

# Foundational Teachings



## Preparing a Highway for Our God

—by Charles P. Schmitt

Everywhere that Dotty and I travel—across the country and around the world—there is such a deep expectation of God's impending move.

The prophetic word in Isaiah 40 is that our God *shall come!* The glory of the Lord *will* be revealed! And all mankind *will* see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it! The preparation, however, is clear—"prepare the way for the Lord ... make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God." The making of a highway—both in Isaiah's day, and in our day as well—involves intense work. Valleys must be raised up, high places brought down, rough places made smooth, crooked places made straight. These are all essential operations for making a level highway, especially this highway—a highway for the feet of our God! And the promise is the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind shall see it together!

Several years ago, I was led by the Holy Spirit into what would become an extended time of deeper dealing from the Lord. I sensed there were unhealed wounds in my soul, unresolved issues of self in my life, unchanged wrongful habit patterns in my walk. I needed God to help me to prepare my heart to become a highway for the feet of my God, that His glory might be revealed in my life. Let me take you with me into my own personal journey of "road building."

### Preparing a Way in the Desert—by Dealing with "the Sin of the Fathers" and Breaking Generational Curses

We are to prepare "a way in the desert." Deserts are barren places—places, symbolically, where our fathers have fallen because of their sins. "Your children will be shepherds here for forty years suffering for *your* unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies *lies in the desert*" (Numbers 14:32–33).

In preparing a way in the desert for the feet of my God, I realized that I had to deal

with the "sin of the fathers," my family's own desert experience. Alcoholism is one of the sins that runs through generations in my family. And because of alcoholism, my boyhood home was often a home of emotional, physical, and mental abuse coupled with anger, rage, violence, fear, and insecurity, along with a lack of affection and attention, a sense of abandonment, rejection, and a violation of boundaries. And in any number of these ways, I saw that I, too, "did evil in the eyes of the Lord, walking in the ways of [my] father and in his sin..." (1 Kings 15:25–26). Saved at a very early age, I did not become an alcoholic, but all too many of the other family patterns became my code of conduct as I matured.

As I began to understand something of my flawed background, I was able to understand something of my own flawed life and I was drawn to cry out: "O, Lord, I acknowledge my wickedness and the guilt of my fathers; we have indeed sinned against You" (Jeremiah 14:20; Leviticus 26:40–42).

I found that in confessing my sins and the sins of my forefathers (Nehemiah 9:2; Daniel 9:7–9), and then in appropriating forgiveness for myself and, in turn, no longer holding against my forefathers their sins against our family line, I began, in some small way, to prepare in the desert a way for the feet of my God.

Preeminently, I was led afresh to claim that awesome word from 1 Peter 1:18–19: "You were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers with the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb without blemish or defect!" Praise God for the blood of Jesus that severs us from the sins of generations past by cleansing us from every inherited stain and by releasing us from every generational curse that is in our entire family line!

"Father, I do receive the redeeming power of the blood of the cross; I am set free from the futile way of life of my forefathers and the curse of generations is broken in my life, in Jesus' name!"

Thus a road in the desert is being prepared in my life for the feet of my God by dealing with the "sin of the fathers."

### Making Straight in the Wilderness a Highway for Our God—by Replacing the Lies of the Enemy with the Truth of God

Lies are crooked and twisted things. And—as most Christians—I had believed many lies of the enemy about myself. These lies, these

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crooked places, often led to a wilderness experience, but our Lord desires to "make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God." Jesus had promised, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). Concerning satan, Jesus had declared "there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). Lies are what the enemy would have us believe about ourselves; "the truth" is what God says about us, and "the truth" of God sets us free—even from those things about us that are true! This is why Paul turns our minds toward "the truth that is in Jesus" (Ephesians 4:21) and encourages us "to be made new in the attitude of [our] minds" (Ephesians 4:23). This renewal comes as we "put off the lie (lit. Greek) and speak truth (lit. Greek) one to another" (Ephesians 4:25). So, we are to "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15) and in the power of that truth (what God says about us), we and others around us are set free!

In making straight in the wilderness a highway for our God, these crooked and twisted places are made straight; the lie of the enemy is replaced by the truth of God!

"In Jesus' name, I renounce the lie that 'I am all alone in dangerous waters,' and I boldly declare the truth: 'God will never leave me nor forsake me!'" (Hebrews 13:5–6).

"In Jesus' name, I renounce the lie that 'I don't fit in. I don't belong,' and I boldly declare the truth that 'I am accepted in the Beloved' (Ephesians 1:6, AV) and that God has an awesome place reserved for me in Christ's Body!" (1 Corinthians 12:18).

"In Jesus' name, I renounce the lie that I am worthless, and I boldly declare the truth that I am God's treasure, 'His glorious inheritance!'" (Ephesians 1:18).

"In Jesus' name, I renounce the lie that I have crossed the line of God's grace and that I am not worthy of His love, and I boldly declare the truth that nothing 'in all creation will be able to separate me from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus my Lord!'" (Romans 8:39).

"In Jesus' name, I renounce the lie that everything is a threat and no one is in control! I am not a helpless victim in a world that is out

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# Living Dangerously

—by Dotty Schmitt

**T**he longer I live as a child of God, the more I grow to love Him more deeply, and the more I am baffled and

bewildered by His seemingly inscrutable ways of dealing in the lives of His beloved friends whom He has sovereignly chosen to “glorify and enjoy Him forever.”

The Apostle Peter’s life yields to us much insight into the mysterious and awesome ways of the Lord in fashioning and forming His followers. Peter was asked two of the most important and life-defining questions that any of us will ever be asked. How we answer these two questions will determine the course and direction of our life, not only here on earth but throughout eternity.

In Matthew 16, Jesus has a critical discussion with His disciples as to His identity. After exploring some of the opinions of other people, He piercingly turns to His 12 followers and asks: “But what about you? Who do you say I am?” (Matthew 16:15). How we answer this question determines the course of our whole life. Thankfully, Peter shone in his response: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16).

From Peter’s subsequent actions of becoming Jesus’ worst counselor (Matthew 16:21–23), I doubt that Peter even heard Jesus’ declaration that he didn’t come up with this answer on his own. Peter was blessed with

revelation from the Father Himself. How very much the Father delights to reveal His Son to us! But what a journey awaits us once we know who this Jesus is! It is a journey filled with danger, challenge, confusion, and utter and complete delight and joy. (Just study the biographies of devoted followers of Jesus for proof of this last statement).

Little did Peter realize the implications of discovering who Jesus is for he is now on course to be molded and fashioned by the Great Potter of the clay of his humanity. Peter will know delight, disappointment, and even despair as the Savior of his life strategically prepares him to be a vessel fit for the Master’s use.

It is after Peter’s most serious failure and betrayal of Jesus that Jesus asks him another most penetrating and piercing question. It is just like our Savior to never give up on us and to always bring us back to what is really important in life. Just like Peter, we too are continuously being asked that same question. He simply will not stop asking it. A question that when answered affirmatively will lead us to places we don’t want to go, to obedience that will cost us everything, and to realms of the glory of His presence that will

ruin us for anything other than a radical, passionate relationship with Jesus, the Son of the Living God!

And the question? “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” (John 21:15–19).

Echoing through the chambers of church history we hear the sound of His voice to every human being—“Who do you say that I am?” and “Do you love Me?” It is only after these two life-changing questions have been answered with a “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You,” (John 21:17b) that He places another seemingly impossible mandate upon our lives as His friends and followers. “Jesus said, ‘Feed My sheep’ (John 21:18).

And this is where the journey really becomes complicated, challenging and, yes, even dangerous—for sheep are so very unpredictable. But this is a

whole new story of loving Jesus! Regardless of the danger, just listen to Peter’s conclusion: “Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible, leaping, bounding, and glorious joy” (1 Peter 1:8).

So, come on Church, let’s live dangerously! †

*But what a journey  
awaits us  
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who this Jesus is!  
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# A Stillness That Lets God Work

—by Charles P. Schmitt

“He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth. . . . As a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. . . .” (Isaiah 53:7).

**R**eflecting on this very messianic prophecy in Isaiah, Peter writes concerning our Lord Jesus: “When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly (1 Peter 2:23). The amazing stillness of Jesus in the face of painful opposition, insult, and accusation is an awesome testimony to the “stillness that lets God work.”

All of us have been called to bear insults; we have undoubtedly all suffered at the hands of often well-meaning but none-the-less unrighteous people. We have been evil spoken of, maligned, and accused; and in this way we

have shared in the sufferings of Jesus. Paul calls this “the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings” (Philippians 3:10). But the Father desires us to share in His stillness as well—a stillness that lets God work.

“Have I, for far much less,  
With rage, which I called righteousness,  
Resented slights with great distress?  
My dear Savior held His peace.”

Both Matthew and Mark make a very interesting observation. When Jesus was asked concerning the truth about Himself (“Are you the king of the Jews?”), He answered clearly and firmly, “Yes, it is as you say” (Matthew 27:11 and Mark 15:2) But when Jesus was accused, He said nothing. “When He was accused by the chief priests and the elders, He gave no answer. . . . Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the amazement of the governor” (Matthew 27:12–14 and Mark 15:3–5). His was a stillness that lets God work.

And God did work—on Resurrection Sunday morning! In the face of all that His adversaries sought to do to keep Jesus down—

Secure the tomb! Seal the stone! Post a guard!—God, nonetheless, delivered His beloved Son from the jaws of the lion!

Death cannot keep its prey—  
Jesus, my Savior!  
He tore the bars away—  
Jesus, my Lord!  
Up from the grave He arose,  
With a mighty triumph o’er His foes;  
He arose, a victor from the dark domain,  
And He lives forever with His saints to  
reign;  
He arose! He arose!  
Hallelujah! Christ arose!  
—Robert Lowry

And God’s vindication went even further—He exalted Jesus above the highest heavens, and seated Him at His right hand, waiting till all His enemies will be made His footstool!

There is a stillness that lets God work. May that stillness be ours today! †

of control! I boldly declare the truth that I 'have been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will!' (Ephesians 1:11).

By simple and bold declarations of faith, we are able to begin to make "straight in the wilderness a highway for our God!"

## **Every Valley Shall Be Raised Up—by Healing the Brokenhearted and Binding Up Their Wounds**

Valleys are the sunken and depressed places in our lives. Psalm 23:4 speaks of "the valley of the shadow of death." The NIV margin reads: "the darkest valley"—"even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for You are with me...." But the victory had already been declared by David: "He restores my soul" (Psalm 23:3). Through this inner restoration of soul, the sunken and the depressed places, the valleys within our lives, are raised up, preparing a level place for the highway of God, for the feet of our Lord!

It was a life-transforming revelation for me to realize that God desires the healing of our broken hearts and our crushed spirits as much as the physical healing of our bodies. Jesus declared: "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me ... He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted..." (Isaiah 61:1). The psalmist in Psalm 147:3 proclaims: "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." David, in Psalm 34:18, testifies: "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

In examining the life of David we learn something of how hearts can become broken and spirits wounded. The losses in David's life that broke his heart were great. There were deep emotional losses in his family (Psalm 27:8–10; 69:8). David, when barely 20 years old, sustained the loss of his hero, King Saul, who then became his relentless enemy; David also suffered the loss of his wife, Michal (whom Saul, in a rage, gave to another man); and, finally, David sustained the loss of his closest friend, Jonathan, slain at the hand of the Philistines on Mount Gilboa. His cries of agony expressed in 2 Samuel chapter 1 are heart-piercing.

In our own lives, situations of grave loss that wound and crush us inwardly can be the death of a loved one; a divorce; an abortion; physical, emotional, verbal and sexual abuse; rejection and abandonment; war memories; financial losses and business failures; accidents; and spiritual and moral failures. These

experiences can break our hearts and wound our souls deeply.

Healing for our wounded souls and our broken hearts is of utmost importance in God's plan for our lives, for "wounded people wound people." That was true in David's life. David was a seething cauldron of anger; and he was an adulterer and a murderer—a man without moral boundaries, as he walked out the pain of his deep inner wounds. God wants us set free from this ungodly cycle.

Our Father desires to heal us inwardly. David cried out in Psalm 139:23–24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way [any way of sorrow, pain, brokenness, grief] in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

"Lord Jesus, I choose to be open and submitted to You today. Like David, I cry out for You to search me. Lord, only You know the deep things inside of me. Search me; show me the hurts that You want to heal today. I give You permission to dig deep to the roots of any hidden anxious thoughts that are affecting my life. I ask you to take the keys to my heart and unlock the doors. And as I repent before You, I trust You to set me free from any way of sorrow, pain, brokenness, and grief by the power of Your cross and by the might of Your precious blood! In Your name, Lord Jesus, I pray. Amen!"

One final thought—Scripture teaches us "that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). How can that promise work in our lives with all of our past wounds? Thom Gardner in *Altars of the Heart* answers that question: "The healed wounds of the past become tools in the hands of God for healing in other lives. They make us sensitive to others who have been wounded like us. As a result, we are able to 'comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God' (2 Corinthians 1:4). God does not waste anything. The wounds that we think disqualify us, in fact, become our qualification—our redemptive résumé. Who could better understand someone who has been wounded than one who has been wounded the same way?" And so we are not only healed ourselves, but we bring treasure out of the darkness as God raises up every valley in our lives!

## **Every Mountain and Hill Made Low—by Deliverance from the Oppression of the Enemy**

High places in Scripture were frequently strongholds of the enemies of God's people. Christians today have very real enemies—satan and his demonic hosts. These strongholds

of the enemy must be torn down.

Although Christians cannot be demon-possessed (because "possession" implies ownership, and Christians are owned by God), Christians, along with unbelievers, can be "harassed" (Matthew 9:36) and "oppressed" (Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38, AV) by satan and his hoards. These mountains and high hills, these strongholds of the enemy, God desires, in Jesus' name, to tear down, that a level place may be prepared for the feet of our Lord, a highway for our God, that His glory might be revealed.

Paul's letter to the Ephesians is very helpful in understanding how Christians can become oppressed and harassed by the enemy, and then what God's method of divine deliverance from the enemy is.

Ephesians 4:27 contains a very revealing statement. The NIV states, "do not give the devil a foothold"; the KJV states, "neither give place to the devil." But how could a Christian give such a foothold, such ground, to the enemy? The context of Ephesians 4 tells us exactly how—by giving in to lying, anger, stealing, unwholesome speech, grieving the Holy Spirit, bitterness, rage, slander, malice, sexual immorality, impurity, and greed (Ephesians 4:25–5:7)!

What then is God's way of "delivering us from the evil one"? First of all, the context of Ephesians 4 tells us exactly what we must do. We must turn away, in deep repentance, from those sins that gave the enemy his legal stronghold, and then we must, in faith, turn to God. This deep repentance and this turning to God is described by Paul in Ephesians 4:22–23 in these words: "Put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires ... be made new in the attitude of your minds; and ... put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." Again and again in this passage God commands a deep repentance—"put off falsehood"; "do not sin"; "do not let the sun go down while you are still angry"; "do not give the devil a stronghold"; "steal no longer"; "do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths"; "do not grieve the Holy Spirit"; "get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger"; "there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed ... nor should there be obscenity...." In this way—by putting off the old and putting on the new, in repentance and in faith, we are able to take back from the enemy any legal ground that would give him a stronghold—a foothold, or any ground or place, in our lives by which he could harass or oppress us.

Finally, we must take a stand against the devil and his forces in the authority and in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! We are to "be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power." We are to "put on the full armor of God [which is nothing other than taking up the virtues and

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provisions and triumphs of our Lord Jesus Christ], so that [we] can stand against the devil's schemes." We are to "put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, [we] may be able to stand [our] ground, and after [we] have done everything, to stand. Stand firm...!" (Ephesians 6:10–18).

"Father, in Jesus' name and in His authority, I take back any and all ground that I have given over to the devil because of sin. I repent of those sins that gave satan legal ground in my life, turning from them to You—putting off the old man and putting on the new! And I now take my stand and command the powers of darkness to release any authority that they have had over any part of my life! I am Your possession, Father, and I surrender myself wholly into Your hands through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ! By that grace I will no longer live oppressed or harassed by satan or his demonic powers!"

### **The Rough Ground Shall Become Level—by the Revelation and Experience of the Father's Love**

We speak of folks having a "rough" childhood, having a "rough" time in their growing up, having a "rough" start in life. This is "rough ground" needing to be made level. Usually rough ground translates into growing up in an environment where love, affection, and affirmation were seriously lacking or even missing. The insecurities that arise out of such deprivation are all too clear. I have uncovered them in my own life; I grew up as "damaged goods," but, praise God, the revelation and the experience of the Father's love is able to make all those "rough places smooth" (NKJ)—that a highway for the feet of my God might be prepared!

The revelation of the Father's love became the transforming experience in David's life, and in mine as well. We have seen David's brokenness, his losses, his sins and failures, but what a joy to gain some insight into his recovery! For this we need to focus on the words of Ethan the Ezrahite, one of David's anointed musicians, as he tells us, in words found nowhere else in Scripture, of the revelation that came to David of the Father's love. Ethan writes in Psalm 89: "Once You spoke in a vision, to Your faithful people You said ... I have found David My servant; with My sacred oil I have anointed him... My faithful love will be with him, and through My name his horn will be exalted..." (verses 19–25). And then, in the strength of this awesome vision of God's "faithful love," David responds and enters in—"He [David] will call out to Me, 'You are my Father, my God, the Rock my

Savior.' [The Lord says] I will also appoint him My firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth. I will maintain My love to him forever, and My covenant with him will never fail..." (verses 26–28)!

We can believe that it was this revelation and this experience of the Father's love that transformed David, a man with such a broken life, into that "man after God's own heart" that made him one of the greatest persons in Holy Scripture, next only to our Lord Jesus Christ Himself! And it is this revelation and experience that is transforming my own life as well.

"Father, by the power of Your Holy Spirit, show me how deeply and dearly You love me! Forgive me for ever doubting Your wonderful love for me! I do receive Your love into the depths of my being right now. I thank You for so dearly loving me! And, by Your grace, I will walk in the wholeness that Your holy love brings into my life! In Jesus' name! Amen!"

And so the rough places are becoming level as we prepare a highway for the feet of our God!

### **The Rugged Places Shall Become a Plain—by the Power of the Blood of the Cross of Our Lord Christ**

The rugged places of sin and shame in our lives can only be transformed by that Old Rugged Cross—"where the dearest and best for a world of lost sinners was slain." The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the power of His blood so freely poured out on the cross, is our only hope of both eternal redemption and present transformation.

In Psalm 51, David brings his sins to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, crying out in repentance, "wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin..."

A similar New Testament passage, 1 John 1:9, outlines this same amazing work of redemption—"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." God not only wants to forgive us, He wants to cleanse and purify us deep within.

A.W. Tozer comments in *The Knowledge of the Holy*: "When we return to God, even if our sins were as great in number as all mankind's put together, still God would not count them against us, but would have as much confidence toward us as if we had never sinned."

"Father, I thank You for Your complete and sufficient provision for all my guilt and shame in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! I do repent of my sins and I do receive Your mercy; I do receive Your grace. I do receive your forgiveness; I do receive Your deep inner cleansing in the blood of Jesus Christ, my Lord! Amen!"

### **And the Glory of the Lord Will Be Revealed—and This "Glory" Is the Heart of the Sanctifying Power of the Holy Spirit of God**

The first Pentecost was marked by the Shekinah glory of God filling the Church, just as the glory of the Lord had filled the Tabernacle in Moses' day and filled the Temple in Solomon's day.

The Holy Spirit came, however, to give His people not only power but purity. Reflecting on the powerful falling of the Holy Spirit on the household of Cornelius, Peter describes their Pentecost in these words: "God [gave] the Holy Spirit to them ... for He purified their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:8–9). Purity of heart is essential for "without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14), and "blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Matthew 5:8). Heart purity is the very heart of the fullness of the Holy Spirit!

William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, prayed—

"Thou Christ of burning, cleansing flame  
Send the fire! Send the Fire!  
God of Elijah, hear our cry!  
Send the fire! Send the Fire!  
Oh, make us fit to live or die!  
Send the fire! Send the Fire!  
To burn up every trace of sin,  
To bring the light and glory in,  
The revelation now begin,  
Send the fire! Send the Fire!"

"Spirit of the Living God, I open my life to You. Fill me to overflowing with Your glorious presence! Empower me, not only for service, but for holiness. I trust you to send Your cleansing flame to sanctify me through and through, imparting to me the holiness of Jesus, keeping me blameless until the day Jesus returns! And I thank You that You are faithful and You will do it! In Jesus' name! Amen."

### **And All Mankind Together Will See It—That Exchanged Life of Christ Within Us**

And what shall they see? They will see Jesus Christ living in and through His people. A highway has been prepared for the feet of our God—and He has come!

Ours is "an exchanged life." By this we simply mean that our Lord Jesus Christ has taken to His cross our wretched sinfulness and shame, and in its place, in His resurrection glory, He has given us Himself as our very own life! We are, therefore, able to say with Paul, "I

have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God (literally, 'I live by the Son of God's faith'), who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20)!

Watchman Nee summed up the exchanged life in these powerful words: "At the beginning of our Christian life we saw how the Lord Jesus bore our sins on the cross so that by His death we were delivered from death, our sins were forgiven, and we were condemned no more. Today, Paul tells me that because Christ lives in me, I no longer need to live. As He died on the cross for me, so now He lives in me in my place. This is the secret of victory. It is neither a life of imitating Christ nor a life of merely having His power given; rather, it is a substitutionary life."

"Lord Jesus Christ, I thank You that You have taken my guilt and my shame and my very defeated self to the cross! I thank You also that in Your resurrection glory, You have now become my very righteousness—imputed to my account and imparted to my very character by Your living in me and through me! I receive this great exchange—Your beauty for my ashes—by faith in Your holy name! Amen!"

Praise God! By the *blood of Jesus' cross* we are set free from the "sin of the fathers"; by the *truth of God* we are set free from the lies of the enemy; by the *Father's healing touch* we are set free from a broken heart and a wounded spirit; by the *triumph of our Lord* we are set free from the oppression of the enemy. We are set free by the revelation and experience of the *Father's love*; we are set free by the *cleansing power of the blood of Christ*; we are set free by the *sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit*; and we are set free to live "the exchanged life!" Praise God!†

Books that I have found valuable in my journey:

1. *Altars of the Heart* by Thom Gardner; available from Destiny Image, Shippensburg, PA.
2. *Experiencing the Father's Embrace* by Jack Frost; available from Charisma House, Lake Mary, FL.
3. *Restoring the Foundations* by Chester and Betsy Kylstra; call 850-835-4060.

I bless you on your journey!

An 11-tape series, *Shout of the Soul Set Free*, taught by Pastor Charles P. Schmitt is available for \$35. To order a copy of this teaching series, please see page 7 of this newsletter.



## The Freeing Power of Forgiveness

—by Charles P. Schmitt

"...forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32).

"Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you" (Colossians 3:13, *The Message*).

Jack Hayford, in a penetrating article entitled, "The Freeing Power of Forgiveness," makes this observation: "Having been forgiven, we have essentially lost our *right* to be unforgiving, critical, judgmental, or retaliatory toward others. Forgiveness doesn't mean that what is being forgiven is right; it means rescinding the right to be angry, hateful, or judgmental.... It means I have given up my right to sit in judgment.... At some point we must come to terms with the fact that we have been given an awesome grace that puts us under an awesome point of accountability—to *forgive others because we have been forgiven*.... This is the freeing power of forgiveness—offering to others what God has so graciously, and at so profound a sacrifice, bestowed upon us!"

At times I do feel like the servant in Matthew 18:23–27, the one who owed his master *millions* of dollars, and was simply "not able to pay." Instead of turning him (that's me!) over to the jailers to be tortured until he (that's me!) paid back all he owed, the master cancelled the vast debt and let the debtor (that's me!) go free! That has been God's amazing grace poured out upon my life!

But then there are those fellow servants of mine—those who have sinned against me, those who owe me "a few dollars." My tendency is to place the demand upon them: "Pay back what you owe me! Pay up or I'll throw you into debtor's prison until you pay your debt to me." At this point, to quote Jack Hayford, I must come to terms with the fact that I have been given an awesome grace that puts me under an awesome point of accountability—to *forgive others because I have been forgiven so very much!*

This is the freeing power of forgiveness—me freeing others (from their debt and from their debtor's prison), and me being freed in turn from being "turned over to the jailers to be tortured, until I should pay back all I owed." Sobering thought: "This is how My heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart" (Matthew 18:35). Indeed—"if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (Matthew 6:14). Lord, help us, for Jesus' sake!†

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Dear Friend,  
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# What in the World Is God Doing?

—by Pastor Charles Schmitt

“Satan has asked to sift you as wheat.”—Luke 22:31–32

At first I thought it was only happening here—the sifting and the shaking. But as I’ve listened and watched, I’ve come to realize that in many places across the Body of Christ there is a sifting and a shaking. God is up to something!

In His final words to His disciples, Jesus declared: “I confer on you a kingdom, just as My Father conferred one on Me...” (Luke 22:29). Jesus was bringing forth a Kingdom and a Kingdom people, but Satan was also there bringing about a sifting and a shaking to prevent some from entering in. But God used that very sifting for His purposes. He was up to something!

Jesus spoke to Simon Peter in the next verses, “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat...” Here, the “you” in the Greek is plural; the NIV footnote points this out. Jesus’ band of followers as a community of faith would be sifted as wheat is sifted, and the chaff—Judas and others like him—would be blown away on the winnowing floor (Psalm 1:4; 35:4–5). God was up to something! He was purifying a people for His Kingdom purposes!

Jesus then goes on to address Simon Peter himself. In the original language of Luke 22:32, the plural “you” of community gives way to the singular “you” of Simon Peter personally—“I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” Sifting is not only corporate, it is personal. Shaking is not only collective, it is individual. And it is all in preparation for God bringing forth a Kingdom and a Kingdom people. There was much in Simon Peter’s own heart that the trial of those days brought to light—much of sin and much of self that needed to be flailed and sifted. As the chaff was blown away, the precious life of God within Simon Peter would be manifest. And this is the Kingdom of God!

J.I. Packer comments, “There is great cause for humility in the thought that He sees all the twisted things about me that others don’t see. Indeed, He sees more corruption in me than that which I see in myself. Yet He wants me as His friend and desires to be my friend, and has given His Son to die for me...” Packer’s statement is actually a beautiful summary of Jesus restoring Simon Peter after the sifting in his life was over (John 21). Thank God that Jesus is also praying for us as He prayed for Simon Peter in the sifting

and in the shaking. God is up to something!

God is bringing forth a Kingdom people. In days of sifting and shaking as accusation, rumor and untruth fly around, much in our hearts comes to the surface—hurt, anger and defensiveness. But, thank God, His winds are blowing this chaff away, that the preciousness of God’s work in us might be made manifest.

And to what end is all of this sifting and shaking? In Luke, God was preparing that community for His Kingdom outpouring! The sifting of Luke 22:31–32 would bring about the promised Kingdom, made possible by the outpouring of Luke 24:48–49: “I am going to send you what My Father has promised...” And besides all this, God was also preparing a vessel in Simon Peter for use in the Kingdom: “And when you have been converted, strengthen your brothers.”

Today the Lord is speaking everywhere about impending harvest, unprecedented and awesome. Everywhere God is speaking about bringing forth a Kingdom people. The Holy Spirit is promising us that Jesus will send upon us what His Father has promised—a fresh Pentecost—and with it a bountiful ingathering, just “before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord” (Acts 2:20–21). And the sifting and the shaking are but necessary preparations. This, I sense, is something of what in the world God is doing! †

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