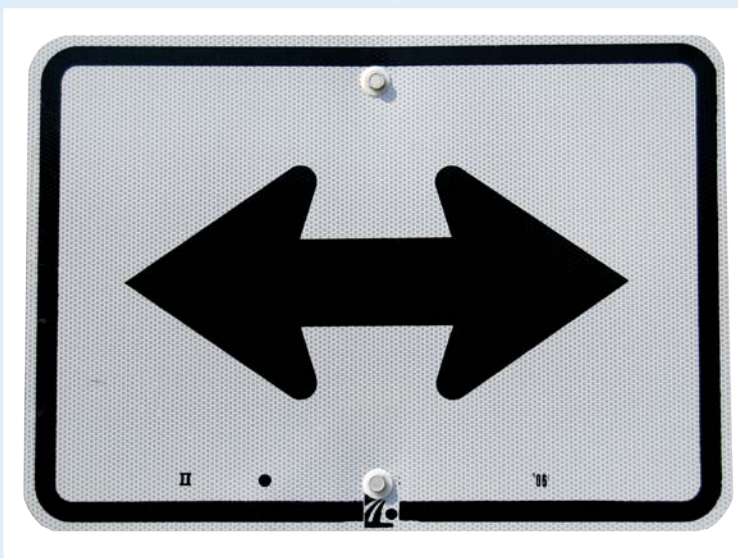
"Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." (Eph. 2:3)

Fulfilling desires can be addictive. Accomplishing desires brings great fulfillment (Prov. 13:19). When we are unable to fulfill our desires, we experience pain (Prov. 13:12). Consequently, without God, we can easily fall into a trap of continually cultivating desires and pursuing them. We get on a treadmill where we never feel truly satisfied. When one desire is fulfilled, we develop another. Without God, we feel

empty and inadequate and repeatedly chase the next desire hoping it will bring a more complete sense of fulfillment.

OUR MINDS AT WORK

This ongoing cycle may eventually cause some of us to examine ourselves. When we do, we tend to think of ourselves within an intellectual framework. That is, we



"The problem with the natural man is he is riddled with desires but lacks wisdom to guide and direct those desires..."

tend to think of ourselves based on our conscious thoughts. A significant portion of our mind, however, predates conscious thinking.

Intellect requires language. It represents higher order processing and although we are all born with this capacity, we do not initially possess it; it must be developed. Prior to its development, our sophisticated minds are already at work. At this pre-language stage, they work with images. First we perceive images, and then we learn to create images (i.e., use our imagination).

For example, the toddler watches as those

around him walk on two legs. He then imagines himself walking on two legs. He develops a deep desire for the image he has created in his mind and calls upon all of his resources to fulfill this desire. When he finally takes that first step, he and his parents are thrilled (Prov. 13:19).

As we mature, this rudimentary image processing never leaves us. Instead, we lay on top of it more sophisticated ways of thinking. We gather knowledge with language; then we learn to reason with the body of knowledge we have gathered.

We learn to communicate in sophisticated ways with those around us and as we do, we become adept at fooling them and ourselves about our true state of maturity. Without God's Spirit, we remain immature. Despite our sophisticated use of language, what really drives us is what drove us before we could speak: our imagination! We formulate images with our mind and we cultivate desires for those images. We then strive to fulfill those desires.

"But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward." (Jer. 7:24)

IT'S THE ECONOMY

The western economy is built on the insight that we desire what we imagine. Without God, man suffers a deep feeling of emptiness. Mistakenly, he believes *if* he can only get something, he will feel fulfilled. Manufacturers develop products and advertise them showing us how fulfilled we will be if we acquire them. Advertisements are presented as images to bypass our intellect and trigger that base part of our minds. We put ourselves in the picture and the emotion of *desire* is aroused within us.

Once we finally acquire the desired object, its power to fulfill us quickly fades and we cultivate a new desire. Wash, rinse, repeat.

The cycle continues *ad infinitum*—until another emotion kicks in— the emotion of fear.

Fear, like desire, bypasses all intellectual processing. It triggers imagination of negative consequences and results in immediate, split-second reactions that override all other actions. All of the advertising in the world won't get people to shop if the panic button has been pressed.

Unfortunately, we must continue to engage in hyper-consumption if the economy is to have any hope. According to economists, we must cast aside rational thought and plunge deeper into debt and enjoy today's fleeting sensations. However, as more bad

contentment (Phil. 4:7, 11).

THE ROLE OF DESIRE

To come back to our original question, what is the *role of desire* in the Christian life? The scriptures tell us that without vision the people perish. When our future with God is clearly seen, it arouses desire within us. When desire is aroused, we set clear goals and we avoid distractions. It is only when spiritual desire is stirred within us that we will “mortify [subdue] the deeds of the body” (Rom. 8:13).

An example of this is found in 2 Corinthians 7. The apostle Paul observed that the Corinthian church went from a

desire to change with a *deep passion and fiery enthusiasm*. Once this deep desire was triggered, true change was inevitable.

Another example of this desire is written by the prophet Isaiah:

“Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” (Isa. 26:8-9)

Once the right desire is activated, we will be motivated to pray, study, fast, and meditate and to resist and overcome Satan. *Desire is critical* to our success as Christians, but that presumes we are cultivating the right desire. *Oniomania*, is not the type of desire a Christian should, or would pursue. Sadly, it's nothing more than a form of idolatry and will only leave us feeling empty and unfulfilled.

“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” (Luke 12:15)

With the right desire in place, we will not suffer from recurring bouts of emptiness. We will be spiritually fulfilled. Moreover, with the right desire in place, we will not be troubled by a failing economy as we will know that our heavenly Father knows what we need.

“(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matt. 6:32-33)

As we continue to hear news of a failing economy, let's not panic and let's not be fooled into thinking shopping for material things is the answer. Instead, let's cultivate a compulsive desire, built on passion and enthusiasm for God and the things that we can do to please Him.

“Once the right desire is activated, we will be motivated to pray, study, fast, and meditate and to resist and overcome Satan. Desire is critical to our success as Christians, but that presumes we are cultivating the right desire.”

economic news unfolds, we feel panic-stricken and spend less. As we spend less, the economy weakens further. This causes us to hear more bad news and we fear to shop. However, we are constantly encouraged to spend to ‘help the economy.’

How have we reached this state where failure to consume like impulsive children threatens the world economy?

We must realize that the foundation of the world's economy is anti-God. For the economy to function properly, mankind must remain insecure and unsatisfied—ever seeking but never being content. Mankind must worship things and not God. When we worship God, we no longer feel insecure. When we worship God in spirit and in truth, we experience a great sense of

state of harbouring sin to zealously driving it out of their midst. A key ingredient in their success was the deep desire they experienced:

“For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.” (2 Cor. 7:11, emphasis added)

The term translated “vehement desire” is the Greek word *epithymesis*. It means to have a *deep and earnest* longing for something. The word “zeal” is translated from the Greek word *zelos*. *Zelos* is passion, ardour, or enthusiasm. The Corinthians





A DAY IS COMING
when the sun won't shine,
it will be dark.

A NIGHT IS COMING
when the moon won't shine,
it will turn red — like blood.

HOW WILL THIS HAPPEN?

Watch and Pray!
Watch the Armor of God!
See back cover for listings.

If we profess to be true Christians, we are duty-bound to continuously examine ourselves—purifying our lives as we draw closer to God. We know that we are accountable not only for our actions but also for our thoughts. Both our actions and the content of our thoughts must be pure; however, our self-examination must not stop here. *How* we think is just as important as *what* we think.

We've all heard the famous credo, "*I think therefore I am.*" This applies to Christians as well.

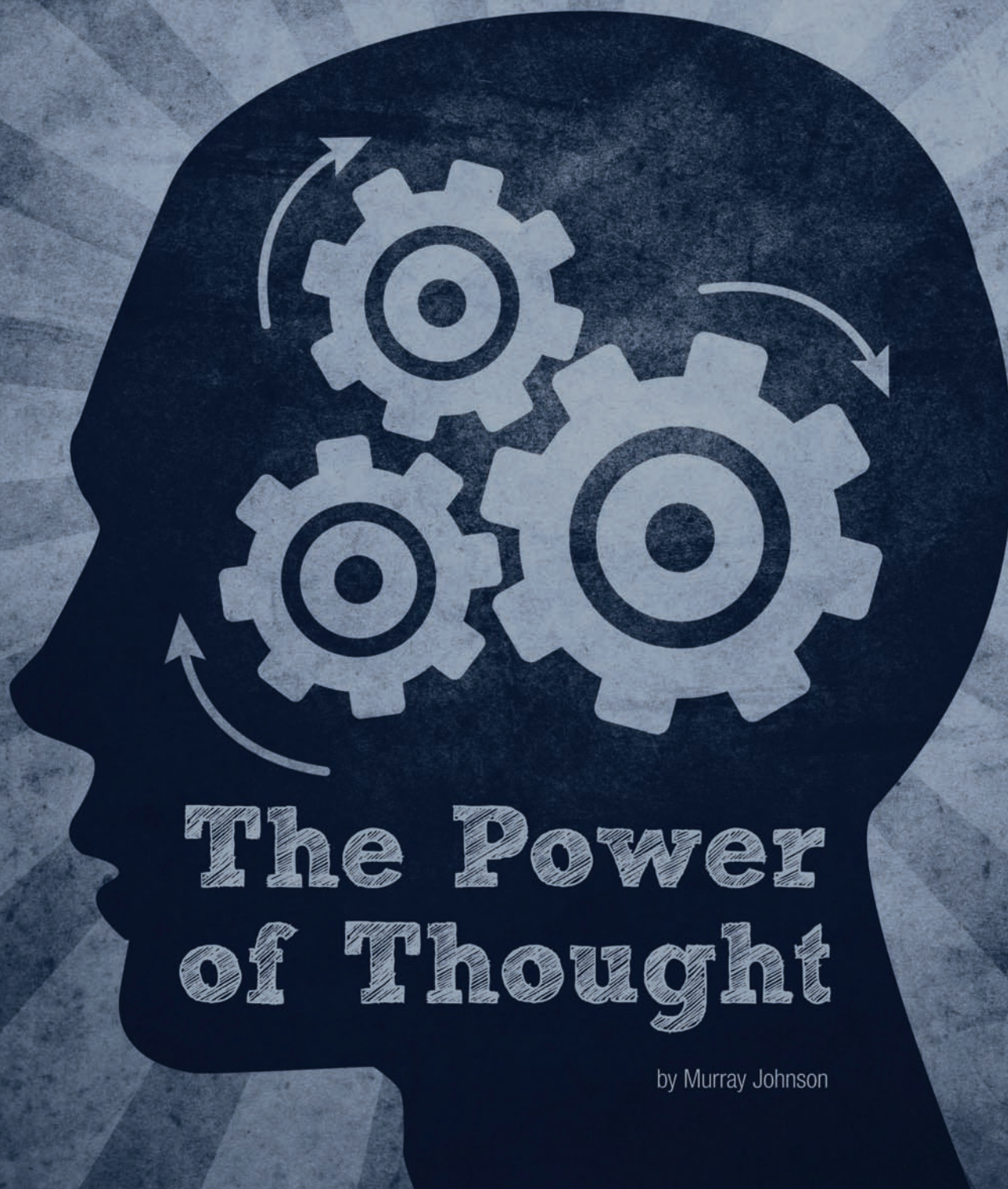
We must realize that true spirituality comes first from our thought process. Therefore, we must consider both *what* we are thinking about and *how* we are using our thoughts. From our inward thoughts, we move towards outward action. We formulate something in our mind and ulti-

mately find ourselves doing it.

Romans 1:21 tells us:

"Because when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful, but became vain in their imaginations [thoughts] and their foolish heart was darkened."

We see that they knew God—they had no excuse. However, in their *inward thinking*



The Power of Thought

by Murray Johnson

they became stupid:

"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools... Wherefore God gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves." (Rom. 1:22, 24)

Notice the order of occurrence. First, the idea came to mind, followed by the action. In verse 25, we see they changed the truth about God into a lie and worshipped the created rather than the Creator.

Notice verse 28, here we see that same order again: thoughts came first, followed by actions.

"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind [a mind hardened in sin] to do those things which are not convenient." (Rom. 1:28)

The apostle Paul warns us not to be conformed to the things of this world. Instead, we should be transformed by the renewing of our minds—from the inside. Ephesians 4:17 states that we must not walk as the Gentiles (unbelievers) in the vanity of the mind. We see this is the wrong walk to take because our actions begin first with our thoughts. The story of Joseph in the book of Genesis is a perfect example of this.

Joseph's brothers were much older than him; yet, they envied and hated him. Their actions were all based on their thoughts about Joseph. We see the results of inward hatred manifested as outward actions. They were willing, if need be, to murder Joseph and lie to their aging father that wild beasts had killed him.

We also see this same *thought process* played out in the story of Adam and Eve. They knew God in a very personal way, even talking to Him face-to-face. Nevertheless, when their thoughts turned to Satan, they doubted their Creator. They pondered what Satan had said to them and

in their *thinking* they rejected God and believed Satan. Their actions proved this when they disobeyed God, which became known as the point at which humans fell. Interestingly, the description of Satan's rebellion is presented but we see another scenario regarding this story:

"For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne

more powerful than God. Ultimately, his *thoughts* moved him to engage in *action*.

With one third of the heavenly hosts (Rev. 12:4) Satan challenged God and was defeated and cast out of heaven to the Earth (Rev. 12:9). Satan himself was the originator of what we presently see being played out in mankind's thought process: first the *thought*, then the *action*. Sadly, this kind of *thinking* originally led Satan to reject God's authority. Consequently, mankind has followed in this same direction throughout history.

In light of all these examples, what should our thought processes be? Clearly, we should try to have a mind like that of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 2:5)

Christ's own thought process was to do the will of His Father. He gave up His glory to take on the nature of a servant to die for our sins, as willed by His Father. Knowing this should cause us to strive to be as humble as Jesus Christ; in so doing, we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Instead, we will be motivated to seek, serve, and worship the Eternal in spirit and in truth which

will help us to control our thoughts.

In summary, if we are to walk the Christian path that leads to our Crown of Glory, we must nurture this inward thought process to the end. God expects us to cast down *thinking* that exalts itself above Him and to restrict every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

We can be encouraged to know our salvation can be anticipated thanks to the shed blood of God's only begotten Son, who faithfully obeyed the will of His Father.



"In light of all these examples, what should our thought processes be? Clearly, we should try to have a mind like that of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High." (Isa. 14:13-14)

Where did all this come from? Historically, we know God created Lucifer as a perfect being—he had everything going for him. When God created the angels, He gave them free will, and with this, obviously, comes the freedom of choice between obedience and disobedience. It might have taken millions of years, but Satan must have *thought* about his own potential as God's creation and, unfortunately, aspired to be



Jesus Christ is Building an Organization

by Bill Watson

Jesus Christ is building an administration. He is calling us to be kings and priests, and we will reign on the Earth with Him (Rev. 5:10). God is organized. We can look all around us and see symmetry, coordination, and interdependence. Throughout His Creation, from the planets and stars of galaxies beyond, to the smallest of bacteria and living organism in between, there is synergy. Why then, do some think it odd and unnecessary for God to build His body a living spiritual organism through an organizational structure for achieving the Christian objective of spiritual growth?

For some, the problem with belonging is that it requires sacrifice, interaction, and teamwork. Unfortunately, today there are fewer people in God's Church who want to be part of a collective team.

Many believe it suits them just fine and is more spiritually comfortable to be disassociated, detached, and disconnected from any organizational associations. In other words—to be 'independent.'

There are a variety of reasons for this, but two very common ones are: to minimize, if not eliminate, commitments, obligations, pressures and/or personal identification with any particular group; and secondly, to be in the forefront: to be heard, to run the show, or to get and receive all of the credit,

the accolades, and of course the money.

INDEPENDENCE CAN BE SELFISH

Admittedly, some fail to recognize the problem with *not* belonging is that it can be a selfish approach to Christ's calling.

The reason? Our calling includes and demands more than just *receiving* or *getting* personal salvation. There is a work to do, which requires us to put our personal learning into real interaction with others! In other words, it's a work that should be larger than us.

It's larger than our families, our friends, and our lives. It has everything to do with personal *sacrifice and fellowship* for a collective Christian purpose.

Christ Himself said that we must *love* our families and friends *less* than we love Him to be worthy to serve Him.

"If any man come to me, and hate not [love less] his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."
(Luke 14:26-27)

Yes, we are absolutely expected to provide

for our families and to grow personally in grace and knowledge. But in addition, there is a collective reason and purpose for our calling:

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."
(Matt. 24:14)

"And the gospel must first be published among all nations." (Mark 13:10)

ORGANIZATIONS ARE FOR TEAM PLAYERS

As melodramatic as it may sound, some of us may be required to lay down our lives in martyrdom (Luke 21:12-19). Dying for our faith is a great honour. Consider the historical records of Christians throughout the centuries, the apostles, and Christ Himself.

Unfortunately, today many of us have lost that connection in the quagmire of our politically correct society. Many are far more concerned with serving their own personal agendas than sacrificing for their country, political purpose, corporate goal, or team objective.

So it is in God's church. We find Christians who are more concerned about what they can do independently, or how they can help

themselves or improve on how they *personally* feel. So many today are only concerned about what *they* can do for *themselves*, completely forgetting the value of fellowship, which results in mutual benefiting relationships. Sadly, they fail to recognize the importance that comes with working with others, and the *long-term value* it has in the actual development of learning how to become a king and priest. It's one thing to read and understand the 'theory and idealism' of becoming a *world ruler* (Rev. 2:6), but quite another to actually inter-act presently with others, promoting the Christian way.

ARE WE TEAM PLAYERS?

Not all of us are evangelists. Not all of us are teachers or pastors. We are not all writers or scholars. As in many areas of life, not all of us are capable or qualified to lead in every area. But we can be part of a collective movement by using the God-given talents/gifts we have for the benefit of the whole. We call this, *first among equals*. However, *first among equals* can only be understood in the context of being a team player.

Organizations are for *team* players. They require the spirit of cooperation for a common cause. They are not for the self-serving, self-oriented, self-interested or self-promoting. People like this are not well suited for an environment requiring sacrifice for a collective objective. That is too ambiguous for those who are self-serving; besides, it requires faith and trust in others beside you. This is difficult to understand and accept for those who have personal ambitions or agendas.

The Bible says to trust no man (Psa. 146:3). This is true. But we are not talking about trusting an organization with our personal salvation. We've been through that. Don't get confused. We're simply talking about trusting an organization enough to voluntarily participate in a particular *evangelistic* work. In our case, that work centers on

sounding a clear and concise warning to a derailed and dysfunctional world while making disciples for Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19-20). This is not hard to understand unless you are strapped with suspicion, distrust, or perhaps, just simply an ample amount of selfishness.

BUILDING FAITH

Doing such a work requires faith. But faith (belief and trust) develops and matures only when we are committed to something *outside* ourselves, be it our business, our family, or our church.

efforts towards others.

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke [encourage] unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching... Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." (Heb. 10:23-25, 38)

Holding the profession of faith firmly and encouraging one another as we "see the day approaching" demands a team effort framed in fellowship. We are required to get along, work with one another, interact with each other and trust and depend on one another. It requires the ability to trust each other's judgment, thoughts, advice, and leadership. In other words, we should have some type of relationship with each other.

Mutual trust with interpersonal functions, while each of us trusts our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: this is fundamental to our preparation for positions in Christ's government and administration. Under these conditions, camaraderie occurs and the attributes of faith and trust become a real living experience that metabolize as part of our spiritual



"By networking, we can enhance our personal growth and positively impact the world around us."

With that consideration in mind, a spiritually healthy *Christian* faith should generate *outreach*. Unobstructed, this outreach generates selflessness and compels one to repent, get baptized, and proceed to overcome while committing to *share* the Good News (the Gospel).

It's not difficult to recognize the need to connect and network with others when one has this mindset and outlook. By networking, we can enhance our personal growth and positively impact the world around us. There is strength in numbers and our personal effectiveness is multiplied by these

make-up.

BENEFITS OF ORGANIZATIONS

An organized effort that requires mutual trust and cooperation creates an ideal environment for developing faith and other attributes of godly character that are intrinsically real because they're derived from living the experiences. At the same time, it enables us to contribute to a larger work, resulting in greater impact for Christ throughout the world.

continued on page 17



The Perfect Government

by Dan Alexander

In October and November 2008, general elections were held in Canada and America respectively.

The results of the Canadian elections were predictable. That is the way elections have seemingly unfolded over the past few decades: short and sweet with a little bit of controversy here and there. There was nothing earth-shattering or historically significant as far as federal elections go. That is unless we talk about some special interest groups whose agendas cut into the

moral fiber of society.

When it comes to certain biblical values, for example, the traditional definition of marriage and the sanctity of human life in the womb, Canadians don't seem to care anymore.

Just over 60 percent of Canadians turned out for the October elections—about the same turnout for the 2006 elections.

In my opinion, some Canadians now vote

out of a sense of duty. Others, due to apathy, don't even bother. Some feel empowered because they never had the freedom to vote in their country of birth. Then, there are the selfish voters or groups that only have one thing in mind: *What's in it for me?*

The few who actually vote in this country of approximately 33 million people, vote with one eye open. Those who vote fulfill a privileged duty, but too often vote with blind faith.

In the same way, many go through life blind and without faith.

In the United States, the election took over the “land of the free and the home of the brave” like a tsunami. There seemed to be patriotic passion burning in the belly of the nation that has been missing for quite some time now.

In a way, the American federal elections were once a reflection of Canadian elections. You could predict the outcome without much difficulty.

The campaigning for presidential nomination prior to the actual election seemed to last for years, with so many contenders competing in the first few months. The American people were like lumberjacks, cutting away the limbs and branches off a huge redwood, until they reduced it to two branches on either side of the massive trunk.

The right side fell first, leaving one contender victorious: Senator John McCain for the Republicans.

The left side continued to fight an unprecedented battle between former U.S. President Bill Clinton's wife, Senator Hillary Clinton, and fellow Democrat and relative newcomer, Senator Barack Obama.

Some said one of Obama's shortcomings was his youth and inexperience in the national political arena. Others thought his biggest obstacle was his race. After all, he is a Black man born to parents from different races. And if he succeeded in winning the presidency, he would become the first minority candidate to attain the highest office in the free world. Some said it was impossible.

Regardless, in the end, the young senator was the winner.

In the beginning, I thought America would not entertain the idea of a young Black senator who talked of change. But Obama spoke with such eloquence that you were compelled to listen. And listen America did, making history by electing Obama as

their 44th president.

Yes, the race was a fascinating one. People everywhere were enthralled by the historical achievement. One of the dreams of significant figures, like Martin Luther King Jr., has become a reality. A major cultural achievement has been accomplished now that *America the Beautiful* has come full circle by electing its first minority commander in chief.

What is next? Wars and rumors of wars will continue. You can bank on it.



“Sometimes it seems as though politics today is simply all about staying in power.”

Politicians often come in like lions and go out like lambs. Dreams can turn into nightmares. People's love can turn into hate when expectations are not met.

I'll hope and pray for the best for both countries and our planet, but unfortunately, politicians often make claims and promises they cannot fulfill.

Sometimes it seems as though politics today is simply all about staying in power.

Remember the famous saying by British historian Lord Acton:

“Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are

almost always bad men.”

There is a source of power that's incorruptible; One who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

One who gave up everything for you and me in order for us to inherit life eternally. One who will form a perfect government that only has our best interests at heart.

Isn't this the kind of government and leader we should vote for and dedicate our entire lives to? This leader stands for real change you can believe in!

It is the promise of the soon coming perfect government: The Kingdom of the King of kings and Lord of lords, our High Priest Jesus, the Christ.

Every government of this world has failed; present and future human governments will be no exception. But the Kingdom of God will be triumphant.

As much as some would like to believe in mankind's promises and dreams of change, we need only look back in history to see the future. Real change comes from within.

“...greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” (1 John 4:4)

Jesus Christ makes this change within you. This change lasts far beyond the governments of this world. This change is lasting and will go on into a future perfect government that is everlasting and built on love and peace.

“... choose you this day whom ye will serve... but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” (Josh. 24:15)

He's got my vote, how about yours?

Picture the ballot with 2 choices: Jesus or The World.

Pick your candidate. Pick your future.





AMID THE FINANCIAL CHAOS... BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD

by Steve Agnew

THE MELTDOWN

Since the decisive defeat of Saddam Hussein's army in March of 2003, the stock market had been on a roll in North America.

By late 2007, the market had experienced about five and a half years of positive returns.

It was an unprecedented series of gains.

Statistically, the market was due for a breather; yet many optimists were eagerly calling for another year of positive returns. Only a few were hedging their bets.

A troublesome factor was an emerging, but

little understood problem in the United States: sub-prime loans and its travelling companion, Asset-Backed Commercial Paper (ABCP). Some would later call these ABCP 'assets' liabilities.

Much later, many in the U.S. came to believe that the financial institutions which created these either lied, or completely misunderstood the risk associated with both toxic products.

Nevertheless, it would take some time for the crisis to unfold, and the band, as they say, played on.

At the beginning of the sub-prime mess, the fiscal problems associated with it seemed distant and unrelated to business

affairs in Canada.

The first weak signal of trouble that I noticed occurred when my wife and I went out for dinner with a friend and his date in February 2008. During our time at the restaurant, my friend's date complained bitterly about the losses she had accumulated in her mutual funds. At the time, I mentally assigned her losses to the bad advice of an inexperienced financial consultant.

When this same woman learned of my passion for the stock market, more questions followed. But I could not provide her with the comforting information she sought.

Unbeknownst to me, the personal financial stress she was experiencing was intense.

After hearing my negative take on the market, she immediately became agitated and sought comfort in another drink.

Even now, I can still remember her anxiety when she realized that her losses would not be recovered easily.

Although I suspected that the near-term prospects for the market were not rosy, I never imagined the carnage that followed later in the year.

No one, not even Warren Buffett, the 'Oracle of Omaha' did.

They couldn't.

Only God knows the end from the beginning (Isa. 46:10; Rev. 21:6).

As I recall, it's God who gives the power to get wealth, not the simple plans of men (Deut. 8:18).

As I write this piece in early December 2008, the market is hoping for a powerful counter-rally from its autumn lows.

This hope is based on statistical patterns and stock market history. Whether it will occur or not is moot. The underlying problems of the market will not be fixed by a simple rally, and the better market analysts and technicians know this, as do their bosses.

Obviously, the first problem with the markets is paper fiat money. Simply put, this type of money is a non-gold-backed currency of which value rests in the confidence that pieces of paper can be exchanged for various goods and services.

Fiat money is produced by governmental decree and has existed in the U.S. since the creation of the Federal Reserve System.

It has existed as a stronger more absolute form of currency as the world standard since President Richard Nixon closed the gold window to domestic and international markets in 1971.

The second problem is the greed and fear exhibited at times by various market participants.

Fiat money allows the defacto agent of the government, the U.S. Federal Reserve,

known as a central bank elsewhere, to create money, or liquidity, virtually out of thin air and worry about paying the bills later.

The inflation associated with fiat money has been a concern for several decades, but massive Third World immigration and the import of cheap foreign goods have papered over the problems of inflation in North America.

Essentially, some of the First World inflation associated with fiat money has been exported to Third World countries in the form of excess liquidity, which has been used to build dynamic economies and raise the standards of living there.

China and India have been two of the major Third World countries that have been blessed. They are now on their way to First World status and may reach it soon.

I was truly amazed several years ago when my wife returned from a business trip to Shanghai. This region of China has become a showpiece of Chinese progress and rivals the position of business centers elsewhere in the world.

Up until recently, the only true negative for North America was the ever-declining manufacturing base and the loss of high paying manufacturing jobs.

Later, some of the research and development jobs that congregate near manufacturing centers also began to disappear. As did the call center jobs.

India was the net winner in this category.

For the most part, Wall Street, Bay Street and North American governments seemed to care little. The rich got richer, workers were otherwise employed, and the various governments got their tax revenues. Even the unemployed got benefits, retraining, and handouts.

The trouble is that many of the financial tricks designed to mitigate the effects of

inflation and clean up the problems of unemployment do not work over the long term.

Eventually, inflation facilitated by fiat money works its way into the financial system as excess leverage or debt.

At first, the effects are not noticeable, but at some point the toxic sludge builds and becomes very clear. The continued use of excess leverage or debt over decades produces profound credit inflation.

In other words, prices for financial assets rise dramatically and become unsustainable.

When credit is cut off, as it has been recently, asset prices financed by leverage (debt or credit inflation) sag, since buyers

"As I recall, it's God who gives the power to get wealth, not the simple plans of men."

now must rely on their own resources or reduced credit to purchase items. Stocks, cars, houses, artwork, and the like, fall in price under these conditions.

This is what has happened.

Left unchecked, deflation in the form of a depression can follow the bursting of massive credit bubbles.

This is what happened in the U.S. during the 1930s after the credit driven inflation of the 1920s. If the symptoms of credit inflation are treated incorrectly by means of massive trillion dollar bailouts, the credit bubble shifts to other asset classes and grows larger. The day of reckoning is postponed but not eliminated.

This is what may happen in most First World countries post 2008.

The present financial carnage with more to come as the decades roll by is not unpredictable. The Bible hints at this.

Scriptures in both the New and Old Testaments suggest this.

Revelation tells us of a time when a day's wages buy only enough wheat or barley (that is bread and by extension poultry and beef which are fed various grain stocks) to feed that same worker for a day, and nothing more (Rev. 6:6).

This is inflationary, reminiscent of the problems in Weimar Germany back in 1925.

It could also be deflationary, that is too many workers and people competing for limited resources force real wages down. This is like China's market in 2008.

However, the second part of the verse suggests that wheat is harmed deliberately while other food items are left untouched (Rev. 6:6).

As the supply of wheat and barley is decreased, inflation sets in if demand for grains (that is mouths to feed) is left unchanged.

WHY IS THIS?

War, famine and pestilence come to mind (Rev. 6), but I also suspect that fiat money has a role too.

Isaiah states that men shall throw out their idols of silver and gold (Isa. 2:20; Isa. 31:7).

Some say that this verse means exactly what it says and no more. Some say that these verses have implications for the future financial worth of precious metals. I agree.

Erroneously, they say that gold will be rejected because it becomes worthless. I disagree.

I say that these verses describe a time when a generation will exist which cannot determine what is valuable, and will foolishly make paper fiat money their store of physical wealth. Inflation will result.

Gold has been and always will be a store of physical value. Easily created paper and electronic money is not. The problems of the fiat money financial system that we live under today, demonstrate this fact.

Another problem with our financial system is the greed and fear exhibited by market participants.

When an economy rocks along, as it did

can feed the prosperity message taught by some and rebuked by the Bible (1 Tim. 6:10-11).

When fear sets in, as it did, during the fall of 1987, the summer of 1998, the period of 2002 to mid 2003 and again in the fall of 2008, people hold their money tightly and refuse to lend or give. When this occurs, business lending and charitable donations lock up. When business lending declines

to unnaturally low levels, as is currently the case, businesses fold and unemployment increases. When tithes and charitable donations are withheld, the work of the church and charities remain undone. Those in need of spiritual and physical help suffer.

What is the end result? In this environment of fiat money and asset bubbles, greed and fear set in and the phenomenon of stock market volatility emerges. Large pools of money begin to slosh about from one asset class to another, distorting prices and causing financial chaos as the tide of cash ebbs and flows. The average citizen is unable to cope with the high level of asset price volatility and is unable to understand why.

One thing that many average investors do realize is this: money laboriously accumulated over many years can vanish quickly when market confidence sags as fear replaces greed.

Following this, many workers will soon experience the same in the employment arena.

Under these conditions, people suffer loss and retirement timeframes lengthen. Misery soon follows.

(To be continued in the next issue of *Prevail Magazine*, as I discuss the Government's 'Quick Fix' versus God's plans for the future.)



"Everyone hopes for gain
and pleasure. The attitude of
something for nothing abounds."

from 1993 until 1999, and again from mid 2003 until the fall of 2007, everyone wants more, gets more and then throws greater amounts of money at assets, whether it's stocks, houses, or cars.

They can do this because credit or borrowed money is plentiful. Everyone hopes for gain and pleasure. The attitude of something for nothing abounds. This is greed and it creates unhealthy asset bubbles as well as unhealthy spiritual attitudes of avarice and pride (1 Tim. 6:10).

How many families were unable to buy houses during the last housing bubble while others, who owned or built, demanded more and more?

Even within the church during these times, greed can be present. Some imagine godliness as a means of gain (1 Tim. 6:5). This



Daniel

A living example for
today's society

by Patrick Bastien

It is God's intention that every generation recognize the timelessness of the Bible. The story of Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego), walking in the scorching, fiery furnace, is food for thought for our lives. The Bible is not just a handbook telling us what we should and should not do. The Word of God tells us about God's timeless purpose for our lives.

About 600 years before the birth of Christ, Daniel saw his nation overrun by her enemies and his life uprooted. Together, with a group of other Jewish prisoners, he was led as a captive to a place called Babylon. While in Babylon, Daniel experienced the challenge of living faithfully in a culture devoted to a vastly different set of values and priorities.

As Daniel and his friends entered their new world, they would live out convictions that were destined to put them out of step with their powerful captors. Yet, in the middle of a pagan world, Daniel became a government leader, serving under three kings; as an historian, recording what God did in his day; and a prophet, predicting the future and interpreting dreams, speaking God's truth to the leaders.

As Daniel's story develops, Judah is being invaded and business is at a standstill. The prophet Jeremiah knew why because for over 20 years he had pleaded with the people of Judah to return to God. He warned them that if they refused, the Babylonians would take them into captivity for 70 years (Jer. 25:1-1; 1 Dan. 1:1-7). King Nebuchadnezzar decided to take the best and brightest of the captives from the nation of Judah and use them to advance his nation. He used the best minds and abilities to make Babylon a strong nation. This selection process demanded they meet high standards: they had to be good looking and without physical defect, skilled in wisdom and able to learn and discern. These young men would become wise men. This strategy presented some subtle challenges. Yes, they would be better off than the slaves in Babylon, but their situation produced challenges others would not face. These challenges came from several areas:

1. ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS:

These are the problems that either shape our character or reveal it. The key questions here was, would Daniel be able to maintain his purity, having been taken to a strange pagan land at an impressionable age?

2. LIFESTYLE:

The king's delicacies were not necessarily bad. However, it was food that had been offered to Babylon's false gods and eating it was believed to endorse those idols.

3: ALLEGIANCES:

First, the king planned to change their dedication to the one true God by requiring them to study under the astrologers of Babylon. Second, his goal was to change their worship by changing their names, which would indicate a shift in allegiance to the Babylonian gods. They all had names that pointed to the God of Israel.

Nebuchadnezzar's goal was to change their way of life—thinking, eating, and worshipping. How would they respond to this character test?

Daniel responded by recognizing that eating the king's food raised an issue of principle (Dan. 1:8-14). He saw something about the food that prompted a response similar to what we find by King David in Psalm 119: 11. What did Daniel see? First of all, the king's food wasn't sanctioned by the Word of God—that is, it was not prepared according to the dietary principles of Israel. But what was probably a greater

issue for Daniel was a pattern that appeared in other areas of his life. He didn't want to do anything that would honour the gods of Babylon. Eating and drinking food and wine offered to idols were violations of the Word and the honour of the true God. The path of least resistance would have been to go with the flow, but Daniel's objective was obedience to God, despite his environment.

Daniel and his three friends took a stand the other captives apparently did not take.

"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." (Dan. 1:8, emphasis added)

This is the key attitude. He had a variety of options, but he was *determined* to be true to the living God (Dan. 1:9-10). Daniel used diplomacy and showed a proper consequence. Even here, we see the work of God in preparation for this moment. Daniel took his stand and God gave him favour with the chief of the eunuchs who agreed to Daniel's request for a 10-day trial of eating only vegetables. It was a small test of faith that would prepare Daniel for the greater tests of faith to come regarding God's deliverance.

The test worked and showed that Daniel and his friends knew what Israel forgot. God honours obedience. At the end of the 10 days, Daniel and his friends came out stronger than the others because God worked on their behalf. As a result, the diet was allowed to continue. Daniel's life had stayed firm because he was committed to a purity that flows from obedience to the Word, and it gave him a foundation for living in a difficult culture. Yes, God's blessing was confirmed as Daniel and his friends were declared to be ten times better than all the scholars of Babylon (Dan. 1:15-20).

At the end of their training, Daniel was probably no more than 20 years old. At that young age, Daniel was set apart for service and lived a life of distinction under a powerful pagan government (Dan. 2). As the story continues, Daniel and his friends will rise above the challenges with a deep confidence in God.

In Daniel 2, King Nebuchadnezzar's sleep was disturbed by dreams. But it was one particular dream that concerned him. The king awoke in turmoil and summoned his advisors. Daniel and his friends were not called, perhaps because they were still in training. However, the king did call his magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and the Chaldeans. When the Chaldeans told the king that interpreting his dream was unfair because only the gods could do such a thing, they unwittingly set the stage for Daniel's God to do just that! Once they admitted their inability to understand the dream, Nebuchadnezzar exploded! He was so enraged he ordered all the wise men, including Daniel and the other youths in training to be executed.

edge to his own advantage. Rather, it was to worship God—the God of power and provision. Daniel gave God all the praise for answering his prayer. What a marvelous display of worship! Would it have been inappropriate for Daniel to thank God for saving his life? Of course not! But it seems that even this miraculous rescue was secondary in Daniel's mind to the wonder of the God who performed it.

Daniel's response should cause all of us to examine ourselves to see where our own focus lies. When we fail to put our confidence in God, it is easy to lose our focus. Our perspective becomes blurred, and we see the trees rather than the forest. Yet, Daniel's focus stayed clear during a time of life and death. God enabled him to

"When we fail to put our confidence in God, it is easy to lose our focus. Our perspective becomes blurred, and we see the trees rather than the forest."

The king sent out Arioch to kill all the wise men of Babylon. But when Arioch approached, Daniel was able to speak to him with counsel and wisdom. Daniel asked him for an explanation of the death decree and Arioch told him the entire story. Making the most of the opportunity, Daniel went in and asked the king to give him time to interpret the dream. Next, Daniel went to the house and made the matter known to his companions Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, that they might seek mercies from God concerning this secret in order to avoid perishing with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. Daniel shared his heart's burden with his friends, and together they began to seek mercies from the God of heaven. This is a powerful expression of their spiritual confidence (Dan. 2).

As they prayed, God unveiled the secret of the king's dream to Daniel. This was not a big surprise! With the proverbial noose still around Daniel's neck, his first response was not to gain relief or to use his knowl-

perform rather than wilt under pressure. Daniel was able to succeed where the other wise men had failed. This was not false humility. It was a sincere understanding of his role in the event. To this young man, the issue was clear—it was about God, not himself. Daniel recited the dream and its interpretation accurately but the key result is a declaration of the glory of Daniel's God.

Our choices during changing times tell a lot about us. Where is our focus in times of pressure? Are we scrambling to protect ourselves at all costs? Are we doing desperate things that harm others in the process? Or, are we more concerned about how our actions will reflect on God?

In your thoughtful moments, ask God to showcase His presence in your life. Like Daniel and his three friends, let us use these moments to line up with eternal purpose and honour of God.



Jesus Christ is Building an Organization

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It's much like the principle found in 1 John 4:20. If we can't love those whom we see, work, and talk with now, how can you say we really love God, whom we *don't* see? This is very profound! It's quite a statement and simple equation to consider, especially when applying the same principle to organizations and/or organized Christian efforts.

How can we say we are on "God's team," yet not have enough faith to commit to an organized brotherhood, sharing ourselves, our talents, and skills with a 'work' that is bigger than us; a work of witness and warning to our troubled, failing, and violently agitated world? After all, isn't Christ going to require us to work with others in a coordinated effort during the millennium? It's something to think about and consider when and if we are hesitating to fellowship with others.

CLARIFY OUR WORK AND CALLING

When suspicion and distrust are abundant, Satan the Devil can scatter the power of God's holy people and cause the love of many to wax cold (Matt. 24:12-13).

God's Church needs to have a very pointed, focused, and concise message. It needs to be laser-sharp! But with all of us being scattered, fractured, and split, we have effectively allowed Satan to defuse our efforts and blunt our proclamation of the *true* Gospel and warning of the coming destruction to our own cultures within the Christian world, and other parts of the world.

Consequently, many today are focusing on more customary and traditional subjects of Christianity with minimal emphasis on the distinctions of God's Truth. This obviously is less likely to generate criticism from the public. Failure to emphasize our distinctions is unfortunate for God's Church. We are all aware of Christ's warning, found in Luke 6:26, about His true *called out* ones:

"Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets."

In light of this world's destructive trends



"The nations of this world need God's team to be committed, clear, and concise in message, and dedicated to the work of witnessing, warning, and making disciples for Jesus Christ."

and the continued demise of our Judeo-Christian values, God's Church cannot afford to take a lukewarm approach towards our responsibilities as an evangelistic trumpet. The nations of this world need *God's team* to be committed, clear, and concise in message, and dedicated to the work of witnessing, warning, and making disciples for Jesus Christ. As a culture and nation, we are facing impending national calamities and destruction. And Christ's return to re-institute our Father's government on this planet is our responsibility to announce and "*cry aloud*." So what are we doing about it?

We should ask ourselves, what are the present levels of our participation in advancing the gospel of Christ crucified and the

announcement of His coming world-ruling government? Are we involved? Are we contributing? Be honest with yourself: are you doing all you can in these troublesome times to contribute toward opening up more opportunities to help save someone? Are we part of an organized team that is actively witnessing and warning, and building God's *Gideon's army* in these latter times? Are we proactively involved in preparing to be future kings and priests by working within an organized effort *bigger* than ourselves? The choice is ours. We need to get real and be urgent because the times, brethren, are upon us!





God's Diamond in the Rough

by Ken Allen

Have you ever known an individual who on the surface seemed shy, modest, and ordinary, but behind it all was the most loving, gracious person you've ever met? They abound in exceptional talent and good works; yet, they are your typical unsung hero. They rise to the occasion in a time of need and shine best in trial's darkest hour and seasons of severe tests. Such a person is one whom we would call a *diamond in the rough*. Like naturally occurring diamonds, they appear quite ordinary, even rough on the outside, but their beauty and worth comes from the extreme pressure under which they are formed and the harsh process of cutting and polishing that are used to reveal their inner beauty and value.

Every one of us is a potential diamond in the rough. Embedded within each person are diamond-like qualities waiting to be

mined bringing joy to our Maker, others, and ourselves. Are we willing to endure the pressure, the cutting, and the polishing of the Master Jeweler to bring out the diamond within us? Most of us are not. But, for those of you who really want your diamond to break out in magnificent radiance and stunning beauty, read on!

Let's take a look at diamonds and see how their formation and qualities parallel the lives of true believers.

A diamond is just carbon (essentially the same thing as charcoal) in a very concentrated form. Yet, when mined, cut, and polished, it becomes the most precious gemstone in the world. Diamonds are formed about 161 km (100 miles) below the Earth's surface, when carbon is subjected to a temperature of at least 400°C (752°F) and 435,113 pounds per square

inch (psi) or 30 kilobars of pressure. Where diamonds are formed, the pressure exceeds 700,000 psi and temperatures over 1200°C (2192°F).

As we try to imagine the extreme temperature and pressure under which diamonds are formed, it brings to mind the fiery trials which children of God must undergo to develop true godly character.

1 Peter 1:6-7 describes the beautiful outcome of being tested by God's fire:

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

The conditions of high pressure and temperature way beneath the Earth's crust must be ideal for carbon to form into diamond. Slightly less than this, we end up with graphite (a soft black mineral) instead of the extremely hard, clear crystal we know as diamond. That's why we have to be willing to endure the pain of trials and godly discipline if we want God's character to be perfected in us. James puts it this way:

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (Jas. 1:2-4).

A diamond is the hardest known mineral. It's so hard that it can only be scratched by another diamond. It's the unique molecular structure of the carbon atoms that makes a diamond very hard. As we allow Christ to live in us we will have His diamond-hard strength to withstand the pressures of life and not be easily scratched or wounded by the words or deeds of others.

SHAPING DIAMONDS

Before diamonds become beautiful jewels, they must be cut and polished by hand or machine using steel or diamond blades or laser. The cut diamond is then polished by a rotating wheel coated with an abrasive diamond powder. God's purpose is to refine and perfect us. He will use whatever means necessary to bring us to the point of being *"a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"* (Eph. 4:13).

A DIAMOND'S WORTH AND BEAUTY

Diamonds are judged according to the four C's:

1. **Cut** – the geometric shape

into which it has been cut

2. **Clarity** – a measure of its flaws, or inclusions that can be seen in the diamond

3. **Carat** – the weight of the diamond (in milligrams)

4. **Colour** – ranging from icy white transparent to light yellow.

Here, too, we can see some similarities with the life of the believer.



"As we allow Christ to live in us we will have His diamond-hard strength to withstand the pressures of life and not be easily scratched or wounded by the words or deeds of others."

CUT

The more we come under the sharp edge of God's Word and allow it to pierce and shape us, the more valuable we will be for His Kingdom. Someone once said that God cannot use us until He has first wounded us. This wild human nature and spirit must be broken in order for God to effectively use us. His desire is that our lives be transparent and flawless. We must be sincere and true (1 Cor. 5:8).

CLARITY

As the apostle Paul says, we must not

have "spot or wrinkle or any such thing," but rather "be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27). Like flawless diamonds we must reflect and disperse light because we are the light of the world to disperse the darkness of this evil age (Matt. 5: 14-16).

CARAT AND COLOUR

God's diamonds will be judged, not by the colour or roughness of their exterior, but by the content and quality of their interior, in a word, by their *character*.

This character is developed, not inherited. It cannot be bought, it must be earned. It cannot be achieved by avoiding God's divine process. We must be willing to endure the Master Jeweller's refining process. It is this process that will shape and refine us from being diamonds in the rough to become sparkling jewels. A verse from the old hymn, *How Firm A Foundation* puts it very beautifully:

*"When through fiery trials
thy pathway shall lie,*


*My grace, all-sufficient,
shall be thy supply.*

*The flames shall not hurt
thee; I only design.*

*Thy dross to consume and thy gold to
refine."*

The world's biggest and most prized diamonds adorn the Royal Sceptre and Imperial State Crown of the British Monarchy. These precious gems are worth an incredibly vast sum. But even these cannot be compared to those who will shine like diamonds in the Heavenly Father's realm on that day when He makes up His jewels (Mal. 3:17).



A close-up photograph of a hand holding a thick, light-brown rope. The rope is frayed at several points, particularly near the top and middle, where the individual strands are visible. The hand is positioned at the bottom left, gripping the rope. The background is a solid, bright white.

WHEN YOUR HOPE IS HANGING BY A THREAD

by Greg Stubbings

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." (Jer. 29:11)

I'm sure there have been times in your life when you've felt like giving up or letting go of some ethereal dream. A time that finally causes you to admit it will never come to pass. Perhaps God has revealed to you, through His Word, some promise you grasped onto at a desperate moment. However, you've waited so long for its fulfillment that you begin to believe you must have misunderstood God's intentions.

There must have been times when the patriarchs, after hearing from God, waited so long that they contemplated giving up too. Abraham comes to mind when he took Sarah's handmaid to bear his promised son. Joseph waited years for his God-given dream to transpire. Noah stuck to the instructions God gave him even though he saw no sign of rain for decades.

The Hebrew word for 'hope' is often translated *tiqvah*. The first time this word is used in the Bible is in Joshua 2:18, 21. It's not translated 'hope' here, but *line* or *cord*, referring to the scarlet rope hanging in Rahab's window. Isn't it interesting that Rahab's future was dependent upon that scarlet rope? You could say her whole family's future was hanging by a thread. You see, she had heard about the God of Israel and she believed. Her confession of faith, as recorded in Joshua 2:11, was the source of her hope. When she is spoken of in Hebrews 11, her lies were not mentioned, just her faith.

Let's focus on the phrase, 'a future and a hope.' These encouraging words are found together a number of times. In Jeremiah 29:11, God says when we begin to seek Him with all our heart not only will He listen to our prayers, but He will reveal Himself to us and restore us from our losses (v. 12-14).

Again, in chapter 31, Jeremiah records the same combination of words. In verse 16, God says to quit emoting and start believing that He will reward your faith. Verse 17 says there is hope in your future. The word 'future' is the same word used in Jeremiah 29:11—it can be translated *reward*. The phrase, 'a future and a hope,' or 'hope in your future' can be translated, 'the things hoped for as a reward.'

In Proverbs 24:14,

"So shall the knowledge of wisdom be to your soul; If you have found it, there is a prospect [reward], And your hope will not be cut off."

Here again is the same combination of

because of a lack of knowledge, and an avoidance of addressing His law (Hosea 4:6). God's blessings are linked to obedience (Psa. 112). He will give revelation to those who obey Him (1 Cor. 2:9-10; Acts 5:32). Yet God says that the priests and shepherds have violated His law (Ezek. 22:26).

How?

Many teach that the Commandments are no longer valid and that grace replaces obedience. But He didn't say it was alright to steal, kill, and destroy. These spiritual leaders teach that, with grace, anything goes. This false teaching actually causes crime and violence to run wild (Ezek. 13:22). They don't make a clear enough

distinction between right and wrong, good and bad. How can you hope in God's promises if you're not keeping His Word?

"Trusting in God and hoping in His Word are closely linked. That's how you can check to see if you're hoping in/for the right things."

The words 'hope' and 'trust' are sometimes interchangeable. Trusting in God and hoping in His Word are closely linked. That's how you can check to see if you're hoping in/for the right things. If "it is written," or the principle is in God's Word, you're on the right track.

words, *tiqvah* and *achariyth*, meaning future or reward. God is good and He is faithful. He'll give you a new heart and place new desires or hopes in that heart (Psa. 37:3-4). Not only that, but when you choose to trust and hope in Him, He will also perform those desires for you (v. 5).

When we get sick, we often put our trust in doctors, hoping that medicine or surgery will save us. Likewise, when financial problems overtake us, we often combine all our debts into one—refinancing seems to be the right solution. To be safe, we put our trust in home security or a firearm. Looking to God for a solution to these problems is not part of most of our plans. And that is where the problem lies. Too many of us have no hope in God. We would rather trust in what we can see.

Perhaps you have heard or experienced that "hope deferred makes the heart sick" (Prov. 13:12). However, the rest of that verse says that when the hope is fulfilled your strength is renewed. David said he would have given up; except he believed he would experience the goodness of God in his lifetime (Psa. 27:13-14; Psa. 31:24). When your hope seems to be hanging by a thread, remember Rahab and her scarlet cord. That's all she had to hope in and her new-found faith in the God of Israel. God is good and He will deliver you too.

"Wait on the LORD; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the LORD!" (Psa. 27:14)

The Lord says that His people are destroyed



by Duane Nicol



THE 7 ATTRIBUTES OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE CHRISTIANS

PART II

In this second installment of *The Seven Attributes of Highly Successful Christians*, we will introduce another two characteristics that contribute to our success as Christians. In Part 1 discussed the attributes of wisdom and understanding.

We are a people as called from God, *outliers*. This means we are outside the normal 'curve' of Christianity. Our calling separates us from the traditional Christian model. With God's Spirit we can now look into the Bible and begin to *understand* God's intent for all of humanity. The *wisdom* we receive is from 'hearing' the Word preached, because faith comes from hearing the Word of God. Our diligence in striving and searching will produce the fruits of wisdom and understanding.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Prov. 9:10)

We will begin to see the deception foisted on mankind by our adversary, Satan the Devil.

"Understanding is a wellspring of life to him who has it." (Prov. 16: 22)

We are required to work diligently by

making ourselves available to God for His use. The Father has called us and Jesus Christ is developing us as future kings in His Kingdom. Kingship is our reward; not heaven as most of the world believes. The enticement should be to learn as much as we can and prepare ourselves for our eternal reign with Christ. That takes increased wisdom, a full understanding of God's plan, along with the attributes of prayer and obedience, which will be presented in this installment for our comprehension and understanding.

#3: PRAYER

Does God ignore our prayers? Are we in a time when God is turning away from His people? Many agonize over the myriad of social issues facing society and would like to have answers from God. Of all the attributes of a godly person, why is the answer to prayer so difficult to achieve? James 4:2-4 gives us a clue in part to that answer:

"Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that

the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

Are we so involved in this world that our prayers are being hindered? Or do we unconsciously love this world more than we love God? 1 John 2:15 also reiterates the danger of worldly love:

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Jesus, too reminds us in John 16:33,

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

These powerful statements indicate that too much worldliness can affect prayer. Remember, Jesus prayed all night on one occasion. Just prior to His capture in the garden, He prayed for three hours. Jesus was in fact doing what He tells us to do in Matthew 6:33,

"... seek ye first the kingdom of God... and all these things shall be added unto you."

Jesus talked to His Father. Do we talk to God? Are we expressing our heartfelt problems, hopes, dreams, and anxieties to God? Jesus certainly asked for strength. Jesus was intent on not sinning in order to carry out His mission of saving mankind. Jesus accomplished this incredible task by praying often and with heartfelt intensity. He knew He could not do it alone! We, too, should know that we cannot do our task alone. Jesus had an awesome job in His human form. He had physical and spiritual strength for the task. We, in our infirmities and weaknesses also need to do our task even though it is less intense. The tasks are proportionate: Jesus prayed for supreme strength and died for the world. We pray for the less intense jobs we have and can be just as successful. All of us need the satisfying results of contact with our Father in heaven.

Do you ever feel that your prayers are not yielding the results you desire? Is your prayer life alive and well or does it need some spiritual medicine? Are we like James described, being friends with the world? In part, we do have numerous distractions in our daily life that may be a hindrance. Let us examine what Jesus did when he prayed in solitude.

We can begin by actually listing those distractions in our lives. Would your list include your iPod, computer, Facebook or MySpace account, television, cell phone, books, newspapers, conversational chatter, traffic noises, emergency sirens, or boisterous children playing? These may put us in the position of being a “friend of the world” but they may be distracting to our prayer life (Jas. 4:4).

Mark 1:35 says,

“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.”

A solitary place. None of the above listed cacophony of noises! Rather, total silence! In the early morning hours in a vineyard or orchard where the birds would be sleeping and only a small breeze could be heard, would be calming as white noise. The

world indeed does affect us if we cannot get up that early, or the distractions are such that concentration is almost impossible. Matthew 14: 23 tells us,

“And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone.”



“Do you ever feel that your prayers are not yielding the results you desire?”

Solace was Jesus’ preference for prayer. He accomplished miracles because of His isolation and complete absorption in prayer. His prayers were without any clutter or worry about mortgages, retirement funds, overtime, or any personal venues of family, friends, or work related scenarios. In the context just mentioned, this world’s society

might be hurting us more than we ever realized. Daniel prayed three times a day and was successful. He even had an archangel apologize for being late in answering his prayer. Fasting is also a good companion to effective, fervent prayers.

There is an example in Acts 4:31 that helps to dramatize the prayer attribute that we need to examine:

“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy [Spirit], and they spake the word of God with boldness.”

Acts 7:55 speaks of Stephen “being full of the Holy [Spirit].” Why can’t we be filled with the Holy Spirit as the examples of Jesus, the apostles, and Stephen illustrate? Can we shake our Houses of Worship? Are we able to speak with boldness and convict the unbeliever? If we are engaged to this world as James describes to us in graphic detail, we may not be successful in giving God our undivided attention and having our prayers answered.

Our modern world is a marvel in many ways with all the glitz and convenience of electronics, all competing for our time. Admittedly, when praying we need solitude and a quiet place to think out our prayers, as Jesus and His followers dramatically demonstrated on many occasions. We have the advantage of modern technology, but conversely, we also suffer from the distraction of all the ‘noise’ that deflects our thoughts from being able to focus for long periods of time. Luke 6:12 records,

“And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.”

On every occasion that Jesus and His apostles prayed, something grand happened: calming the sea and Peter walking on the water; casting out devils; cleansing the leper; and preaching with boldness as one who had authority. Let us pray for the spreading of the gospel, healing of the sick, strengthening those who are feeble and in need of strength to resist evil, and most of all, for the return of our Lord and Saviour,

Jesus Christ our ever ruling King of kings! Let the Spirit of God help us to be bold in our outreach and let us shake some walls as we become filled with the Spirit, as were the biblical examples of effective prayer! Jesus' prayers were answered because He accomplished His mission flawlessly. Our prayers, too, will be answered.

#4: OBEDIENCE

One of the most heart-rending stories in the Bible is that of Israel's first king. Saul, King of Israel was instructed by God to kill the Amalekites, including every adult, male and female, all the children, and all the animals. Saul did not fully comply and kept the finest of sheep and oxen and spared King Agag. The punishment rendered to Saul is clearly documented in 1 Samuel 15:22-23. Samuel, the prophet ended up executing King Agag by cutting up his body into small pieces, because Saul did not do the job as he was ordered. Samuel had to finish the job the king was expected to do, but failed because of disobedience. John writes in Revelation 21:8 that the fearful, unbelieving, sorcerers and idolaters will burn in the lake of fire. Saul's punishment at the time was being removed as king, but sadly, perhaps condemned to the lake of fire. Remember, witchcraft and idolatry are worthy of *eternal damnation* as Samuel portrayed Saul's grievous sin to be as John graphically confirms in Revelation. Obedience is of primary importance to God. Twenty-first century Christians need to heed this account in Samuel's writings.

As end-time Christians, we are in the midst of blatant lawlessness: elimination of prayer in schools, promulgation of homosexuality, partial birth abortions, rampant white-collar crime, siphoning of funds from corporate accounts, political scandals in government, and decline in church attendance. If we're not careful, we can easily fall into the admonition rendered in Hebrews 3:12-13. We become accustomed to staying home from services, not attending Feasts, lax in building treasures in heaven, harbouring hatred, resentment, animosity, and jealousy. The hardening comes as we refuse to repent and overcome. Daniel and Joseph are two outstanding examples of fortitude and mental toughness who were rewarded abundantly for their effort to obey God. God's people today have the same opportunity to be as obedient and trusting in

God to provide in our time of dire need as well. He will never forsake us or leave us if we seek His Kingdom first (Matt. 6:33).

Paul cites a serious concern for all Christians in 2 Timothy 2:24-26. Many uninformed Christians are in the throes of an adversary that is walking around seeking prey to devour. We are in a climate where church hopping is rampant. It is so very easy for Satan to walk into any church and take anyone who has been hardened and does not realize they are the advocate of Lucifer. We must remember the end times bring self-love, pride, stubbornness, high-mindedness, and betrayers. These are traits that Satan exploits upon those taken captive by him at his will (2 Tim. 2:26).

Satan instigates all the separations and splits because he takes captive all who are lacking in humility, patience, and love. Paul said, "*we are not ignorant of his devices*" (2 Cor. 2:11). Paul knew and there are many of us who know and grieve at his effective demise of unity and cohesive enthusiasm in preaching the precious gospel of Jesus Christ. Hence, we become *d i s o b e d i e n t* through our adversary's wily tactics. It takes complete unity as Paul depicts in Ephesians. Paul states that we should no longer be tossed about by doctrinal winds and the carefully crafted ways of the Dragon. Satan, when first created, was a creature of beauty, talent, and high ranking as a covering cherub. Now Satan is completely against God and us. It is similar to the Old Testament story of the man who loved a woman, who then turns to as much hatred as there was originally in love.

The first century church knew too well their adversary. All the writers of the New Testament warn and alert us, but regrettably, too many today have an agenda and hastily make mistakes that thwart our command from Jesus Christ to preach the gospel to the entire world. Due to extreme

cost, it takes a unified *ecclesia* to carry out the commission of Jesus Christ. Does the Lord take delight in a multiplicity of congregations who are only self-serving and not engaged in the gospel spreading task? It is better to obey God rather than men and have the whole body fitly joined together so it can edify itself in love.

Obedience is among the many tasks we have all been given regardless of our local church name. Saul lost God's Spirit for disobedience and was removed from his position as Israel's first King. Jesus says,

"...I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent." (Rev. 2:5)

With the Holy Spirit removed from Saul and the warning of candlesticks being

"...I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent." (Rev. 2:5)

removed by Jesus Christ, we should humbly look at the larger picture of what work must be done. The called-out ones have as their obligation, regardless of their church affiliation the responsibility to get busy about *The Work* of sharing the Gospel on a broader scale! It is truly better to obey than to sacrifice!

(To be concluded in the next issue of *Prevail Magazine*.)



start the cultivation

by Cordel Reid

Lord you are Sovereign!
Lord you are Divine!

Start the cultivation of
my spirit and mind.

You said, "Knock and it shall
open, seek and ye shall find"

I solicit your help to be
spiritually inclined.

I lack discipline and self-control

Save me Lord before I lose my soul.

Jesus, a perfect example
of self-control, was spat
on, beat, and ridiculed.

He did not lose control
in spite of it all.

It was evident, the fruits of
the Spirit, He had them all.

Peace, love, long suffering, I'm
adamant about emulating my Jesus.

Temperance, gentleness,
meekness, joy, and faith,

The glory of your Coming I anticipate.

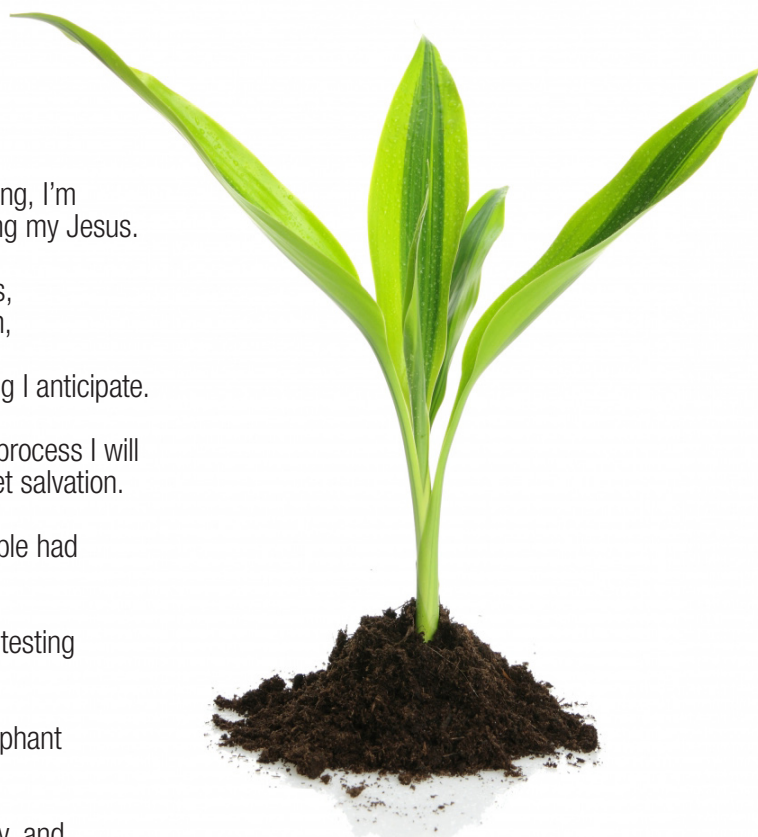
Through the cultivation process I will
be strong; in order to get salvation.

The Patriarchs of the Bible had
the Fruits of the Spirit.

Through their trials and testing
they have displayed it.

By faith they were triumphant
and were blessed.

Lord please heed my cry, and
start the cultivation before I die.



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CHNU Channel 10
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Change is coming...

