

Pathway to Adventure

Introduction

Gerald Rowlands has been a preacher for more than fifty years. Originally from Britain he emigrated to Australia in 1957 where he became an Australian citizen. In 1958 he married Elizabeth Duncan from which marriage were born Christine, Kathryn and Virginia. Gerald and Elizabeth currently have six grandchildren. Four of these are now married. Gerald and Liz presently have four great grandchildren.

Gerald and Elizabeth, usually with some or all of their children, have been travelling the world since 1975 visiting some 65 nations in the course of their ministry. In 1975 whilst living in Zimbabwe Gerald wrote and formatted a training course for helping pastors to train their members in evangelism and church planting. Those teachings, which originally formed the basis of his teaching curriculum in ACTS Bible College, Harare, are now being used on all five continents in thousands of churches. More than 27,000 churches have embraced the program. Graduates from the Courses have planted thousands of new churches. This is a brief account of some of their “Adventures in Christ” over these years. It is, in brief, a story of how Gerald and

Elizabeth (Liz) have followed the leading of God's Spirit to live and minister in various parts of the world. In these chapters they tell of some of their experiences whilst "following the cloud of His presence."

A considerable part of the book relates to a "vision" that Gerald experienced in 1964 in Klemzig, South Australia. Obviously a vision may contain certain subjective elements and he realises that much of what he "saw" was actually what his spirit longed to see in Australia. However, it is also true that much of the vision was actually fulfilled in some considerable detail within the next few years during what came to be known as the "Charismatic Renewal." As for its finale, which is yet to be fulfilled, this will have to be prayerfully appropriated as the Holy Spirit seeks to move in a new and fresh manner in the earth. May God prepare our hearts to embrace His great purpose for our land!

In 2007 Gerald received the Order of Australia Medal for his work over fifty years in encouraging and fostering ecumenical links around the world and establishing training schools for aspiring church leaders. In the course of his teaching and training ministry he and his wife Elizabeth have visited more than seventy nations and have lived at various times in Africa, Asia and Israel. During their travels they have worked closely with many different denominations including Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic and many Independent Churches.

Dedication

This modest book is dedicated firstly to my dear wife and partner, Elizabeth, and our three daughters, Christine, Kathryn and Virginia, sons in law, Charles Newington and Joel Baker, and our grand-children, Joshua, Victoria, Catherine, Alice, Elise and Noah. They are a super little army of supporters who have encouraged me all the way.

It is also written to honour my peer generation, particularly in Australia, with whom we have shared these years. May our lives, as older saints, not consist solely of memories from the past but of visions of what we may yet still accomplish for God in His grand purpose.

However, it is really written also for the “Prophet Joel generation” to challenge them to rise up and become adventurers for God. See the big vision. Win your world for Christ. Go out and do amazing exploits in the name of the Lord. Work for God’s Kingdom and He will work with and through you to accomplish great miracles.

The modern contemporary generation are inheriting a much more complex and dangerous world than that which we have known. So many things are rapidly changing, mostly for the worse. Humanism in a multitude of forms is invading our world seeking to relegate Almighty God to the status of an primitive obsolete myth. Yet these are actually the days when God will manifest His rule and authority in a clearer and more powerful manner than ever.

The present challenge before the church of Jesus Christ world wide is a greater one than ever before. God is abundantly sufficient to meet the challenges and to fulfil all His prophetic purposes. However, it will require a remarkable generation of Christian activists to bring in God's rule and manifest Kingdom. The processes of transition will constitute the "greatest adventures ever experienced." We older warriors have faith in you and especially in the power and authority of God manifest through your yielded and submissive lives.

Gerald Rowlands

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Chapter One

Seeking Adventure

Adventure has been variously described as :-

“An exciting or very unusual experience.”

“Participation in exciting undertakings or enterprises.”

“A bold, usually risky undertaking; hazardous action of uncertain outcome.”

A typical adventurer is “A person who enjoys going to new, unusual and exciting places, experiencing unique situations and achieving new accomplishments.”

To many observers I am sure that the Christian life would appear to have little in common with such definitions. On the contrary it may seem very mundane and predictable or even boring. It is certainly not the routine of traditional church and religious life that constitutes exciting adventure. Rather it is the dimension of walking by faith, following the leading of God’s Spirit that so often leads into unusual experiences and exciting adventures. Moreover, for Elizabeth and I it has been decidedly adventurous with hardly a dull period. Our united life has been spent discovering and following God’s will wherever it has led us. For us personally it has proven to be life’s greatest adventure.

Although much of this book will be written in the first person many of the adventures were also shared by my wife Elizabeth and often in company with one or more of our

three wonderful daughters. I have been so greatly blessed with the precious family that God has given me. Just one of those blessings has been the fact that they have always been willing and ready to undertake many of the long trips to distant places that have been part of God's plan for me. Of course Elizabeth has been involved far more intimately and constantly than have our daughters each of whom has eventually "left the family nest" to follow God's purposes for their individual lives.

Elizabeth has travelled with me almost constantly for most of the fifty years that I have been involved in ministry travels. She has stood faithfully with me wherever God has called us to go. She has adapted herself to so many various climates, cultures and places. Throughout this time she has certainly been my "better half" lending her wisdom, faith and good common sense to balance my often impetuosity.

Our engagements over the years, preaching and teaching the Gospel, have taken us to more than 65 nations. This has meant considerable travel by air, land and sea and into many wonderful adventures and experiences en route. Unfortunately I have never meticulously kept a diary nor recorded the actual mileage or finer details, but I know we have circled the globe more than twelve times and travelled its surface east, west, north and south over many thousands of miles.

I sincerely believe that life was meant to be an adventure not a burden. God built into the human being a spirit large enough to attempt and achieve things beyond the ordinary and mundane. The setting that God provided for our original

ancestors would certainly affirm that. Life, for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden was a daily adventure as they walked the path that God had chosen for them. Their primal setting was a virtual adventure land until their disobedience caused their expulsion.

Amongst many other benefits, our redemption in Christ restores to us a lost opportunity to live in “God’s preferred path” for our lives. In Christ we can discover the path we were originally intended to walk and we can live out our intended destiny.

As a young lad I had acquired a real bitterness about life and the feeling that somehow, life really owed me something. My mother had died when I was about four years old and circumstances dictated that I be accommodated in a series of foster homes. This gave me deep feelings of insecurity and a sense of not really belonging to anyone. At this early age I learned how to fight and because I had this chip on my shoulder, I frequently found myself involved in fights. This attitude got me into a lot of trouble but it was my way of trying to prove my worth to myself. I also grew up with a lot of inner hurt, feeling confused and frustrated about who I really was and what life was all about. This created massive resentment against life and against people. One of my young peers once said, “You were born to fight!” But that was not true. Deep inside I did not want to fight, I wanted to love and to be loved which also made me ultra sensitive and extremely vulnerable. I wanted to find out what life was all about and become secure in an awareness of who I really was.

It was in one of my foster homes that my interest in Australia began. Many of the relatives of the family with whom I lived had long since emigrated to Australia. During World War 2, several of their offspring returned to Britain in the Australian military. During their brief stay in England en route to North Africa, they looked up their “pommie relatives” with whom I happened to be living. I became quite fascinated by these tall friendly figures in khaki who never bothered to open the garden gate but casually swung their long legs over the fence. They were so warm, friendly and dynamic. I was immediately attracted to them, forming happy but temporary mate-ships with them. Sadly the friendships were short lived because within weeks of their landing in the North African desert their lives were terminated in battle. However, I had become very keenly interested in Australians and Australia with a strong desire to go there one day. Little did I realise how that desire would be fulfilled and that the major part of my life would be lived there as an Australian citizen.

When my father re-married I was able to briefly have a home once again but I was far from settled. Circumstances had forced me to grow up prematurely and experience all kinds of things that a young person in a sound home environment would not normally experience. This all added to my attitudes of insecurity, frustration and defiance that encouraged me to fight people and win, to somehow prove to myself that I was somebody. My desire to prove myself did help me in competitive sports where I discovered a measure of success and won numerous awards in soccer, athletics and amateur boxing. I began boxing as a schoolboy, continuing until my time in the Air Force. Once in the ring, whether

sparring or in competition, rage would often boil over within me and I would take out my frustration on the other unfortunate person. Many times the fight would be stopped as I fiercely tore into my opponent. On the athletic field I specialised in field events, throwing the javelin and discus and putting the shot. I later competed in the Air Force in these disciplines. From schoolboy soccer in the under elevens, I played at various representative levels at school, youth leagues and later in the R.A.F. Several of my young soccer team-mates went on to play for Manchester United and some for England. I was also known by several Manchester United scouts, playing numerous games on grounds which they frequented. Although I played in several trial matches my skills were not nearly as impressive as some of my friends! I later saw them go on to play for Manchester United and earn even higher honours though sadly some of them perished in the Munich air disaster.

As a young man I always had a strong desire for adventure. At the age of fourteen I ran away from home to join the merchant navy but my attempt met with failure. I later forfeited a university bursary to spend some time in the Air Force, still without really determining what to do with my life. I was restless and unfulfilled. I longed for travel and adventure but was not sure how to accomplish it. When events transpired that brought me to faith in Christ and the prospect of a Christian and possibly a ministerial life, I thought my opportunity for adventure and travel had been lost forever. How wrong that proved to be!

Several experiences in the Air Force brought me face to face with death and caused me to think seriously about what lay

beyond the grave. I attended a number of plane crashes and helped to extricate several persons and a number of bodies from the wreckage. I saw young men blown into tiny pieces. The only remains we found of one young pilot fitted into a small cardboard box which I carried back to the base. On another occasion I helped to rescue a young pilot who had suffered some fractured bones. During the months of his recovery we became very close friends.

However, it was with a young amateur boxer in the R.A.F that I experienced the most poignant feelings. He was a young man with whom I had frequently sparred and trained. This particular night he was fighting and I was in his corner. Towards the end of the second round he took a powerful right hand to the jaw and the back of his head hit the canvas with a sickening thud. When he got back to his corner he was obviously very groggy but was able to converse with his seconds and he said that he wanted to fight on. However, in the third round it became obvious that all was not well and the referee stopped the fight. Soon after he got back to his corner he lost consciousness and in this condition he was admitted to the Base Hospital about 10 p.m. that night. By 2 a.m. the following morning he was having severe seizures and it had become obvious that his condition was far too serious for the small Base hospital to handle. It was decided to transfer him to a much larger and better military hospital some twenty miles away. I sat in the back of the ambulance with him on the journey and after a while he became extremely restless. Of course he was not conscious but he began to writhe around, lashing out with hands and feet and trying to get off the cot. I could not tie him down but had to wrestle with him to try to save him from more bodily harm

and injury. Arriving at the hospital a doctor and orderlies met us as soon as the ambulance door opened. Seeing his condition they immediately decided to bore into his skull to relieve the intense pressure that had obviously built up inside it. Unfortunately every effort was in vain and my friend soon died in my arms, still struggling. His death and subsequent funeral were both very emotional experiences for me sobering my mind considerably and causing me to think very seriously about the fragile nature of life.

It was actually during my term in the Air Force that I came to “know” Jesus. I had been hospitalised in a military hospital having suffered severe corneal damage to my eyes. Receiving expert attention from very fine doctors, my head was swathed in bandages and I tensely awaited their removal to test my sight afterwards. My spirits were very low as I lay in bed for some weeks. I was heavily sedated with morphine against the intense pain. At this time I “knew” something about Jesus having heard about him as a boy but had not yet met Him experientially.

Then, late one evening, as I lay in a state of mental depression, I “sensed” someone near my bed. Not being able to see, I quietly asked, “Who is there?” A calm voice responded within me, “I am Jesus! What do you want me to do for you?” My surprised response was, “If you could just ease the pain and let me sleep properly for one night I would be grateful!” In reply He said, “I can do more than that. I can heal you!” I evidently fell asleep right away for the next thing I knew it was the following morning. Although my eyes were still covered, I knew within that all would be well and that when the bandages were removed my sight would

be restored. And so it was, though it was not perfectly restored right away. Initially, as I looked across the ward, I could see a white blur where each bed was though I could not distinguish who was in each bed. Nevertheless, I “knew” with that inner knowing that I would recover perfect sight in God’s good time. I felt somewhat like Job when he said. “I have heard of you by the hearing of the ears but now mine eyes see you.” I did not know about this scripture until some time later but when I eventually read it, the application was clear to me.

The Christian life, particularly in a ministerial capacity has provided continuous interest, change, adventure and travel. Looking back over more than forty six years, I cannot imagine an alternative path I might have taken that would have led to more interesting experiences in so many parts of the world. If I were to capture the essence of a lifetime in one phrase it could be “Exciting Adventures.” Numerous people who have heard of and observed some of those adventures have frequently encouraged to write about some of them. I have always felt loath to do so believing that such a project should be undertaken at the end of one’s life and that I am not there yet.

However, sitting in an apartment in Jakarta, Indonesia, whilst conducting meetings and seminars in many parts of that large, and then troubled city, I felt encouraged to write down some of my experiences, primarily for the benefit and encouragement of many younger Christians who may be sensing their destiny in God, yet experiencing a fear that such a path might be mundane and rather boring. I can assure them that this is far from the truth. A life time of

following God's leading, to almost every part of the globe has been one long, glorious adventure. Were it possible to have my life and choices over again I could not choose a more interesting, rewarding and adventuresome life than what my present life has become.

Nurse Me This Child

My life of adventures with Christ really began when I met Evangelist Tom Wilson who became a great friend and mentor. Tom Mitchell Wilson was a veteran itinerant preacher. Born in Bishop Auckland in the north of England he came to Christ in 1927 when Rev Stephen Jeffries held a dynamic evangelistic crusade in that town. From the first night he attended the meetings, Tom was powerfully impressed by all he heard and saw. So profoundly was his life impacted that he not only became a Christian, he also dedicated his life to becoming an evangelist.

Many of the miracles Tom witnessed in those meetings were amazing and most convincing. One of these was the healing of Celia Brown a girl of thirteen who had been born without eyes. The sad little sockets were empty. Before a crowd of several thousand people she was led to stand before Rev Jeffries who gently laid his hand on her eyelids. After prayer, he removed his hands and Celia opened her eyelids to reveal a beautiful pair of newly created blue eyes with perfect vision.

Another amazing healing involved a young woman who just prior to her wedding had been the victim of a dreadful accident. One night, as she waited for a bus, the bus had mounted the pavement and ran over her. She sustained

shocking injuries to her spine and abdominal area. During the many serious operations she underwent at Newcastle Hospital, her womb and ovaries were removed. Although the various surgical procedures improved her condition somewhat she was still a badly crippled and deformed young woman. She could no longer stand upright and was forced to move around on her hands and knees. In this pathetic condition she and her fiancée were married. He had reasoned that if they had been married prior to the accident he would have looked after her. He therefore determined to go ahead with the wedding even though his future wife was a pathetic cripple without any female, internal organs.

When the Stephen Jeffries crusade commenced she was wheeled into the Town Hall on a stretcher, unable to walk or even to stand. As Pastor Jeffries prayed for her, Tom Wilson said that the profound silence was suddenly broken by the loud noises of cracking bones and joints as her poor body experienced surges of healing power throughout all her limbs and organs. She arose from the stretcher and was able to walk. She left the hall pushing her own stretcher.

Exactly one year after this miraculous healing, she gave birth to her first son who was named after Pastor Stephen Jeffries. Two years after the amazing miracle she had her second boy who was named after the pastor of the new church in Bishop Auckland. Mrs. Stead took her two young sons to Newcastle to introduce them to the senior surgeon who had operated on her originally. He told her, "Mrs. Stead, I am thrilled to see you walking again, something I never dreamed you would ever be able to do. I also believe you have done a good thing in adopting these two boys." She immediately assured him,

“Doctor, I have not adopted them, I have given birth to them.” His reply was, “It is wonderful that you feel that way about the boys, but obviously I know that you could not possibly have given birth to them because I am the surgeon who removed all your female organs.”

She assured him again that she had truly conceived and borne the children and was happy to submit to any tests that would prove or disprove it. The surgeon and some of his colleagues then arranged for her to undergo a series of tests and examinations. They discovered that all the female organs they had removed were now present again in her body and there was no physical reason why she could not have borne the children.

Such miracles, together with many other amazing, life transforming incidents of salvation laid the foundations of the newly formed Assembly of God church of which Tom Wilson and hundreds of others became foundation members. It was truly a New Testament type church displaying amazing faith and zeal. Many of those original members would subsequently become preachers of the Gospel as indeed did Tom.

The following year, in 1928, Tom became a student at the Assemblies of God Bible College in Hampstead Heath, London. The Principal of the school was the renowned Howard Carter, a pioneer of the British Pentecostal movement. Here Tom was not only taught Bible truths, he was exposed to the life of faith by examples of the faith of Howard Carter. The College was definitely a faith enterprise

and many wonderful incidents occurred as God continuously met their ongoing needs.

At one stage, the College account was empty and the pantry was bare. Howard Carter announced a special week of prayer and fasting, commencing on the Monday morning. Instead of going to breakfast, the students gathered in the chapel to begin their week of fasting and prayer. After only a few minutes, Rev Carter began to prophesy. The words sounded colourful and rather exotic and went something like this, “The arrow of the Lord’s deliverance has already left His bow and you are delivered. Money will come to you speedily. It shall come to you in spices and sweet perfumes. On the backs of camels across the desert, and across the great sea shall it come to you.” Immediately Howard Carter rose to his feet and announced, “The prayer meeting is over. Breakfast will be served in one hour!” The students began to protest, “Mr Carter, we have hardly begun to fast and pray, why do we not continue?” His answer was, “Because God has already answered our prayer and to continue asking would amount to unbelief.”

Later that day, a businessman called to see the Principal. He began to explain that he had been working in the Middle East for some time. Not having a local church to attend, he had saved his tithes, planning to direct them wherever God might direct later. He then handed over a sizeable cheque, asking the Principal to use it wherever it was most needed. At the close of their conversation and prayer of thanksgiving, the man made to leave the room. Pausing in the doorway, he turned and said, “This may not really interest you Mr. Carter but my business interests are in exotic spices and perfumes.

It may sound rather romantic, but those spices were actually transported on the backs of camels across the desert to Port Said, and then across the Mediterranean (the great sea) to Britain.”

After only one year of training, Howard Carter sent Tom out into the ministry and for the next sixty years he travelled continuously, preaching in churches and crusades all over the British Isles. In later years he would also minister in Australia and the USA, but it was in Britain that he was best known and where for the most part he faithfully pursued his evangelistic calling.

Tom lived to preach. His two greatest delights in life were preparing sermons and preaching them. He was quite brilliant at both. He was always an immensely popular preacher in constant demand. Tom truly loved life, but above all he loved God and he loved people. His whole life was dedicated to those two priorities, loving God and helping people. His itinerant life and ministry gave him scope for both! His dedication to a travelling ministry influenced him to remain a bachelor all his life. He was married to his ministry. Throughout the long years of his ministry Tom showed great interest in assisting young men into the ministry. Numerous ministers including myself have cause to be thankful for the encouragement and inspiration received from him without which we might never had entered the ministry.

My initial meeting with him took place in Manchester, England in 1952. I was serving in the Royal Air Force at the time. Tom was booked to speak at an Easter convention at

the renowned Bethshan Tabernacle in Manchester. A few weeks prior to Easter he had been studying and preparing the messages he would preach at the Convention. Whilst in prayer he had a vision in which he saw himself at the convention for which he was preparing. He had just delivered a message and the meeting had concluded. He came down from the pulpit and began to walk towards the back of the church in order to greet and talk with people. As he walked down the aisle, he was suddenly confronted by a young man in R.A.F. uniform. He reached out his hand to greet the young man and the Lord said to him, “Nurse me this child and I will pay you wages”. At that point the vision concluded and he was left with those words echoing in his heart.

For some days he wondered what the vision was all about and then concluded that God had furnished him with a subject He wanted him to preach on. He realised that the words came from the story of Moses, when the Egyptian Princess had charged Moses’ mother with the task of nursing and caring for the infant Moses. He studied the relevant passage of scripture, prepared a sermon on the thoughts he received and then temporarily forgot about the vision.

Some weeks later he arrived in Manchester for the Easter Convention. His sermon on “Nurse Me this child” was in his brief case together with a number of other messages he intended to preach. At the close of the first meeting, having delivered the opening address of the Convention, he descended from the platform and began to make his way to the rear of the church. Half way down the aisle he was suddenly face to face with a young airman whose face

looked vaguely familiar. He began to wonder, “How do I know this young man and why does his face look so familiar?” Suddenly it dawned upon him. This was the young man in the vision. Again the inaudible words came clearly to his spirit, “Nurse Me this child and I will pay you wages.”

Tom immediately introduced himself, though I already knew who he was having just heard him preach. In response I also introduced myself and we began an interesting conversation during which we both sensed some strange destiny. He did not immediately tell me about the vision but did discover who I was, where I was stationed and numerous other items of interest. Over the next few days we had many more conversations and began to develop a keen mutual interest. Before the end of the weekend we had made arrangements to meet again and had laid the foundations of a friendship that would last for many years. It was really only in retrospect many years later that I realised how fortuitous that meeting had been. It was a catalyst that would change the direction of my life and powerfully impact on every subsequent aspect of it. It would launch me into a ministry that would eventually take me to more than 65 nations around the world over some forty years of preaching experiences.

As I look back over these many years, I have realised numerous times that Tom Wilson was obviously the ideal person to nurse me through those early days of Christian experience. He became an ideal mentor for me, someone who understood me so well. He was a person with patience and determination, willing to sacrifice and expend himself in the development of his often difficult protégé. My Christian

life in those early stages was like a mine field with so many factors that could easily have blown its fragile nature apart. As a young convert, Tom himself had experienced many of these things. He had asked himself the same questions, faced similar challenges and temptations. He had extricated himself from similar circumstances. Nothing I could tell him ever shocked him. His own early life had rendered him shock proof! In the struggles of his early walk with God he had learned valuable lessons. Those lessons were conveyed to me in a loving and understanding manner. He patiently nursed me through many tests and challenges, always manifesting a practical perception of life as it really is.

Even in those early days of my Christian pilgrimage, God was teaching me to hear His voice within my spirit. I distinctly remember at that time, gazing fascinated into a shop window that was beautifully decorated for Christmas. It was late at night. The shop window was filled with interesting things and I was absorbed in looking at them. Suddenly, within my spirit, a voice said, “Move quickly, get away from this window!” Not understanding why, I nevertheless obeyed the voice and literally turned and ran from the window. Seconds later a front tyre blew on a huge bus. It swerved, mounted the pavement and drove straight through the shop window where I had been standing seconds earlier completely demolishing the show room. How good God was to warn me and save me from certain death.

Soon after this event I was baptised in the Holy Spirit and experienced a new dimension of joy and inner confidence. I had initially sought this experience in a non-Pentecostal

church where I and a few others were prayed for and urged to receive the Spirit by faith. We sought to do so but none of us gained any confidence that anything had actually transpired. Shortly afterwards I sought the blessing again, this time in a Pentecostal church where the pastor, John Nelson Parr, explained the phenomena from the scriptures pointing out that on most of the occasions that people received the Holy Spirit in New Testament times, they actually spoke in new tongues.

I was prayed over and I also prayed myself. I sought earnestly to receive but it was only later in the evening when I was almost exhausted from trying to receive that I relaxed somewhat and suddenly discovered a new tongue flowing from deep inside me. About this time the meeting closed but I was oblivious now to all else but the sensation of communing with God in a new dimension and language. I determined to keep doing so as long as I could. For one reason, I thought that if I stopped, I might never be able to start again. But the main reason I spoke for so long was that the Holy Spirit was busy “emptying my garbage can.” Praying out of my being so much of the rubbish, resentment, and bitterness and negativity that had warped my personality. (Romans 8:26)

By the time I came down to earth, I realised that everyone else had gone home. It was then after 2 a.m. the following morning. I discovered a little note on the chair next to me. It said, “When you are finished, please switch out the lights and lock the door after you!” I did this only to discover that the gate outside the church was also locked and I would have to climb a fairly high brick wall in order to get out. This was

not difficult however, I was fit and agile and quickly swung myself over the wall. As I let myself to the ground on the other side, a pair of hands grabbed me around the waist and a deep voice exclaimed, “Gotcha, you come with me!” It was a large police constable. I tried to explain that I had been to a prayer meeting but he was very dubious. “Where are the other people?” he asked. My protests and explanations did not suffice and he escorted me to the local police station. He informed me that there had been a number of burglaries in the area recently and that he was now sure that he had caught the culprit! He then announced to a very large sergeant, “I have caught a burglar from the church around the corner.” The sergeant was jubilant and got out his report book to book me. When I protested again that I had actually been praying in the church, he remained extremely sceptical. “Oh yes” said he, “Can you prove you have been to a prayer meeting?” How could I prove that I wondered? Suddenly I knew the answer. I placed my hands on his head and began to fervently pray for him in my new prayer language. “Alright, alright” the sergeant shouted, “I believe you, now please go home and leave us alone!” My first answer to prayer in my new language of the Spirit!

A miraculous answer to prayer

Soon after this dynamic experience of the Holy Spirit I discovered a new and deeper desire for prayer. In addition to spending private time in prayer I began to regularly attend the same prayer meeting at which I had received a new prayer language. One evening, after the close of this prayer meeting, I began to walk home along a busy city street. After walking some fifteen minutes I came to a major intersection. A crowd of people stood on the side walk and

an ambulance was in attendance. Being partly curious and partly desirous of giving any assistance I could, I joined the crowd and the ambulance officers. The first thing I saw was a battered cycle, a smashed shop-front window and the bloody figure of a young woman. One medic was just covering her head with a blanket but not before I realised that the broken body was that of a young woman who had also been in the prayer meeting. Christine was about seventeen at the time. She was a keen young Christian who travelled to and from the prayer meeting on her bicycle. Apparently she had been just ahead of me. When she came to the intersection a huge truck ran a red traffic light, hit Christine on her cycle and projected her through the air like a rocket. She flew through the air and into the plate glass window of a shop head first.

I did not immediately recognise the significance of the blanket being pulled over her head. I told the officers who she was and gave them the names of her next of kin. After this I ran back to the church in time to contact the small group who were still there. I quickly explained that Christine had met with a dreadful accident and was en route to hospital. I also urged those persons remaining to stay with me to pray for her. About fifteen of us began to pray with tremendous compassion and faith. Several were praying in their prayer languages in great earnestness. We all prayed for about three hours after which we sensed that the heavy burden of prayer was becoming lighter. We then dispersed and went home.

The following day I received some amazing news. Christine's father rang me to say that his daughter had been

declared dead on arrival at the hospital. Her body was taken to the mortuary. About 2.a.m. the following morning two young nurses took another body to the mortuary. As they passed the gurney on which Christine's body lay covered by a sheet, they detected some movement. Fearfully pulling aside the white sheet, they found to their amazement that she was alive! This was just at the same time that our burden to pray had eased and the impromptu prayer meeting had ended.

Although alive, she did not recover from the coma for some 43 days. During this time her parents and many others prayed for her every day. Our prayer vigil somehow came to the attention of the media and was featured in the National Newspapers. Several doctors, having read the articles, warned her parents about the true condition of their daughter. The doctor in charge told them kindly, but firmly, "I cannot personally believe in the power of prayer, but if somehow a miracle were to happen and your daughter came out of her coma, you must realise that mentally she would be a vegetable for the rest of her life". Her brains had actually been roughly pushed back into her skull by the ambulance man, because he had realised that she was already dead on the side walk.

Her parents thanked the doctor but told him, "We believe that God brought her back from the dead for a purpose and that was not to be a mental vegetable. We will continue to pray for her." After 43 days she regained consciousness and gradually began to return to normal. About one year later she married a fine young scientist with whom she was mentally and emotionally compatible and later bore three

healthy children and enjoyed a happy, fulfilled and perfectly normal married life.

My First Convert

It was at this time too that I had the joyful privilege of winning my first convert to Christ. I was walking a city street late at night. There were few people around and I was deep in thought. I became vaguely aware of someone approaching from the opposite direction and looking up saw a rather sad looking young man. I am sure I would have walked passed him without a thought if an urgent voice inside me had not said, "Speak to this young man!" My immediate thought was "What can I say to him?" but as quickly as this question arose the words were in my mouth. I suddenly found myself placing my hand on his shoulder and saying, "Excuse me, do you know that God loves you?"

A look of amazement crossed his face. He had obviously never heard such a strange question before. He replied, "I don't believe there is a God but if there is, and He loves me, He must be the only one in the universe who does." I recognised immediately that there was an enormous amount of hurt in this young man and asked if he could spare the time to talk for a while. He said that he had nothing else to do and would be happy to talk if I could help him. It transpired that he came from a large, dysfunctional family. His parents were chronic alcoholics and his siblings had all been in trouble with the law. He mentioned that despite being part of a large family, no one in his whole life had ever told him that they loved him.

I began to share the experience of my recent healing and salvation. I encouraged him to believe that what God had done for me, He could also do for him. As the mid night hour struck, on that lonely, wet city street, he repeated after me the sinner's prayer. Within minutes he felt better. As I prayed that the love of God would flow into his heart, he cried, "I can feel it. I can feel it! Because he had no decent clothes to wear to church, I bought him a few used items of clothing and took him to church. I also bought him a Bible but he confessed with some embarrassment that he could not read. But for the next several months he prayed with his bible every day, and Jesus taught him to read! Within one year he could read any portion of the Bible and every hymn in the hymn book. Within the next couple of years his parents, plus brothers and sisters had all come to Christ and his family circle was transformed. What a blessing for me, to win one bedraggled young man to Christ and then see him win his entire family. This was my very first convert but thankfully not the last. I have had the joy of repeating such an exercise over and over again, bring many people into a relationship with God through faith in Christ.

As the time for my discharge from the Air Force drew near, I was faced with a new challenge of what I was going to do with the rest of my life. At this time I was seconded to the USAF, Strategic Air Command, stationed at Lakenheath in Suffolk and it was from there that I received my military discharge.

Prior to being in the military I had held a good position with an organisation and the job, with prospects of promotion was still open to me. However my view of life had changed

considerably. I felt too restless to go back to the mundane security of a steady job. A sense of destiny and adventure had been aroused within me. As a result of my mentor's influence I had seen a glimpse of a world I had not previously known. It was a world in which my major goal would be "To know God and to make Him known." After much thought and prayer I eventually informed my previous employers that I would not be returning to the organisation.

Tom Wilson had invited me to travel with him. His itinerant life style gave him many lonely hours and he would value a companion with whom to travel. I was especially useful because he had never mastered the art of driving and consequently did not own a car. This made travelling tedious and onerous and the prospect of having a driver appealed to him very much. So, initially I became a companion/ driver and general practical assistant making life a little easier and more interesting for a constantly travelling preacher. But Tom was not willing for me to remain in that restricted role for too long. He knew that God had asked him to nurse me and nurture me for a specific reason and purpose. Together we established a daily routine that included prayer and Bible study. We spent hours reading and studying the Bible together and he would teach me the simple principles of deriving messages and sermons. Tom was widely known and greatly appreciated as an excellent preacher and was in great demand as such. I was fortunate indeed to have private tuition from such an accomplished and acknowledged preacher. This period laid the foundation for a preaching and teaching ministry that would eventually take me around the world many times.

It was only in later years that I realised that Tom had been such a remarkable mentor to me. In those days the word mentor was not as frequently used as it is now. But the passage of time and the increasing awareness of the power of mentorship made me realise that God had truly provided me with the finest mentor I could have known.

Firstly, he became a wonderful friend to me. The offer of his friendship was unconditional. He determined to be my good friend through thick and thin, good times and less than good times. Indeed his unswerving loyalty to me and our friendship in those days often demanded real sacrifices on his behalf and undoubtedly must have severely tested his resolve to be my friend and mentor. Yet he never swerved from his commitment. He was loyal to me, even when it cost him dearly.

The second aspect of our unlikely relationship was that he was a spiritual guardian to me. Tom was neither super spiritual, nor self righteous. He was a man who loved God and people with all his heart and lived to please and honour God but he was always a man with both feet on the ground.

One of the maxims he shared with me was evidently a saying of St. Augustine which Tom quoted to me many times. It said, “Love God with ALL YOUR HEART, and do what you like.” At first, it sounded like a risky strategy. To say, “Do what you like.” But the key to the saying was firstly to “Love God with ALL your heart.” Tom said, “If you truly fulfil the first part and love the Lord with ALL your heart, you will always want to please Him. Not from some religious purpose, but simply because you truly do love God

with all your heart and being. This is not a life of religious rules and procedures, but the adventure of living by the GRACE of God.

As a young man Tom had experienced many worldly activities. When converted he left a life of dancing, drinking, smoking, gambling, womanising and various other fleshly pursuits. But he also learned that one does not always manage to break free from such habits without the pain of self denial and determination. He knew full well that a fight is often called for when the heart and will have to be firmly set against continuing in the former patterns of the flesh. It was precisely because he had experienced such things personally that he was so well suited to encourage me too. Whilst in the Air Force I had begun to drink quite heavily, regularly doing the rounds of the local bars with some of my friends from the squadron. When I met him, I was still experiencing such traumas, but Tom was patient, understanding and always encouraging. His wisdom, common sense and patience saw me through many obstacles that might have ship wrecked my desire to be a genuine Christian.

It was the same with regard to my becoming a preacher. Initially, I felt totally unsuitable, unworthy and inadequate. Becoming a preacher was the furthest thing from my mind. But Tom, largely from the initial vision God had given to him, knew that there was a divine purpose to be fulfilled through my life. So he continually inspired and encouraged me in every possible way. He was firm yet gentle. He used every opportunity to extend and encourage me. He virtually

shared his life and experience with me, even to the degree of sharing his modest income with me.

The lessons I learned were extremely practical. Tom was himself a pragmatist and so was I. So he shared with me lessons that were very sensible and extremely useful. Under his tutelage I soon began to blossom as a preacher. He insisted on me preaching regularly in his crusades, even though he was the seasoned preacher and I was initially a young novice. After a while I became more adept and experienced in preaching and conducting meetings and was able to more adequately complement him in his tasks.

We had many wonderful adventures during those early days of my ministry. We travelled to many parts of Continental Europe, visiting and preaching in France, Switzerland and numerous other countries. Despite a considerable age difference, our companionship was mutually rewarding. We had many things in common and enjoyed sharing common delights experienced during our many travels. I have many reasons to be thankful for Tom's life and ministry. Although we were quite different in many ways, in other ways we were remarkably similar. I learned and imbibed much from him. I feel sure that it was his influence and example in caring for younger ministers that gave me a similar role in subsequent years. Just as Tom had encouraged me and several other younger men into a life of preaching and ministry, so I became adept at doing this. Everywhere I have gone during the past forty five years I have had the joy of helping young men and women into a life of service for God.

In the past few years this aspect of my life has increased enormously and in my present role I am able to encourage and inspire literally thousands of pastors and preachers. I am sure that this particular aspect of my work owes much to the fact that many years ago a preacher was commissioned to “nurse me” and encourage me in God and His service. In consequence I have always deemed it a privilege and joy to be involved in the training, preparation and inspiration of younger servants of God. All over the world I have contact with many younger men (and women) who were encouraged and assisted into the ministry through contact with me. It gives me tremendous joy and satisfaction to see many of them doing tremendously well in various roles of ministry as evangelists, pastors and missionaries.

Chapter Two

Bound for Australia

One of the regular annual events in which Tom Wilson had participated for many years involved ministry at a summer camp in Scarborough, Yorkshire. After I teamed up with him I also accompanied him there. I played several roles on staff and thoroughly enjoyed spending a couple of months in one place. People would come to the camp from many parts of the British Isles and Europe and many wonderful friendships were forged there. In 1956 a young lady from Sydney, Australia, came to work on the staff as a secretary. Tom had already briefly met her in London and had instantly felt that somehow she was going to play an important role in our lives. I was somewhat sceptical about this, until I met her!

Elizabeth Duncan is the youngest of four daughters of Rev Phil and Molly Duncan who were the leaders of the First Assembly of God in Sydney. Pastor Phillip had been ordained to the ministry in 1927 by none other than Smith Wigglesworth, the British revivalist. Since that time Rev Duncan had been the pastor of that church but he, his wife and daughter were now on a world tour, their present port of call being Britain. During those two months, romance blossomed and I began to plan to leave for Australia the following year. Tom often jokingly remarked that “I was leaving my uncle Abraham for the well watered plains of Australia.” Although he joked about the prospect it was quite a dramatic decision for all of us.

I travelled to Australia on an old steam ship, a voyage that took more than five weeks. Even on that ship, God gave me several exciting adventures. The first one happened on the evening we left Naples after spending one day there. That evening I went for a walk around the decks and through a lounge room/bar. An attractive woman was sitting alone at one of the tables looking very sad as she steadily worked her way through several glasses of alcohol. As I looked in her direction, I sensed a voice within say, “Go and sit with her and talk to her.” I hesitated to do this. I was conducting Bible studies each morning and numerous people on board knew that I was a preacher. Sitting with her in conversation with drinks on the table could have looked somewhat compromising. I walked around the deck again quietly praying as I went and the thought remained with me. So, committing the project to the Lord, I walked over to her table and asked if I might join her. After explaining that I was a Christian and had felt led to pray for her, she began to open up. With tears flowing down her cheeks she told me her sad story. She was a young mother of two small children. Some three years previously her husband had deserted her for another woman. Then he had returned and said that he wanted to start all over again with her and the children. He suggested that they should all emigrate to Australia to make a brand new life for themselves.

Just prior to the time to sail, he told her that he had some unfinished business contracts to conclude and suggested that she go ahead with the children and he would join her shortly. However, on arrival in Naples, there was a letter waiting for her in which he told her that he could not leave his mistress

and that she should make a new life for herself and the children. She was devastated and in a state of shock and despair. She determined to get totally drunk and then later in the night, jump overboard with the two children and end all their lives together.

I began to tell her about Jesus, the friend who sticks closer than a brother. As she sobbed her heart out, I helped her pray a prayer of commitment. Gradually, the crying subsided and a peace began to overtake her. Throughout the rest of the voyage she and the children came to all the Bible studies and made some great new friends. She testified several times about the wonderful peace that had come to her since receiving Christ.

A fine young couple with whom I was talking one day asked me if I would like to go to hear “Ron Hubbard” speak. I did not know who Ron Hubbard was or that he was on the ship, but I happily agreed to accompany them to this gathering. A group of about fifty people attended and after an introductory talk, questions and debate was encouraged. I took the opportunity to enter the discussion and in the course of my remarks managed to briefly yet clearly share the Gospel with Hubbard and his “followers”. A lively debate followed with an enthusiastic exchange of views. It was only later that evening that I really began to discover who Ron Hubbard really was. No less than the founder of “The Church of Scientology,”

It was the couple who had invited me to that meeting who later began to tell me that they were seeking for spiritual enlightenment following a rather strange incident that had

happened to Brian some months earlier. He was a very bright and intelligent business executive in the English midlands. One day he had reason to visit a client in Birmingham. He parked his Jaguar car by the roadside and began to walk towards the office of his client. Suddenly, a man crudely dressed in overalls stood before him and asked in a loud voice, "Would you like to go to heaven?" Brian pushed past him, ignoring his strange question but the man began to follow him calling out, "Well then, go to hell!" Although Brian wanted to ignore and forget the interruption by this strange "prophet" he could not shake off his words. For several months afterwards, the subject of heaven and hell occupied his thoughts continually. It was his desire to acquire some spiritual "enlightenment" that had drawn him and his lovely wife Vanessa to encounter Ron Hubbard. He went on to tell me however, that he was much more impressed with what I had shared than with what Ron had to say. Could I talk with them further and did I know what the strange man in Birmingham had meant?

We spent that evening in earnest conversation and before parting for the night, I gave them a copy of Billy Graham's book, PEACE WITH GOD. The following morning after I had enjoyed a good night's sleep, I went down to breakfast. The couple were waiting for me in the dining room, their eyes red with lack of sleep and some tears! They explained that after we parted they began to read the book and had spent the whole night reading and talking their way through it. Now they were anxious to know, "How may we receive peace with God?" What a thrill and pleasure it was to tell them and to pray with them the sinner's prayer. They came through to a glorious experience of peace in Christ and

became regular and enthusiastic members of our Bible study group. We kept in touch for some time before they, and Jesus, returned to Britain.

I reached Australia in September 1957 and began to itinerate throughout the land conducting evangelistic meetings wherever doors opened. Early the following year, Tom joined us in Sydney in time to be the best man at our marriage at Petersham, Sydney on May 17th, 1958. Immediately after our honeymoon, I assumed the pastorate of the Sutherland Assembly of God church that had recently been pioneered by Rev Norman Armstrong. He had planted a vibrant new congregation in this southerly suburb of Sydney and I was delighted to follow in his steps, further establishing the fledgling congregation that has since grown to some 1,000 members. In those days, of course, it was a small but lively congregation, one of only four Assembly of God churches in Sydney. I was the first “full time” pastor of Sutherland since Norman was the Director of the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association in Australia and supported by them.

Those days in Sydney were very formative ones for me. I still had much to learn about the Ministry. My father in law, Phillip Duncan was an inspiration and a true pioneer. Originally a deacon in the Burton St Baptist church in Sydney, his life had been impacted and changed through the visit of Rev Smith Wigglesworth from England in the 1920's. The Baptist Church had invited Wigglesworth to conduct a crusade, on the recommendation of a Medical Doctor who was one of the elders, before realising that he was actually a dynamic, Pentecostal revivalist. It took just

two nights for them to realise their error. On the second evening as Wigglesworth stood to preach he began with a startling announcement. He said, "I am going to prophesy this evening and if my prophecy does not come to pass, I will never prophesy again." He then pointed to a lady in the congregation, seated in a wheel chair. He announced, "I shall pray for that woman and she will walk tonight and push her own wheel chair." Gasps of surprise greeted his statement. Phillip Duncan said later, "The pastor looked at the doctor. The doctor looked down at his shoes, and Wigglesworth looked to the Lord!"

Wigglesworth then left the platform, stood before the lady in question and commanded her in a loud voice to arise from her chair. She evidently did not respond quickly enough, so he began to pull her out of her chair. Suddenly, to the surprise and consternation of the pastor, she arose, stepped out of the chair and began to walk, pushing her own wheel chair up and down the aisle.

The Pastor immediately closed the crusade and asked Wigglesworth to leave, but his message had already captivated numerous hearts, including that of Deacon Phillip Duncan. When Wigglesworth departed, so did Phillip and numerous other members who had caught a glimpse of some new spiritual dimensions and had developed a hunger for the deeper things of the Spirit. Wigglesworth began another crusade in a neutral venue and the crowd that joined him became the foundation members of the first Assembly of God church in Sydney. Wigglesworth recognised the leadership potential in his new found young friend and subsequently ordained him to the ministry.

Another incident that occurred about this time became one of our favourite stories about Smith Wigglesworth. He had asked Phillip Duncan to call on him in his hotel in Sydney. Wigglesworth wanted to ordain him to the ministry and needed to talk with him on numerous matters. Smith Wigglesworth was awaiting Phillip in the foyer of the hotel and asked him to accompany him to his room where they could converse in private. The quickest route to that room was through the dining room and Wigglesworth led the way, his young protégé following in his wake. Breakfast was still being served in the dining room and a businessman sat alone at one table quietly eating his breakfast and minding his own business. This gentleman had a huge cancerous tumour on the side of his face. As Wigglesworth marched through the dining room he paused momentarily, reached out his hand and shouting “In the Name of Jesus” plucked the huge, crab like cancer from the man’s face. He calmly placed it on his breakfast plate and continued on his way through the room. Phillip Duncan, walking behind him gazed in awe at the man’s surprised face. It was as clear as a baby’s. No sign of the hideous cancer that moment’s earlier had grossly disfigured him. It was the first, but not the last dramatic miracle the young preacher had witnessed. In later years he too would have a miracle and healing ministry and would witness all kinds of remarkable miracles in his own ministry. There can be no doubt that this was due in no small way to his early association with the British revivalist who had laid hands on him and said, “In the Name of the Lord Jesus, I ordain you to the New Testament ministry.”

During some three years at Sutherland, we also saw some remarkable miracles and many new believers added to the

church. In this same period I developed a close relationship with Norman Armstrong who had become the national leader of the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association in Australia. In addition to overseeing the administration of that ministry Norman was also busy holding meetings and crusades all over Australia. Those crusades were commonly called “Salvation-Healing Crusades” and many people found Christ in a new way as Saviour, Healer and Baptiser in the Holy Spirit. The Pentecostal movement was still quite small in those days having laboriously grown from very insignificant beginnings. But now there was a fresh spiritual impetus in the land, probably spurred to some degree by the earlier visit (1956) of Oral Roberts and the subsequent continuance of his influence through radio ministry, TV films used in crusade meetings, and the enthusiastic, faith inspiring ministry of Norman Armstrong. It was still a time of small beginnings but there was definitely a new spiritual stirring in the land.

I had the vision of an evangelist and the heart of a pastor. I spent hours every week going from door to door, talking to people about Jesus and distributing literature. We also conducted regular open air meetings in Sutherland through which several people came to faith in Christ.

One Sunday morning a young teen age girl came to church and asked to see the pastor. She told me that someone had pushed a healing magazine through her letter box and she wanted to speak to that person. When I told her that I was the person she related this interesting story. She had been deaf in one ear all her life, a problem that caused her considerable embarrassment at school. However, it also had

small benefits. For example, the bathroom tap next to her bedroom leaked and the noise would keep her awake at night. When this happened, she placed her good ear on the pillow and slept soundly.

The previous week she had discovered an ABUNDANT LIFE magazine in the mailbox. In it she read testimonies of healings and miracles that thrilled and inspired her. Alone in the house she knelt by her bed, asked Jesus to heal her and confessed Him as her Saviour. That night the tap was dripping as usual. She turned over in bed as normal and lay awake listening to the tap through her deaf ear! A good number of her school friends followed her to church and formed the nucleus of a fine young people's group. Many interesting characters from around the Sutherland Shire found Christ, salvation and healing in the Sutherland Assembly.

Rev and Mrs. A.S.Worley, from South Carolina, USA, were visiting New Zealand and Australia conducting powerful meetings. Their travels took them to Launceston, Tasmania where they felt led to hold a short crusade. From the commencement the touch of God was on those meetings and every night, people were saved, healed and delivered. The small hall in which the meetings commenced was soon outgrown as the nightly crowds began to increase. Over the period of a couple of months, some 1,600 people had registered decisions for Christ and many had been remarkably healed. The Worley's stayed as long as they could before moving on to other places to which they had previously committed themselves. Before leaving they

asked Norman Armstrong to join them in Launceston with a view to continuing the crusade after they had left.

Norman had been in Launceston for a couple of weeks when he urgently phoned asking me to please join him. It was my first trip to Tasmania and an enormous thrill to join forces with Norman in what was for those days, a tremendous move of God. He and I batched together in a rented house and I became the chief cook. Fortunately we both loved curry, so I cooked it every day. Many of the new converts would bring food parcels to the house and everything, including Mutton Birds, would go into the curry pot. It is a wonder we did not both turn yellow, considering the amount of curry we ate.

Clothed In A New Garment

I had not realised how much colder it was in Tasmania, compared to Sydney. Consequently I arrived there without any warm clothes. I really needed a good cardigan. Norman mentioned that he had two such garments and that If I did not mind wearing the old one, he would gladly loan it to me. He had worn the old one when painting his house in Arncliffe, Sydney and one could easily see what colour paint he had used because much of it was still on the cardigan. Also, the elbows had been worn through leaving large holes in them both. Fortunately, I was not proud and gladly accepted his offer. I determined to keep my jacket on over it so that no one would see it anyway.

The atmosphere in the meeting that night became much warmer than I had anticipated and before I was due to preach I decided I would need to remove the cardigan. I slunk off to a corner of the platform to secretly discard Norman's

cardigan. However, I was evidently not as discreet or clever as I had thought.

The following night, arriving at the meeting again, a lady shyly approached me. “Excuse me, Pastor Rowlands” said she, “I don’t want to embarrass you but I noticed your cardigan last night and felt the Lord encourage me to buy you a new one!” She then handed me a nicely wrapped parcel. On opening it, I discovered a beautiful woollen cardigan, far nicer, and obviously more expensive than Norman’s good one. After the meeting, two more people approached me and gave me monetary gifts to buy a new cardigan!

Norman was quite envious and not a little jealous. He complained that since the old cardigan was his, he deserved part of the spoil. I pointed out to him that if he had been a real Christian, he would have loaned me the good cardigan in the first place and then the charity would have come to him rather than me! It was a joke that we both remembered long afterwards.

One of the first things that Norman and I did was to baptise some 1,200 people in the public swimming pool for as yet none of them had been baptised. We also introduced the subject of Holy Spirit baptism for “as yet the Holy Spirit had fallen upon none of them.” In the first week that we began to teach on this subject some 900 converts were baptised in the Spirit with the sign of speaking in tongues. It was an exciting week and a spirit of revival hit the place.

The revival continued for several months. Healings and miracles were still a nightly occurrence as the whole city was impacted by the power of God. Several notable cripples were healed. The local Police Force was impacted, numerous constables and detectives coming to Christ. There was an air of great excitement throughout and around the city. We felt confident that God would establish a remarkable witness in Launceston through this dynamic crusade. Unfortunately, several denominations wanted to reap the crop, eventually dividing the large inter-denominational crowd into several small churches.

Billy Graham's Inspiring Example

I still vividly remember a further great privilege I experienced about that time. I was preaching to several hundred young people at an Easter Camp on the Gold Coast in Queensland, Australia in 1959. It so happened that Dr. Billy Graham, who was conducting huge Evangelistic Crusades in Australia had come to the Gold Coast with his team for a brief holiday. One of his top executives came along to the camp where I was speaking and as a result I was invited to the hotel to share a meal with Dr. Graham and his team that included such wonderful people as Cliff Barrows, George Beverly Shea, Walter Smythe, and others.

The thing that impressed me more deeply than anything else was a "pep talk" that Dr. Graham gave to the team that day in which he strongly exhorted them to be sensitive to every opportunity to witness for Christ on a personal basis. He said the fact that they were on a few day's holiday did not mean that they should not continue to be spiritually alert to opportunities to make Jesus known. He also added that

although they were seeing record crowds attending the great Evangelistic Rallies this did not mean that they should neglect the commission to pursue their calling to the ministry of personal evangelism.

The following week I was back home in Sydney and Dr. Graham was preaching at the Sydney Cricket Ground each night to record crowds. He had invited me to join him on the platform, which I gladly did. I vividly remember sitting just behind him as he preached his great sermon on "The Home." Many hundreds came forward that night as he gave the appeal. It was an occasion and an experience that indelibly impressed itself on the mind of this, at that time, young preacher. When I spoke to him later and mentioned how deeply impressed I was with all that was happening in the Crusade, he humbly replied that it was not his doing, but the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. He modestly refused to accept any credit or any glory, attributing everything to God and His gracious Spirit.

Nevertheless, the occasion I remember even more vividly than the great gathering of some 60,000 people, was in the relative privacy of the hotel in Queensland. Away from the great crowds and the public eye, on a well earned break from a very hectic and demanding routine, yet still dedicated to a calling and a ministry to share Christ on a personal level.

It was during these three years in Sutherland that our first two daughters, Christine and Kathryn were born. At the time our weekly wage was sixteen pounds (\$32 Aust) out of which we paid nine pounds per week rent on a small flat. From the remaining seven pounds, we bought and ran a car,

bought all our food and clothing requirements etc. They were exciting days though and we were thoroughly content with our lot in life. Surely “The lines had fallen unto us in pleasant places.”

(Psalm 16:6)

One of the remarkable things that happened to us as a small family in those days transpired one night as we returned from Lithgow in the Blue Mountains. It was a Saturday night and I had preached at a service there. After the meeting, about 10 p.m. we began our journey down the mountains back to Sydney. It was a perfect night for driving. The moon was full. The mountain air was crisp, enhancing the performance of the carburettor and we were driving down hill all the way. The road was quiet and our two small children were fast asleep on the back seat. Since the next day was Sunday and we faced a busy day in the church we wanted to reach home as quickly as possible. Elizabeth had just remarked about what excellent time we were making as the car sped down the mountain road on one side of which was a sheer drop of some 1,000 feet.

Suddenly I sensed a voice within me speaking urgently. It said, “Apply the brakes and pull over off the road immediately.” As I began to obey, Elizabeth protested, “Why are you pulling up? The children will wake up and I will have to get them back to sleep!” Momentarily, I lifted my foot from the brake but the inner voice spoke more urgently than ever and I quickly obeyed, pulling the car off the road on to the embankment. Sure enough the children awoke and began to cry as I walked around the car searching for some reason why I was urged to stop so suddenly.

Nothing appeared to be wrong. Certainly the engine and the car had been running really sweetly, why had we stopped?

Eventually, out of frustration, I lightly kicked the tyre on the rear inside wheel to see if its pressure was adequate. Immediately the wheel fell off completely. The axle was broken and there was nothing holding on the wheel. If we had continued to drive even seconds longer the wheel would obviously have dropped off and the car would undoubtedly have left the narrow road, probably plunging us all some 1,000 feet, probably to our deaths. How wonderful that the Holy Spirit warned me so clearly and instructed me in what to do. Our lives could have been cut off prematurely and our destiny destroyed had not God warned us in that “still, small voice.”

In 1961 I felt led to resign from the pastorate at Sutherland and join Norman Armstrong in the Oral Roberts ministry. Elizabeth and I had our first two daughters then, the eldest, Christine, being three and the younger, Kathryn, under twelve months. We bought a large International panel van and a family size caravan. Our meagre items of equipment, both personal and for the ministry were carried in the van and we four lived in the caravan. For some two years we drove thousands of miles across Australia. We would frequently stop in a small town, hire a public hall and conduct a crusade. We always tried to go to places where there was no Pentecostal witness. We preached in scores of towns and frequently left a small group of new believers who would meet together as a small local church.

It was at this time, that I received an invitation to join a group of other ministers from around the world at a Holy Spirit conference to celebrate the opening of the Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma in November 1963. Some 4,000 ministers came together from around the world to enjoy and benefit from both plenary and elective sessions at which some of the best known Pentecostal preachers taught and ministered.

One evening Oral announced that he wanted to pray for all the ministers. This was obviously a mammoth task. He sat on a chair on the edge of the platform and we preachers filed past him in a single line. He simply prayed a brief prayer with many, but for others, including myself, he exercised a Word of Knowledge. It was a remarkable session because, to ensure that he did not know for whom he was praying, he kept his eyes closed throughout the prayer time. As we stood before him, one by one, he had no natural knowledge of who was praying for. As he prayed for me he said that only a small percentage, about ten percent, of my potential had yet been released. He said that my life was like a cloudy day. The clouds were filled with rain but as yet, little of that rain had fallen. He said that “my life and ministry needed to be better focused. He prayed that the remainder would be released and then prophesied that in due time this would happen and a mighty work would be accomplished.” Although I would experience numerous times of blessing and fruitfulness, it would be several years before that word would be properly fulfilled.

I have always remembered another incident that happened at the Seminar from which I learned a great deal. Somehow,

among all the 4,000 preachers present, I was invited to bring a brief message in one of the night rallies. Rev Bob DeWeese, Oral Roberts' associate minister and friend, led the meeting that evening. He introduced me and I spoke on, "I will pour water on him that is thirsty." Following my brief message, a lady from Taiwan delivered an utterance in Tongues. In the large and rather prestigious congregation, there followed a long silence as all the preachers present left it to someone else to give an interpretation. Eventually a very large man in the midst of the big congregation stood and delivered a long, loud "interpretation" about the "abomination of desolation" spoken by the Prophet Daniel. A profound hush fell on the meeting. No one seemed to know what to do! Then Oral Roberts, who was seated on the front row of the congregation quietly stood to address the crowd. He explained, sweetly yet very firmly that the man's contribution had NOT been the interpretation of the tongue. He then proceeded to deliver what he believed was the right interpretation. It certainly fitted the occasion better and obviously edified the people. Nevertheless, there followed an embarrassed silence as many wondered what might be the reaction of the minister who had spoken the original "interpretation." No one appeared more embarrassed than Rev DeWeese. He tried to explain to the congregation that some times there could be more than one interpretation to an utterance in tongues.

Immediately Rev Roberts stood again and said, "Dear brother DeWeese, I understand what you are trying to do and I sympathise with your situation, however, that first utterance was NOT the interpretation and we must never

compromise the validity of a true message in order to save embarrassment.” Now, the place became really quiet!

However, the silence was soon broken as the large preacher stood noisily to his feet, pushed his way down the row, marched up the aisle and burst out of an exit leaving the door swinging on its hinges as he strode away from the hall. Now everyone was really embarrassed but I waited eagerly to see what Oral Roberts would do now. He stood quietly to his feet once more and faced the audience, “Dear Friends” he said, “I am sorry if anyone is offended by what just happened but I repeat that the message which that dear brother gave was NOT the interpretation. He was NOT in the Spirit and the manner in which he has just left the auditorium confirms that fact.”

What an object lesson to everyone present! Firstly of the necessity to judge every word of prophecy or interpretation. Secondly in how to graciously yet firmly exercise correction in such a situation. It was an example from which I learned a great deal that was later helpful to me on several similar occasions when I was in charge of and responsible for such a situation. How much we can learn from the gracious actions of an older mentor in the ministry!

N.S.W. State Evangelist

After some time with Norman and the Oral Roberts association, I accepted the role of Evangelist for the Assemblies of God in N.S.W. We continued to travel the nation but now mostly within N.S.W. As a young family we experienced numerous interesting adventures as we roamed the nation together. We were like a band of spiritual

gypsies, waltzing through the Australian outback. Initially, I was frequently puzzled by the warm welcome we received at many petrol service stations and the fact that they always gave me a discount on the petrol price. It was some time before I discovered that a small, inconspicuous label on the windscreen, put there before we bought the vehicle, proclaimed that we were members of a circus fraternity! I never removed the label. I was rather pleased with our association that also won us many interesting friends in caravan parks too.

One of the small towns in New South Wales, in which we held a crusade was Picton. Though it was a tiny rather parochial town it published its own weekly newspaper. One day I went to the publisher's office to place an advertisement of our meetings. I found that the owner/publisher had lived in that small community all his life. He boasted to me that he knew more about Picton and district than anyone else in the region. He actually claimed that he could answer any possible question regarding the town. When I queried this, like a dinkum Aussie, he challenged me to a bet. I forget the amount at stake, but my question to him was, "Can you tell me how to get to heaven from Picton?" I won the bet, but I never did collect the winnings. However, I was able to tell him how to get to heaven from the town in which he had lived all his life!

I also had another powerful experience in Picton. On the Saturday morning I stood outside a local hotel to distribute leaflets inviting people to the crusade. My attention was drawn to a man on the opposite side of the road waiting to cross it. As I gazed at him across the road, the Holy Spirit

began to show me a number of things about this man. When he had crossed the road and reached me I quietly asked him, "Excuse me sir, could I have a brief talk with you?" He immediately began to curse and said, "That's what annoys me about the so and so town, everybody knows your *** business and gossips about it to everyone else!" I quickly assured him that I did not know him and that no one had told me anything about him. I then explained that I was a preacher and that I believed that God had spoken to me about him. I said, "I believe that you are an accountant by profession. You used to live in Sydney with your wife and three children. However, you became a chronic alcoholic and as a result your business has gone bankrupt and your wife and children have left you. You came back to this town to live with your mother but she has recently died and now you are determined to commit suicide!" He immediately began to sob and said, "Oh God, everything you have said is true, what can I do?" I drew him aside into a quiet street to talk with him further and eventually to lead him in a prayer of repentance and salvation. Some months later he was restored to his family and able to re commence his business in Sydney.

Jesus Is Better

One week I was preaching in a small church in the city of Orange, N.S.W. It was winter and raining hard. One night in the middle of my message, I noticed a rain soaked and bedraggled man enter the church and sit on the back row where he soon appeared to fall asleep, but when I later gave a salvation appeal he surprised me by marching forward in response. Whilst praying for the ragged figure I discovered that he was a Russian who spoke very broken English. The

poor fellow was a chronic alcoholic who usually slept out doors. Tonight, almost blind drunk, he had sought some brief refuge from the cold rain in the nice warm church. He got more than he came for though and made a genuine commitment to Christ. Immediately, as we prayed together, he sobered up and faithfully attended every meeting of the crusade.

When I arrived at the church early one evening, “Ivan” was already there, extremely happy and talkative. I asked him what he had been doing that day and he replied that he had been “reading the bubbles!” I thought this was some new form of fortune telling until I realised that he meant, reading THE BIBLE. As we talked he was reading out the text that adorned the wall behind the pulpit. It read JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOREVER!” He suddenly shouted, “That is not right!” I assured him that it was and that it actually came from the Bubbles, sorry, the Bible! Still he insisted, “No, it is not right!” So I asked him, “Why is it not right?” he replied that it should read, “JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME YESTERDAY, BETTER TOMORROW AND BETTER STILL THE DAY AFTER!”

My Canberra Adventure

One week during our travels, we visited Canberra for a few days. God seemed to be laying that city on my heart. We parked our van in the local caravan park, (next to Slim Dusty, the famous Australian Country Western star who was doing some concerts. I had the opportunity to talk to Slim about the Lord and he listened with great appreciation) and spent some time walking the streets and praying for the city. One morning, in prayer, God spoke to me clearly through

1 Corinthians 16:9

9 *For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.* (KJV)

I immediately realised that God was encouraging me to hold a crusade in Canberra. The more I prayed, the clearer the conviction became. We lived in Sydney at the time so I began to commute to Canberra to organise a crusade. The most suitable venue seemed to be the public hall in the Bible Society Building in downtown Canberra. The Society President then was Canon Arrowsmith a well known Anglican minister. He was very helpful to our cause and he and his wife later attended many of the meetings.

In those days there were few motels and very few preachers had the money for one anyway. I advertised in the Canberra Newspaper, “Wanted, accommodation and board for visiting preacher.” The only reply I received was from a delightful young couple in Yarralumlah. When I called on them I discovered that both were interested in spiritual matters having investigated various possibilities such as Bahai, Scientology and Astrology. They had decided to invite me to stay with them in order to investigate some other forms of spiritual truth. Praise God they became my first converts in Canberra, making a commitment to Christ on the very first night of the crusade. They both experienced sound conversions and became great believers.

Since my call to Canberra seemed so clear, I imagined that everything would run smoothly and fall nicely into place. But the opposite happened. Everything seemed to go wrong. Just prior to beginning the meetings I began to wonder if I

had misheard God. I went into some fasting and prayer and God reminded me of the scripture He had given to me. “An effectual door AND many adversaries!” He taught me that sometimes the confirmation of an open, effectual door is the number of enemies and problems that confront you when you try to enter. He further taught me that through the extra prayer (and fasting) that ensues, God strengthens you further for the special victory He wants to give you.

We began to conduct meetings with only a handful of people but over a few weeks we saw God save and heal many others. After three months we were able to leave an infant Assembly in the care of Ian and Dawn Phillips who did a good job of caring for the new believers. A number of other pastors have followed them and today there are some 600 people in the church and several other churches have been planted from there.

A further exciting experience happened in South Australia shortly afterwards. I was being driven to Adelaide by car, through the desert. The population was very sparse along the route but we did drive through several small country towns. In one of these my attention was powerfully drawn to a small public hall by the highway. As I gazed at it, I “saw” myself in that building praying for the sick. The crowd in the vision was not huge but the excitement was great. Some weeks later, I was able to return to the town and hold a meeting in that very hall. About 100 people came along. We enjoyed a good but rather uneventful service until after my message. The Lord then showed me in my spirit that there was a young incapacitated boy in the meeting whom He wanted to heal. I inquired of the people, “Does someone

in this meeting have a young crippled son?” A couple at the rear of the hall responded positively revealing such a child lying helplessly on a blanket behind them. I had not been able to see him. He was about six years of age and had never walked nor stood in his life. Imagine the joy and excitement that erupted when after prayer, the little fellow began to walk with his parent’s assistance. Soon afterwards he was able to walk unaided. Many of the audience gave their lives to Christ that night and became the nucleus of a newly planted church that has grown considerably since then.

By 1964, our third daughter, Virginia had been born. Christine, our eldest, was now of school age and it seemed needful and appropriate to settle down somewhere for a while. We subsequently rented a house in Sydney from where I continued to itinerate conducting many evangelistic crusades in various churches and hired halls. God wonderfully honoured and attested these meetings with many people being saved and hundreds of others being healed of various sicknesses by the power of God. It is quite amazing and thrilling that even now, some forty years later, I still meet people from time to time who were either saved or healed in those meetings. The effect and influence of those times has obviously lasted through the years with the lives of many persons powerfully affected. These years of evangelism and the experience I gained though them became the platform on which my future ministry was to be built. For when today I teach young men and women around the world about evangelism and church planting I do it from personal experience rather than empty theory. In a sense, there is no substitute for positive experience. Principles

which are learned in the laboratory of human experience usually stay with you forever. They are built into the texture of your life and always remain with you.

Chapter Three

Prophetic Visions in Adelaide

Our nomadic wanderings ended temporarily in 1964 in Klemzig, a northerly suburb of Adelaide, South Australia where Pastor John Job had recently built an attractive new church facility. We had held a crusade in that church during our two years of wandering and when the congregation needed a new pastor to replace John they invited us to return there. My inherited assistant and associate pastor there was Jim Williams, who later became the Superintendent of the Assemblies of God of New Zealand. Our two families, with our numerous small children became firm friends in a warm association that has continued until this day.

The church membership then consisted of about seventy members and with their new building in a prominent location on a main road they felt a spirit of anticipation about the future of the church. The church had a large sign outside for which it became a well known land mark. Most people in Adelaide knew the church on Main North East Road with “that huge sign” outside. Many people, all across the city, knew of our church. Although the congregation was relatively small there were numerous fine people and good workers among them.

The new building had fired the vision of the members to see the work increase. A small group of them met at 6.30.a.m. three mornings each week to pray for “revival.” They prayed earnestly for God to bring in sinners that they might be

converted and the church might grow and prosper in the Will of God. When God answered prayer a few months later it was in a different way than any of us had anticipated.

Probably the most faithful attendant at those prayer meetings was a delightful, older, unmarried lady. She was a true lady in every sense of the word. Well bred and well educated, always neatly dressed and well presented, refined and genteel. She had been a sincere Christian all her life and seemed to epitomise the image of a fine, conservative, evangelical single lady. She had a delightful, bird like voice, beautifully spoken and always well articulated. Her prayers were always a delight to hear, for us, as well as for her Lord. She prayed consistently for people to be won to Christ and added to our church. It was a sentiment to which we all added a hearty Amen. I rather labour my description of her in the light of something that happened a little later. Please be patient. All will be revealed.

The Rehab Centre

A young couple who had recently joined the church had a real burden to help drug addicts. One day a national newspaper carried the story of a young woman in Melbourne who had been sentenced to three years in prison to save her from an early and untimely death. Although only nineteen this girl had been a main line heroin addict for six years. She had injected heroin into every part of her body. The welfare people in Melbourne told the judge that if she continued with her addiction she would never live to see 21. She worked as a prostitute to pay for her habit and the heroin plus prostitution was surely killing her. The Judge told her, "I am sentencing you to three years in prison to get you away

from the drug scene and to try to ensure that at least you may live until you are 21.”

The story was carried nationally on the front pages of several news papers and came to the attention of Victor and his wife, the couple who were concerned about addicts. They wrote to Judge Rapke in Melbourne to ask if he would be willing to change the sentence from three years in jail to three years in the custody and care of our church. Amazingly he agreed, placing her on a good behaviour bond and warning her that should there be any infringement of that bond he would immediately send her to jail. Her arrival in Adelaide happened just days after we had acquired a lease on a large house that would serve as a drug rehabilitation centre. Gina was the first “guest” but was soon joined by numerous other girls, all of whom were addicts and prostitutes. In addition to prayer and counselling at the Centre, they also began to attend the church. Several newspapers that had been following the story began to send reporters and photographers to the church and numerous articles began to appear, some of them positive and helpful, others far from the truth. However, the church began to become widely known and soon all kinds of people from the underworld of the city began to attend it to find out what was happening there. Soon the congregation had almost doubled but most of the new people attending were characters from the drug scene both users and pushers, prostitutes, gangsters and sundry sinners. They were certainly not the kind of people that the “prayer warriors” had envisaged would fill the church, but they were the people that Jesus wanted there.

The opening of a drug rehabilitation house introduced new areas of excitement into our lives. The house was situated on the other side of Adelaide under the care of the Kolachenkov's the young couple who had written to the Melbourne Court about Gina. It was soon filled with drug addicts from the local underworld. Many of them were notorious prostitutes and some were gangsters. One of the people who became interested in all that was happening was an extremely dynamic and colourful character known as "Big Jean." She was a very impressive looking young woman, very attractive with titian coloured hair, statuesque and extremely strong. Some of the girls told us that when Jean was "high" she would frequently take a "client" to a motel and afterwards lock the door and keep the poor guy there for days. She would also get sadistic pleasure from beating up the clients, keeping them imprisoned at her pleasure. Jean was never an inmate at the centre but she frequently came to church, visited the centre and generally mingled with our "guests."

The first time I actually ever met her was about 3 a.m. one morning. I had heard a great deal about her and her "adventures" but as of then had not yet met her. An early morning phone call soon changed that! The drug centre phoned to tell me that "Big Jean was as "high as a kite" and wandering round the house shouting all manner of abuses." I was not sure what I was expected to do but I quickly dressed and drove over to the centre. As I parked the car, a dreadful noise rent the air. Looking for the source of the screech I saw a cat, flying through the air like a ballistic missile, emitting this fearful scream as it sailed by across the street. Apparently Jean had grabbed the cat by its tail, swung

it around her head several times and then launched it into outer space, over the fence and across the street.

The next moment, as I entered the garden, I came face to face with the notorious Jean, still high, though not as high as she had been. Standing in the path before me she demanded, “Who the xxxx are you?” I informed that I was the pastor. “You don’t look like a so and so Reverend to me” Jean replied and with that she grabbed my wrist. Her long red painted finger nails sank into my arm and little spots of blood appeared. I realised immediately that she was not in a friendly state of mind and I determined that if I did not get her she would certainly get me. Fortunately, in my earlier days, I had learned some unarmed combat and I was able to throw her over my shoulder to the ground. Seizing her wrist I also placed my foot on her neck and pinned her to the ground. The language that came from her mouth was the most colourful I had heard before or since. It consisted mainly of threats of what she would do to me as soon as she got loose. So obviously I made sure that she did not escape until eventually the drugs were wearing off, dawn was breaking and we were both exhausted. We reached a truce. That weekend she came to church for the first time. Arriving just after the service had commenced she listened to the singing from the car park, refusing to enter because she “felt too unclean.” The following week she did begin to attend but unfortunately, she did not get “converted”. However, we did form a friendship and for years afterwards she would phone me at the oddest hours from the strangest places, requesting me to please pray (over the phone) for some unfortunate client who was begging to be released from her clutches. She was inevitably telling him about God but the

only salvation that most clients wanted was from the presence of Big Jean.

Initially, several members complained to me about the poor types of people who were frequenting the church and how bad they would be for the church's reputation! Fortunately these folk soon came to understand that these were the very kind of people that Christ had come to save, and soon they began to warmly welcome and assist the new comers. One Sunday evening we had an unforgettable service during which the Holy Spirit came down powerfully in conviction on a large group of these women. Following an altar call we took them into the church hall and began to minister to them in prayer for deliverance. Soon the demons began to leave the girls with loud screams. So loud was the commotion that several neighbours living a couple of streets away rang the Police. They said, "We don't know what is happening in the church but it sounds like some people are being murdered. Please send someone immediately." Within minutes several patrol cars arrived with lights flashing and sirens wailing but on investigation the policemen discovered some of the most notorious prostitutes and addicts in Adelaide singing hymns and loudly praising God.

In addition to the deliverances experienced by the young women that night other bondages were evidently broken too. That weekend proved to be a breakthrough in the realm of the Spirit and soon the crowd began to grow as many people came to Christ for salvation, healing and deliverance. Several patients from a local mental hospital also began to attend and many were subsequently discharged from hospital after receiving healing from God. So the expanded

congregation included persons from many varied walks of life. As the church members began to reach out to the newcomers in love and compassion wonderful changes were wrought in many members. As the mixed multitude learned how to love and appreciate each other a new spirit entered the congregation. Religious attitudes were broken down and a fresh spirit of grace filled every life. This paved the way for the revival that God began to send across the State and in our church.

Soon the crowds had increased, filling the church building and forcing us to hire a nearby hall that accommodated considerably more people. Those were exciting days! However, the people who swelled the crowds were largely a motley crew. Certainly not the image of evangelical, conservative Christianity! Many of the former prostitutes wore tiny mini skirts and glamorous wigs. They tottered around on absurdly high heels and their presence tended to change the tone of the congregation somewhat. Initially this may have disturbed several of the orthodox church members, but none more than the petite and genteel spinster lady I mentioned earlier. She became particularly upset about the type of people who were now frequenting the church.

She made an appointment to see me. We met in my office at the church. She was over-reacting and quite emotional about her intended mission. She was also most apologetic. “I don’t want to be a complainer Pastor” she assured me, “But I do feel I must voice my concern about the type of persons that are now attending our church. Their presence and demeanour will give our church a very bad image and reputation” she continued. For some ten minutes she poured

out her concerns. She assured me that we would never get a better type of person attending while we continued to encourage such wayward types to attend.

I listened in silence throughout her complaint. Then I fixed my eyes on her, looking right into her intent face and said, “Its all YOUR fault my dear! You are the main one who has been consistently asking God to send new people into the church and now He is answering your prayers. Did you expect Him to send in ready made Christians? Surely you realise that Jesus came not for those who were already righteous, but to bring sinners to repentance.” My reply initially stunned her. She became speechless and non-plussed. She quietly stared at me for some moments and then broke into laughter. “Oh Pastor,” she cried, “how foolish I have been. Of course I know that Jesus came to save the lost and the sinners of this world but I had just never realised how different they are from we Christians. Please forgive me and ask the Lord to forgive me too. I want to reach out to these dear people with Christ’s love and welcome them into His family, just as they are.” To her eternal credit, (she is now with Christ) she became an enthusiastic and tireless friend to many of those former prostitutes. She prayed with them, loved them, took them home for meals and generally did her very best to encourage and establish them in Christ. In my memory, I can still see her diminutive figure, so impeccably dressed, walking arm in arm with some gaudily dressed, exotic and much younger woman.

During this period the media became extremely fascinated with what was happening in our church. The Truth newspaper, a publication not always known for the truth,

became particularly interested. For many months they had reporters and photographers at every Service. Sometimes their persistence in wanting to interview and photograph some of the “interesting” people attending the church became an embarrassing nuisance. Some of the girls, who had been prostitutes and drug addicts became tired of being hounded by the media after the meetings. So we used to bring these girls through a back exit to our own living quarters. There we would often put male overcoats on them, remove their wigs and put men’s hats on them as a disguise and they would make their exit from the church premises under cover of darkness and their various disguises.

Our congregation became greatly enlarged through the attendance of these numerous under world characters, plus numbers of patients from the local Mental Hospital, many of whom were healed and subsequently discharged. We needed great patience and many months to disciple these previously dysfunctional people, but it proved to be exceptionally rewarding. It was thrilling to see them change, not only in outward appearance but more importantly in their hearts, attitudes and behaviour patterns. I feel sure that it was the change in member’s hearts in receiving, loving and caring for these people that paved the way for the exciting growth and consolidation of the church that followed.

Quite often, when I had a visiting preacher on the platform, I would tell him of the numerous previously dysfunctional people in the congregation and ask if they could recognise any of them. They rarely managed to do so. So wonderfully had God transformed lives and blended together our congregation.

A Vision Of Coming Revival

Following a brief tour of South Australia in 1964, together with Rev C.C. Grant an American evangelist, we returned to Adelaide shocked to discover how feeble and meagre the true Christian witness was throughout our State. What churches there were had small, elderly congregations, mostly with a form of Christian religion, but basically denying the true power of God.

I immediately called a special weeks of prayer in our church for renewal and revival. Every night the small church was filled with people seeking God and earnestly pleading for a fresh move of God's Spirit in the land. One Wednesday night the power of the Spirit was with us in a remarkable way and halfway through the evening God gave me a dramatic vision. The vision lasted for some forty five minutes during which time I described each detail to the congregation. The vision was powerful and remarkable. As I stood at the front of the church facing the back of the building it seemed that someone had suddenly switched on a huge projector and powerful stereo sound. But the dramatic pictures I saw were also three dimensional. During the first part, which was a desert scene, I could actually feel the searing heat. At other times I felt that I was being literally transported supernaturally like Phillip the evangelist and dropped into situations hundreds of miles away.

Basically, it was a vision of coming renewal and revival. It initially concerned the State of South Australia and later the whole nation. In the vision I saw an outpouring of the Spirit that would affect people and churches of all denominations. Much to my surprise, this included numbers of Catholic

Priests and Nuns. In the vision I saw them powerfully filled with the Spirit, speaking in tongues and prophesying. At this time there was no indication of any Charismatic revival in Australia and the Pentecostal churches were greatly despised and spoken against. Pentecostal churches were the Cinderella of the Australian church scene, so we were thrilled with what we saw in the vision that clearly intimated that numerous main line churches would soon embrace the Holy Spirit in a new dimension.

As I waited upon the Lord on this particular night, suddenly the Spirit of God came upon me in a way that really humbled me before the Lord. I fell to the floor and began to sob from the very depths of my heart. Soon my whole being, every part of my body, began to be torn with deep sobbing and weeping. As I cried before the Lord I seemed to fall lower and lower and lower before Him. As I fell low before the Lord, before the sense of His presence and His glory, I said to Him, "I feel like a worm Lord and not a man." God had brought me very low before Himself.

He then seemed to speak to my heart and say "When a man truly becomes a worm I will thresh a mountain." This produced a feeling of encouragement within me, a spirit of rejoicing and victory and I began to praise the Lord. Suddenly it was as though a projector had been turned on and I saw a vision while I was kneeling at the front of the church. There were people praying in the church and I was kneeling facing the rear of the building. I looked at this vision for a few moments and then the Spirit of God began to move upon me and I began to describe the things that I saw. This description became like the spirit of prophecy. It

came forth in a very powerful manner and God began to speak about a Revival. God was telling us what would take place and how the Revival would come. We were told what some of the results of this Revival would be. I remember that the first thing that I saw was tremendous sunlight. I was almost blinded by the intensity of the light. Then I began to discern through the bright sunlight a landscape, an area of countryside. The whole of the landscape was so dry, so parched and so barren. There were cracks all over the landscape, because of the tremendous burning heat of the sun.

I saw how dry and how barren it all was. There was hardly a blade of grass anywhere and the few blades that were there were brown, parched and withered through the tremendous heat. It was a scene of severe drought and so quiet that it seemed like a graveyard. It was so dry that it seemed to dry up my throat. I seemed to be in the midst of that brilliant scene and it made me literally parched and de-hydrated. Suddenly from out of nowhere, and yet from everywhere a tremendous wind began to blow. The Lord spoke through me and said “the Lord shall begin to move through the land like a wind. Like a whirlwind He shall move throughout the land.” As I spoke I felt the wind and then felt it change into a whirlwind. The wind seemed to come from everywhere and it seemed to go everywhere. Immediately there was tremendous confusion. I wondered what was happening. I saw little communities everywhere in the countryside and the people were huddled together and they were in confusion and consternation. They were filled with wonder and with fear. They were full of trepidation because of this unusual wind and the whirlwind which was blowing. Then the scene

shifted to towns and cities. It seemed to move swiftly across the land.

As I moved through country towns and cities the wind was moving before me, like a tremendous whirlwind from the presence of the Lord as God was going through the land. It seemed as though He was creating a vacuum wherever He went. It was stirring up the dust everywhere. As I looked at some of the towns, the streets were empty and they seemed to be spiritually dead. The great wind began to blow against some of the buildings that looked so solid and secure. Immediately the buildings came tumbling down with a deafening crash. The wind took hold of them and blew them down as though they were cardboard.

The Spirit of God said, “These buildings represent the pride of men. These buildings are the security of men. They are the emblems of man’s prosperity and represent his material security. They represent his defences and the protection that he builds for himself with his natural resources. Behold, this is how the Spirit of the Lord can treat all the defences and the security of man. In a moment He can bring them all to nothing.” It seemed like the whole town collapsed and became like dust. There were bricks everywhere and it was a scene of desolation, very much like some of the cities that I saw in Europe after the great bombing raids of World War II.

Town Councils were getting together to try to form some policy and to determine what to do in the face of this strange phenomena which confronted them. As I looked it seemed that this was the judgement of God. God was moving through the land and causing great fear and consternation.

Then the Spirit said, “This wind that is causing great fear and consternation, that is bringing to nought the things of man, is also carrying the seed of the Word of God. This great wind is wafting the seed and scattering it all over this dry land.” At this stage the land was still dry, parched and barren. Then I saw that there was seed in the wind and the whirlwind was picking up the seed and scattering it for miles around. It was reaching the most unlikely places. It was falling in outlandish country areas. It was falling in little country communities that were cut off from the cities and from the major part of the population. Farm houses that were miles from anywhere were receiving the seed which was falling. It lay there on the dry, barren, parched ground. There was seed lying upon the ground everywhere. It was really amazing how this seed was spread in this remarkable manner. At one stage I had the impression that I was suddenly confronted with a congregation of people who were many miles from where I had originally been.

Even now I am not sure how God spread the seed like that. I had the impression that it was done in part by literature, radio and television, but beyond all this there was something new that God was doing. I had the impression that God was working supernaturally in a way that He had not worked before as far as our own experience of spiritual things is concerned. I had a strong impression that God was using preachers in a mightier way than we had ever seen.

Suddenly, in the vision, the heavens opened. In a moment of time there was a tremendous deluge and rain began to just pour down in great torrents. Within a very short while the whole landscape was converted from the dry, parched barren

ground into floods and pools and rivers. The whole place was awash with this amazing downpour which had come from the presence of the Lord. The impression that I gained was that there had never been a deluge in Australia like this before. It was a greater outpouring than had ever been known in this land. It came suddenly without any apparent warning. It came swiftly from heaven. It was not of a long duration but whilst it was raining it came with tremendous intensity so that one could hardly see through the rain. It seemed that the whole sky was full of water and then the ground was turned into pools and rivers as the water poured all over the earth. Then again, suddenly, just in a moment of time the whole landscape was completely changed and everywhere was green and lush.

There were also trees, full grown trees, suddenly appearing just in a moment. They sprang up suddenly and in the distance there were fields that were ready to be harvested. The trees were in the foreground and they arrested my attention. I remember wondering what kind of trees they were. I am not a country man nor well versed in types of trees etc. Before I received any answer or revelation the scene had passed away. I was looking on the trees. The sunlight was shining on them again. The harvest was in the background and then suddenly the Lord Jesus appeared. He appeared in the background of the Vision and as He appeared with His arms outstretched, and in shining white, it seemed that the whole of the scene before me just collapsed and dissolved into Him and everything was gone and lost in Him. Only Christ remained.

A Scriptural Confirmation

As soon as I had finished prophesying, as I knelt at the front of the church, I reached for my Bible. Whenever I receive any impression or a vision, I always seek God immediately for scriptural confirmation. This is something that we need to observe at all times. I am sure that there will be strange manifestations and there will be a need for people to KNOW the Word of God. Not the letter only but the SPIRIT of the Word. Our defence in these days that lie before us, to keep us from the confusion that will fill the world, will be the Word of God. My Bible was closed on the seat in front of me. I lifted my heart to God and said, “Lord, please give me some scriptural confirmation of this. Show me in your Word and confirm through your Word that this is a visitation of you to my heart. Let me know that this is something more than imagination, show me please if this IS your message to me.”

As I said that, I picked up the Bible and opened it at random, it opened at the 41st chapter of Isaiah. My eyes fell immediately upon the 14th verse and I read: “Fear not THOU WORM.” As soon as I read that, something jumped within me for I remembered that before the vision began to unfold I had felt like a worm and had said to God. “I am a worm, and not a man.” God had responded, “When you are like a worm, I will thresh a mountain.”

I began then to read on. *“Fear not thou worm Jacob and ye men of Israel, I will help thee saith the Lord and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel. Behold I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument; thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as*

chaff. Thou shalt fan them and THE WIND shall carry them away, and the WHIRLWIND shall scatter them; and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel. When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord, will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine and the box tree together. That they may see, and know, and consider and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.”

You can imagine how I felt as I read those words because the sequence of the vision was unfolded in these verses. I must have read these verses before many times but I had no vivid remembrance of them. Certainly I had no memory of any details. Yet as I read it the whole thing unfolded as a scriptural confirmation of the vision. First of all, God spoke about the worm. Then He spoke about taking the worm and threshing a mountain. Then He said the wind shall carry them and the whirlwind, just in the same sequence as the Holy Spirit had said. The scripture then goes on to speak about the dryness and the barrenness, when the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue fails them for thirst. This is a picture of dryness and barrenness. God said, “I will open rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of the valleys.”

In the last part of Verse 18, God said, “I will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water.” This was remarkable because these were just the words that the Spirit had used. In the next verse He speaks about the trees. He mentions various trees and how He has planted them there. Finally He says that He has planted these trees that they may see, and know, and consider and understand together that the hand of the Lord had done this thing and the Holy One of Israel had created it.

I saw whole communities of people listening to the Word of God. I became aware of certain features that were taking place in the meetings. The first thing I noticed was that the atmosphere was charged with the power of God in a way that I had never known it in all my life. The people’s faces were just alight and aglow with the glory of God. The whole atmosphere was uninhibited. It was warm and spontaneous. It was not bound by tradition. It was unlike our traditional services, it was much freer, much more informal. The people were free before God and with one another, in a sweet, pure and uninhibited manner. I had a strong impression that no man nor personality was greatly enlarged by this move of God. God was only using people who would stay humble before Him and consequently nobody received any honour or glory in this visitation. God was using some unlikely people too. I saw in the vision people being used by the Spirit of God. They were aglow with the Spirit. They unconsciously diffused the Spirit of God. A power flowed from them and filled the whole place with the holy and healing presence of God. I noticed amongst other things that women and children were being used by God. They were seeing visions and prophesying and the

prophecies came forth with great power and anointing. It was so different from what we are normally accustomed to in our services. It was dynamic, just charged with the power of God. People hung upon every word. It was directive prophecy about things vitally related to the people at that time. It was God speaking to the people face to face.

I had the impression too that there were many unusual things taking place. Signs and wonders, that truly made people wonder! I had the feeling that many people stood askance and aloof from this move of God. Many people would not associate with it, because they did not understand some of the strange things that were happening. I did not feel that these things were objectionable at all, but they were different and unusual and many did not understand them. Whilst many were entering and receiving and experiencing tremendous blessings, others had drawn aside and would not become involved in this move of the Spirit. It seemed as though many congregations were being divided by the issues involved in this move of the Spirit of God. Some of the people were moving towards God to receive all that He had for them, but others were withdrawing and refusing to become involved and they were missing out on the visitation of God. There were even some Pentecostal people who were not willing to be involved in this move of the Spirit of God. There were things taking place which were not objectionable, but they were not in accord with the traditions and the background and understanding of these people and they were not willing to enlarge their capacity to believe in or accept these things. They were, therefore, being left out of this visitation of God. They refused to believe some of the things that were happening.

Some of the visions people were seeing were strange and unusual and needed a Word of Knowledge in order to interpret them. Some people, instead of seeking God for a Word of Knowledge and Wisdom, were refusing to have anything to do with it. Their intellect would not accept these things and their spiritual perception was immature. I remember feeling in my spirit “Lord, help me, that I will not miss the visitation of your blessed Spirit. Help me so that no matter how You may move I may discern the moving of Your Spirit and stay in fellowship and harmony with You.”

It is quite possible that many who read this message will miss the coming move of God’s Spirit because they will refuse to associate with it. It will not be within the bounds and confines of their preconceived ideas and concepts. It will not fit in with their traditional ideas about things spiritual. They are proud of their spirituality but their very pride will keep them from receiving these things from God.

I feel confident that this thing is of God and that it will come to pass and that nothing can stop it. My confidence is not just because God allowed me to see this Vision but because His Word so wonderfully confirmed the whole thing! God showed me that His people have to humble themselves before the Lord. They have to walk very humbly and very reverently before God. I saw that the fullness of the Spirit did not only bring fullness of joy but it also brought discipline into the midst. Although these people were uninhibited and spontaneous in their worship and devotion, they were disciplined as well. They had a holy fear and a reverence for God. The Spirit seemed to signify that the

Lord's people have to become as worms before Him. They must be humble before the presence of the Lord.

The message of the Spirit is "that no man shall glory in my sight, that the people shall know that I, the Lord, have performed this work." In order to have the moving of God's Spirit, we will have to remain very humble and reverent before God and be conscious of the discipline of the Holy Spirit.

The power of the Spirit was moving in a similar manner to the time when Ananias and Sapphira were discovered and judged by the Spirit and were slain of the Lord. These people in the vision were truly rejoicing in the Lord exceedingly but they were also filled with fear lest they should offend the Holy One in the midst of them. God said that He would bring a new threshing instrument to thresh the mountain. I believe that we are beginning to see something of this new threshing instrument in these days.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit amongst some of our denominational friends is part of the new threshing instrument. God is filling many with the Holy Ghost and power. Ministers and people in the various denominations who until recently would have nothing whatsoever to do with the baptism in the Holy Spirit are now being filled with the power of God. Hundreds are speaking with new tongues, laying hands upon the sick and casting out devils in the name of Jesus. Signs and wonders are bursting forth in the most unlikely places.

The Holy Spirit witnessed to something in my heart. For a long time I had been burdened about many of our country towns which had not been reached with the Full Gospel message and I wondered how we could ever reach them all. The time seemed too short for us to get into these towns and establish churches. How would we ever find enough workers to go in and take care of all these churches? The Spirit of God showed me there are Methodists, Anglicans, Baptist churches and people in these towns. These people are being filled with the Spirit of God, and they would proclaim the gospel message of salvation and healing and deliverance by the power of God. It was not the task of the Pentecostal groups alone. What does it matter what denomination preaches the message as long as the message is proclaimed in these towns? These people are part of the new threshing instrument which God is preparing today.

How I praise God because I can see that there is healing for the sick Bride of Christ. There is a deliverance coming from carnality and fleshliness, from the desires and programmes of men. There is a visitation of God coming by the power of His Holy Spirit that will purge the Bride of Christ. It will cleanse and beautify her. It will array her in lovely garments that she might be ready for the coming of the Lord. I feel that the Church today, at this present moment, is not fit to meet the Lord in the air. Presently there is a sickness in the Body of Christ, spiritual sickness. I do not believe that when Jesus comes He will come for a Church that is bowed down, defeated, humiliated and covered in shame. Twice in the prophecy of Joel, God says, "My people shall not be ashamed." I believe that when the Church rises to meet the Lord Jesus as He comes for His Bride that she will rise in

glory and strength, adorned with beautiful garments shining forth in excellence of radiance. She will be shining forth in purity and whiteness and glory as she rises to meet the Lord Jesus in the air to be forever with Him.

The Sequence Of The Vision

The vision actually came to me was in three distinct parts. A clearer understanding of the sequence of the vision will undoubtedly afford greater insight into its significance.

1: In the first phase I found myself outdoors in the dry Australian Bush. There were many clear indications of a severe drought. Everything was parched and covered in dust. I saw several skeletons of animals that had obviously died from lack of food and water. Their bones lay bleached in the sun. As I surveyed the scene I could actually feel the blazing heat and my throat felt parched from the dry atmosphere. Everywhere there were indications of a previous prosperity that had been lost to the drought. Animal carcasses littered the paddocks. Broken fences and deserted farm houses indicated a human exodus from the area, driven from a place of broken dreams by a drought that had sucked the life out of everything, including their livelihood.

2: I was still gazing at this scene of desolation when I was suddenly translated to phase two, on the outskirts of a small country town. I was deposited into a public hall filled with some 200 to 300 people. For what seemed to be several hours I was to observe a meeting the like of which I had never previously witnessed. This phase was the lengthiest of the three and the focal point of the vision.

3: In the third phase, I was outdoors once again and in yet a third location. This time the sky was dark and foreboding, filled with black clouds and signs of an imminent impending storm. I was gazing at an Australian city that was blown apart as I watched. Let me go through the vision again in its proper sequence.

1: The Wilderness Transformed

Initially I was kneeling in prayer at the front of the church, facing the congregation, when the vision began. As I continued in prayer I suddenly became acutely aware of the awesome presence of God. My initial reaction was to fall on my face in a position of prostration and humility. The more keenly I sensed God's presence, the more I felt my own unworthiness to be in that presence. I began to tell Him, "Lord I am a worm and not worthy to experience your presence in this manner." But His response was one of encouragement and I sensed Him saying, "When a man truly feels like a worm in My presence I will thresh a mountain."

This encouraged me greatly and I raised myself up and began to praise God with great enthusiasm. I was kneeling, with my hands raised high and my head elevated. As I opened my eyes I was suddenly in the Spirit and a dramatic scene began to unfold around me.

I was back in the Australian outback again. The sun was shining with great heat and intensity. Everything around me was dry, parched and barren. It was obviously a time of great drought. The ground was brown and parched. Large cracks had broken the earth under the intense heat and dryness of the drought conditions. There was scarcely a

blade of grass anywhere and the landscape was void of any other signs of vegetation. What vegetation there was appeared dry and withered. It was a scene of desolation. I gazed at this scene for some time and felt that my spiritual being was as dry as the landscape.

Suddenly a breeze began to blow and it quickly became a powerful wind. I realised that this wind was carrying seeds and scattering them everywhere until they littered the brown earth. Then the rain began to fall. Initially it came in huge spots as it often does before a tropical downpour. My nostrils were filled with the pungent smell that occurs when rain begins to hit the dry dust. Soon the drops became a shower and this continued for a considerable time until the ground had become moistened and softened. Once this happened the rain increased in tempo until the ground everywhere was obviously soaked and softened. The seeds that the wind had scattered lay in pools of water. Even though it had been raining, the sun was still shining, and the combination of the strong sunshine and the rain caused a dramatic change.

Immediately the landscape was transformed like the wilderness that blossomed in Isaiah. 35.

1 *The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.*

2 *It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the*

glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God. Isaiah 35:1-2 (KJV)

Instantaneously the scene was transformed. Luxurious grass appeared everywhere. Shrubs, bushes and trees were instantly evident. The land, which moments before had appeared so dry and barren, was now clothed with the glorious garments of nature. The fields on either side were suddenly bursting with ripe harvests. The sun whose relentless rays had parched the ground was now shining with a radiance that cloaked everything with a natural glory. I experienced a tremendous sense of elation. It was the kind of excitement that occurs when a long and painful drought is finally broken. I still remember the glorious feeling of the rain falling on my parched being. I stood with my mouth open and the rain filled my mouth and saturated my whole being. Watching the glorious transformation of the landscape was also a most rewarding and exciting experience.

2: A Meeting With A Difference

As I stood gazing at the various elements of the vision, suddenly I was translated to another place. The impression I gained was that I had been caught away by the Spirit. I sensed that I was now miles from where the vision had begun. I found myself in a country hall, much like a School of Arts, or a community hall that was part of every country town in those days. When I “arrived” a meeting was already in full swing. I was in a corner at the front of the hall, behind a piano and a small music group. My arrival was unnoticed and I appeared to be invisible for no one was aware of my presence as I stood quietly observing the meeting.

The hall was filled to its capacity and there was a great air of excitement and anticipation in the air which was alive and vibrant with the presence of the Spirit. The congregation consisted of people of all ages, young children, teens, young adults, middle aged and elderly, all were entering in and enjoying a unity and harmony that encompassed them all. Everyone appeared to be dressed quite casually and not in the typical “Sunday, go to church garb”. The atmosphere was clearly one of informality and friendliness. There were no evidences of the religious traditions that were so much a mark of church gatherings. Nothing was stilted and stiff. The feeling was one of relaxed, joyful, excitement. The obvious features were those of informality, spontaneity and warmth. There was nothing cold, clinical or dead. Everything was alive and vibrant.

The Holy Spirit Was In Control

Someone was obviously “in charge” of the meeting but their leadership was not obtrusive and obvious. It was exercised with a gentle sensitivity to the Holy Spirit that kept the people’s attention on God rather than on the leader. I realised that there was a team of leaders or elders but everyone was aware that the Holy Spirit was actually in control of the gathering and what was taking place. There was also a small group of musicians and several singers lending support to the leader, but they too were not projecting themselves or endeavouring to dominate the scene in any way.

Worship With Purpose And Direction

The worship ranged from joyful exuberance to quiet adoration and the whole congregation flowed as one, as though gliding the thermals of the Spirit’s presence. There

was a remarkable sense of unity and harmony and the people were as one body. Although there appeared to be little pre-planned structure to the service, everything flowed beautifully. It was not simply a matter of singing choruses or hymns, one after another. There was a real sense of direction about the worship, an awareness that it was really going somewhere. A realisation that the congregation had been gently, yet firmly led into the felt presence of God.

Some of the songs had a very lively tempo, extremely joyful and exuberant. Everyone, from the oldest present to the young children, entered into the worship with great enthusiasm and joyful abandon. Numbers of people had entered into the aisles to add physical expression to their vocal ones. A number were dancing joyfully, singly or in small groups. Others stood as though transfixed, hands raised high, faces aglow. Still others were clapping and swaying to the rhythm of the music. Everyone seemed remarkably free of religious inhibition. They were liberated “to be themselves in Jesus.”

Several times the singing and activities obviously moved from joyful celebration to deeper dimensions of worship. On several occasions a number of people prostrated themselves on the floor. Others knelt on all fours with their faces to the ground. There were also numerous periods of profound silence as the whole congregation expressed deep reverence.

People Of All Denominations

I understood that it was an inter-denominational gathering and I was thrilled to realise that most denominations in that

area were represented there. The people were Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists and some Pentecostals. The thing that really surprised and thrilled me was the sight of a Catholic priest and several nuns who were lost in worship, their hands raised high, singing in languages of the Spirit. I noticed that their hands were raised in a slightly different manner to most of the other worshippers. I mention this because it was interesting in later months, when the renewal began, to see that they did have a slightly different way of raising their hands.

Ministry Of God's Word

At one point a teaching was given. I say a teaching because it was without the formality of a “sermon”, or a traditional type of bible study. The talk was delivered in a very informal natural manner, the speaker being very relaxed and very much at ease. The teaching was so clear that even the children understood it, hanging on every word. Yet it was so profound in its spiritual maturity that even the most mature saints received food for their soul. The message came very much from the heart, rather than the head, and was received into the hearts of the listeners. It had good biblical content but was presented very naturally, in a down to earth manner and with a good deal of humour. The congregation received the word with obvious gladness. The theme was very basic and germane to the practicalities of living out a vibrant Christian life and witness amongst the unconverted.

Spiritual Renewal And Refreshing

It was quite clearly a “renewal” meeting and many were obviously being refreshed and renewed by the Spirit. There were many evidences of this as people responded in various

ways to the fresh impact of the Spirit upon them. There were many different responses to the Spirit and yet the atmosphere was one of harmony and unity. Everyone was so taken up with worshipping God that they were not distracted by the various ways in which others were responding to the Spirit. In the opposite corner to where I stood, a group of children, some young people and a few middle aged persons were joyfully dancing together. They danced with simple steps, obviously finding great delight in each other and in God as they also sang in wonderful harmony.

Although the meeting was one of spiritual renewal and basically intended for believers, the joyful activities had also drawn numerous unconverted persons too. They were clearly enjoying every moment of the gathering, eagerly observing the many evidences of joyful enthusiasm amongst the believers. Several of these pre-Christians indicated their keen desire to become one with the believers and various Christians were sitting or kneeling with them, praying and sharing their faith with them.

Spiritual Manifestations

There were numerous instances of spiritual manifestations but these were not exercised in a pedantic, religious manner. For example, several “prophecies” were given. Not in a stilted, religious way and in archaic English, but in a simple, natural style. Several persons, at various times, slipped out to the front of the hall, faced the congregation and quietly delivered some message that they felt God had given to them. In a similar manner, others gave a word of knowledge or of wisdom, all of which were given humbly, quietly and

naturally. Some of these revelations brought forth an enthusiastic response of joyful clapping and cheering. Others were received in reverent quietness.

Prayer For One Another

Several sick persons were ministered to in prayer, with the laying on of hands, but this was not done in some religious or ceremonial way either. It was accomplished with gracious informal dignity and many from the congregation were given opportunity to express their genuine compassion for those seeking prayers. Considerable time was spent ministering in prayer to those afflicted and seeking healing and release. Some of them slid quietly to the ground and remained there for some time, calming enjoying the presence and joy of God. This was certainly not a “quick fix” approach but one that took considerable time and patience to accomplish. The appointed workers gave themselves unstintingly to prayer. Likewise, those receiving prayer did not move quickly away but lingered there, drinking and soaking in the presence of God.

There Was Opposition Too

Although everyone in the meeting was obviously excited and involved, I had a clear impression that there were numerous other ministers and churches that would not accept the phenomena’s taking place. Some were even asserting that such things were a “deception from the enemy” and were steadfastly opposing any contact with them. Even some ministers and churches that claimed to be Pentecostal and Full Gospel were standing aloof from what was happening. Their problem was one of intellectual pride and religious tradition. They had the foolish notion that God

would never do anything that did not agree with their intellectual perceptions of what is right and proper. They were more concerned with upholding religious tradition than with opening up to a fresh move of the Spirit. But their opposition did not diminish or arrest the spread or growth of what God was doing.

Times Of Refreshing From The Lord

The impression I gained was that this was a fresh move of God's Spirit to bring refreshing and renewal to the believers. It was not revival in the classic sense of the kind that powerfully impacts the non-Christian community. It was clearly a time for the saints to be refreshed, made more pliable and freshly anointed by the Holy Spirit. But it was a prelude to such an impact. It was the gentle rain of refreshing that softens up the ground for sowing and to accelerate the germination of seeds.

The Fire Of God

The meetings were aglow with a heavenly fire. Everyone and every thing seemed to be bathed in an aura of light and warmth. The whole atmosphere was aglow with a radiant light. It filled the halls where the people gathered but it also radiated out from there into the wider community. The fire burned brightly in every Christian community and it spread from place to place like a bush fire, jumping from one community to another until hundreds of fires dotted the whole landscape of the nation.

3: A Deepening Drama

The third part of the vision was the shortest, yet the most dramatic. I did not share the details of this phase at the time

because I felt that the people were not able to receive such. I saw a town severely damaged by a powerful wind. It was very much like watching the city of Darwin being destroyed by Cyclone Tracy some years later. Large buildings that had seemed so strong and secure, were blown down as though they were merely cardboard. Within what seemed moments, the town was almost demolished. Many people were crying in the streets and there was great consternation and confusion.

I felt God say within me, “These buildings represent the achievements, possessions and material security of men. They labour for years to build them and rest their hope for the future in the things that they themselves have made. They are like the heathen who worship gods and idols that their own hands have created. The material things of this life have become objects of their worship and completely consume the time, interest and energy of many. They worship their possessions, their homes, cars and leisure activities. But one small breath from my mouth can bring them all crashing to the ground.”

It was obviously a time of great consternation and confusion. Many people lost their entire fortune over-night. There was rampant recession, unemployment and despair. Many families had to leave their homes and possessions which were re-possessed. It was clearly a time of grave consternation. Huge economic problems gave rise to many social problems. This was certainly not the “lucky country.” but a country whose luck had run out for whom the sweet cup of promise had become a bitter cup of loss. The previous hopes, ideals and ambitions of the nation had been

lost in a morass of economic reversals. The nation was in political and social turmoil. It seemed as though the rug had been pulled from under the feet of the people. Everyone was blaming someone else and people began to realise that there was no human solution to the dilemma in which they found themselves.

Large groups of men marched in procession to the company premises where once they had been employed. They were angrily protesting the closure of the companies. The sad fact was that it was their own unreasonably selfish ambitions and demands that had forced the closures and bankrupted the sources of their livelihood.

In one scene the police had turned out to deter the protesters. Many scuffles and fights broke out in the streets between policemen and workers. Other policemen were in sympathy with the workers and refused to challenge or restrain them. Strong feelings of hopeless despair gripped the hearts of many.

At the same time there were also people who were thriving amidst the challenges. Many of these were Christians whose lives had been refined and matured through the trials they had overcome through faith in God. Many non-Christians sought help and counsel from their Christian neighbours and associates, and many church congregations flourished as they forgot their religious rituals and began to minister with faith and authority to the real needs of people around them. It was clearly a time of harvest and ingathering but it was happening in a time of severe testing for the people of the land.

Following this brief scene, a vision of Christ appeared at the back of the church. He was so invested with an aura of glory that it was difficult to see Him clearly but He was obviously clothed in great majesty. He appeared in shining white, with His arms outstretched. It then seemed that the whole vision collapsed and disappeared into Him and the experience was over.

At the end of the vision I had the distinct impression that the third stage of, which had been the briefest part of the vision, was the one in which the real harvest took place.

The first two phases actually dealt with the same phenomena, *the refreshing and reviving of the church*.

The first aspect had shown this in terms of the barren, drought ridden heart of Australia coming alive in response to showers of rain and the unusual heat of the sun. This was depicted outdoors in the vivid translation of a desert into a fertile garden. This clearly showed the stark and dramatic transformation that rain can bring to a natural setting. It illustrated the spiritual dryness and barrenness of Australia in terms that could be easily identified and recognised by Australians who know only too well the contrast between desert drought and flooding rains.

It is the difference between poverty and plenty, desolation and abundance. Whilst consecutive years of drought caused by the complete absence of any rain, spell disaster and bankruptcy, the appearance of rain can quickly transform a wilderness bringing hope and rejoicing with it.

The second phase of the vision really spoke of the same visitation but this time in terms of people rather than the flora and fauna. Nevertheless I was sure that this related to the same phenomena, the refreshing and reviving of the church. The trip we had recently taken throughout most of South Australia had clearly revealed that the church was in a time of spiritual drought. Everything was so dry and in consequence, so barren. But the vision held out the promise of an imminent visitation that would begin to change that. It was an impending time of renewal when the lives of many Christians would be re-vitalised and refreshed.

Although it seemed clear that a relatively small number of new believers had been added through this visitation, it was basically an “in-house” activity and not a classic revival that overflowed into and powerfully impacted the non Christian community. It was a visitation for the believers, to refresh, re-vitalise and renew them. It was a time for preparing them for things to come. One of the main objectives was to break down religious tradition and make the church more pliable and flexible.

The real harvest aspect came in the third phase, in the context of times of testing, confusion and extremity for the nation. It occurred at a time when the natural security of the people had been undermined and taken from them and they began to look outside themselves for fresh sources of encouragement and security. It was a period of national dilemma when materialism had been shown to be deficient to meet the real needs of man. I “saw” huge groups of workers, marching through the streets in protest marches demanding their jobs back. They paraded before city halls

and parliament house with large protest banners, shouting out slogans. The atmosphere was tense and fights often broke out in the streets. The job losses and economic desperation also caused a turning to spiritual sources. Whilst many of them turned to occultism and satanic sources, and false religious systems, an even larger number turned to the Lord. When I related the vision I did not mention anything about this. I felt a strong prompting not to do so. Even now I will not dwell on it except to repeat that the real revival and the true harvest will not occur in a time of ease and prosperity but one when the fortunes of the “lucky country” will be severely depleted and many Australians will experience the severest testing of their lives.

The Fulfilment Begins

In the first few weeks, immediately after I had received the vision, some exciting things began to happen in South Australia. The first of these incidents of which I was aware, concerned a meeting of the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship. The meeting was convened at a motel on the outskirts of Adelaide and I had been invited to be the speaker. The subject that had been assigned to me was “The Ministry of the Holy Spirit.”

I vividly remember arriving at the motel. As I was parking my car, I was surprised to see Howard Seidel racing towards me with a very excited look on his face. As well as excitement he was obviously experiencing some mild consternation too. He told me as I climbed out of my car “There are three *real* ministers here tonight. They even have their clerical collars on! What are we going to do?”

I was somewhat amused at dear Howard's reaction. He was at that time the beloved President of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship in South Australia, and was doing a wonderful job in promoting the Pentecostal experience through this organisation. However, until that night, the meetings were attended only by people of Pentecostal persuasion. Now, the kind of thing for which he and many others had been praying was evidently beginning to take place. It was so new and unusual to him that he was in a state of consternation as to what he should do. He soon calmed down after we had prayed together and went into the motel to greet the three Methodist preachers who had come along to the meeting that evening.

The more senior of them was Rev. Neil Usher who was at that time the minister of the Rosewater, Adelaide circuit. The Rev. Richard Jenner from Tanunda was also present, together with Rev. Ron Hoffman from Hawker. I greeted them all and spoke to them briefly before the meeting commenced. They explained that they had recently become hungry for more of the Holy Spirit than they had previously experienced.

They were all very cordial and extremely friendly and they enjoyed the meeting immensely. It began with a time of praise and worship and then I shared a teaching on the Holy Spirit and His current activities in the world. The three ministers were impressed with the talk and afterwards had prayer to receive the Holy Spirit in a new dimension. As it happened none of them appeared to receive the Spirit that night, or at least none of them showed the typical evidences that we perhaps anticipated. However, after the meeting we

enjoyed a further time of fellowship and they went on their way assuring me that they would like to keep in contact with me to hear more about the activities of the Holy Spirit.

The next thing I knew, I received an unexpected phone call from the Rev. Neil Usher. He was the senior minister in charge of several churches in Adelaide. The main church was at Rosewater. He phoned me one morning in a state of great excitement. He recounted an incident which had just happened to him in the church that day. He had set aside some special time to seek the Lord during a day-time period. He was alone in the church, kneeling at the front and seeking the Lord earnestly for an added and fresh dimension of the Holy Spirit. As he knelt before the Lord he suddenly became aware of smoke around him and for a moment was fearful that something was on fire in the building. He opened his eyes and looked around and saw that there was a cloud of smoke around him at the front of the building. It was not a normal type of smoke and for a few minutes he was unable to understand what was taking place. But then the words of the Lord came to his spirit, as recorded in the book of Isaiah. He remembered that on an occasion when Isaiah sought the Lord, the place where he prayed was "*filled with a cloud of smoke*". As he pondered upon this thought, he looked at the wall behind the pulpit and to his amazement saw an image of Christ there. He was overwhelmed with excitement and began to try to speak to the Lord. He discovered that he was talking in a strange language that he had neither heard nor spoken before. He continued to wait upon God for several hours, speaking in tongues and hearing heavenly music which seemed to fill the church.

The following Sunday morning was the monthly united meeting of the parish. Neil was still very excited about what happened and eagerly told the people what had transpired that week in their church. He recounted his testimony of how he had been visited by the Holy Spirit and had spoken in tongues. He told me, on the phone, that in his excitement he had become carried away somewhat, and had announced a Healing Service the following Sunday evening in that church.

This was evidently the real reason for his phoning me. He said “Pastor Gerald, you must come over and preach for me next week because I have never conducted a Healing Service and I really don’t know what to say or do. I told him that I was unable to go over to his church because I already had a commitment but I assured him that the way God was leading him at that time I felt very confident that if he would go forward in faith, the Lord would be with him and undertake for him.

I often laugh when I think about the report that he gave me on the Monday morning. He said that the church building was filled to capacity that evening. Some of the people had come in faith and expectation and many others had come out of curiosity. The meeting began in the traditional manner with the singing of several hymns and the reading of scripture. After this Neil preached the first message on healing that he had ever given. Following this he invited all who desired prayer to come to the front.

His dear wife was immensely excited about what was happening and full of faith for what God was doing. She had

driven some sixty miles to collect a lady who had for many years been confined to a wheel chair. This lady was placed at the front of the church and while Neil was preaching he was very conscious of the challenge that she and her wheel chair represented. Neil was not at all sure that he was happy with his wife for going to such lengths to bring this lady so far in order for him to pray for her!

Whilst he was still preaching, his mind was working out what he might do about this situation. He had more or less convinced himself that he would pray first for the people with whom nothing was conspicuously wrong. He would pray for people with headaches, migraine and all kinds of internal conditions which were not visible, leaving the wheelchair case to the end, just in case nothing happened.

However, when the time came to pray for the people, he left the platform to come down to the healing line and instead of leaving the wheelchair lady to the end he strode over to her first. He laid his hands upon her and began to fervently call upon the Lord to bring healing to this unfortunate woman. Having concluded his prayer, he quickly moved on from her and began to pray for other people in the line.

As he moved across the front of the church he suddenly became aware of a stirring that was happening around the wheel chair. He looked back to see the lady being helped out of the wheelchair and taking the first steps that she had taken in many years. He immediately went back to her, and together with his wife, stood on either side of the woman and helped her as she began to walk across the church. After a

few minutes her strength had returned to her in considerable measure and she was able to walk without their aid.

Neil was tremendously excited and told me “Pastor Gerald, something happened then that I had never experienced in all my previous ministry.” He said that as the congregation saw this woman healed and realised what had happened, they stood to their feet as ‘one man’ and began spontaneously to sing “To God be the glory, great things He has done.” It was certainly an exciting night for Rev. and Mrs. Usher, but it was the first of many such times as they launched into a new ministry, empowered by the Holy Spirit and bringing healing to the minds and bodies of many people.

The next news item that I received concerned the Rev. Dick Jenner. He also contacted me in a state of excitement to tell me that he had been baptised in the Holy Spirit and spoken in tongues and had experienced a tremendous release of new authority in his ministry. He began to pray for people and they also were baptised in the Holy Spirit.

Sometime later the annual conference of the Methodist Church was convened and Rev. Jenner was posted to another charge in the bush. It was felt by many that he was really being ‘put out into the wilderness’ in order to minimise the effect that he might have on other ministers and churches. He was posted to a parish in the country where six small congregations comprised the circuit. However, he told me that the spiritual life of the community was so low that even when the six congregations were combined, they could not fill one church building.

After Richard had been baptised in the Holy Spirit he began to minister with a new anointing and greater authority. Many wonderful things began to happen including about 100 people receiving Jesus as Saviour and Lord in the first twelve months. Others were baptised in the Holy Spirit and numerous others were healed of various conditions and complaints. It was the beginning of a new and wonderful phase of the ministry for Richard. The congregations began to grow until the buildings were almost too small to accommodate them. A new spirit of revival and enthusiasm gripped the people.

Soon afterwards I also received word from Rev. Ron Hoffman. He also had been baptised in the Holy Spirit and was enjoying a new realm of spiritual activity in his ministry. I went out to his parish in Hawker to hold some meetings with him in the church. We had a great time of fellowship together and saw many of his congregation blessed by the Holy Spirit.

It was whilst I was staying in his home that week that a visiting Anglican clergyman called at Ron's house. This brother had the spiritual oversight of a large area of the countryside and visited Hawker every two months. He always came for morning tea on the Wednesday that he was in their town. At the tea table Ron introduced me to this dear brother and encouraged me to tell him about the Holy Spirit. I did share with him something of what the Holy Spirit was doing at that time and then offered to pray for him that he too might receive the Holy Spirit. In those days I always used to close my eyes to pray, and I did so on this occasion. I closed my eyes and began my prayer, planning to

move over towards him and lay hands upon him for the blessing of the Spirit. However, when I opened my eyes to walk towards him I found to my astonishment that he had disappeared. He was nowhere to be found.

I never met him again until several years later when I was visiting the Anglican Cathedral in Singapore. Whilst I was talking to the Bishop, a tall Australian in clerical garb walked up to us and asked me if I remembered him. I had to admit that I could not recall who he was but then he recounted the story of how I had wanted to pray for an Anglican priest in Hawker and how the priest had quietly slipped out of the house to avoid being prayed for. A big grin came over his face and he said “I am that Anglican priest. Eventually I came all the way to Singapore where God was waiting here for me and baptised me in the Holy Spirit.” Now he was a Spirit-filled priest assisting at the Cathedral.

Our old friends the A.S. Worley’s were conducting a crusade at the C.R.C. church in Elizabeth, Adelaide. What was to be a one week crusade was extended at twelve weeks as more than 1,000 denominational people, mainly Methodists, were wonderfully baptised in the Holy Spirit. These were among hundreds more in every part of Adelaide and South Australia who were experiencing a new charismatic dimension. Many of these people began to attend our church in Klemzig. However, as I prayed about what was happening I sensed the Lord instruct me to minister to them but not to encourage them to leave their own congregations. I would tell them from the pulpit, “We are delighted to see you here and trust that God will bless and enrich your life. However, if you are

a member of some other church in town, please do not attend here when your own church has a service.” The result of this was that the people took the Holy Spirit back to their own churches and in many cases numerous others in their congregations began to receive the Spirit. Also, the pastors of those churches were impressed with our integrity and began to come to see me. Every Monday morning I would conduct a meeting for ministers in which I would teach on the Holy Spirit and other charismatic subjects. We had many tremendous times of enrichment and many churches were revived and enlarged. In some cases real revival broke out among them.

Revival In Klemzig

Meanwhile, our small church in Klemzig began to experience a revival too. Just prior to our going there, Pastor John and Beryl Job had built a fine church building on the Main North East Road at Klemzig. They had actually erected the neat building on TWO house blocks which in those days represented a huge step of faith! Most Pentecostal churches in those days were so small that one ordinary house block was usually considered adequate to contain a church and certainly required as much of the church funds as they could afford to spend. The Job’s had done a fine job for several years and the congregation in their smart new building was in good heart. Membership in those days stood at about 70, but there were more than this in actual attendance. The building had a unique and imaginative design that incorporated a small sanctuary and a “fellowship hall” that could be used for an overflow from the main sanctuary. When the overflow was open, the church

would accommodate somewhat more than 350 people. We soon had to open the overflow room every Sunday.

Visions And Revelations

During this same period I had numerous visions and revelations from the Holy Spirit, several of which occurred in the church. One of the most remarkable concerned Johnny O' Keefe probably the best known entertainer in Australia at that time. Nicknamed "The Wild One" Johnny was a rock and roll singer who symbolised for young Aussies the wild life of drugs, alcohol, sex and wild parties. He was often called "Australia's Elvis Presley."

One Wednesday evening in the regular weekly prayer meeting we were receiving requests for prayer from various people. One lady said, "Pastor, can we please pray for Johnny O'Keefe. He is in Adelaide, performing at a night club and I feel it would be opportune to pray for him." I actually knew little about him except what I had read in the media but willingly agreed that we should pray for him. As I began to lead in prayer I was suddenly part of a three dimensional vision once again. This time I was in fact giving a performance in a night club. I was actually Johnny O'Keefe! The overwhelming feeling I had was of tremendous despair. Several hundred people sat in the nightclub. They had all come for a good time and my task was to provide that feeling. I felt that I was desperately trying to bring happiness to hundreds of people, but there was no happiness inside me. I literally had nothing to give. I was going through a performance pretending to be the wild one, concerned about nothing. Yet inside I was deeply disturbed and distressed. As I participated in the vision,

perspiration ran from all my pores. My mind was in a state of near desperation. I felt ready to collapse at any moment. It was an utterly taxing and exhausting experience. In the next phase of the vision I was at the hotel with Johnny. He took me up stairs to his private room. I could see a vivid yellow wall. I sat on a silver coloured lounge in front of which was a large TV set. Johnny came and sat next to me and I began to share Christ with him after which I prayed the sinners prayer with him. After what seemed to be hours but was probably fifteen minutes, I virtually collapsed with exhaustion and had to be almost carried from the church into my office. Someone else concluded that meeting for me.

The following morning I woke with the deep conviction that I was to see and talk with Johnny that day. I immediately dressed and left for the hotel where he was performing and staying. Presenting myself at the front desk I asked to see him. I was informed that his schedule was completely full and he was not seeing anyone that day. He had even cancelled a scheduled media conference. I asked to see the manager of the hotel, with the same result. So I sat in the foyer and told the manager I would stay there until I got to speak with J.O.K

Eventually he got tired of me being there, contacted J.O.K and evidently explained the situation. The response was that Mr. O'Keefe would see me for coffee for fifteen minutes in the dining room. When we were both seated he asked me my business. I told him I was a Minister and he immediately thought that I wanted him to do a charity performance of some kind. Assuring him that this was definitely not the case, I quickly began to tell him about my experience the

previous evening. I told him of the vision and how I had felt as I tried to perform for the audience. As I talked his face became serious and white. He said, “Reverend you are describing my feelings more accurately than I have ever been able to. How much do you know about me?”

I explained that until the previous evening I had scarcely known anything personal about him. I had read about his career. I had seen him occasionally on TV and I had once read that he had sustained a bad car crash some years earlier in Wyong, N.S.W. That was basically the full extent of my prior knowledge. However, Johnny told me that he had received a great deal of psychiatric care. I have often been asked to describe my feelings and emotions to the doctor he said, but I have never been able describe them as accurately as you have described them. We finished our coffee and Johnny said, “Can you spare some time to come to my room please and talk with me?” Obviously I agreed to do so. This was why I had come. He led me upstairs, opened the door of his suite and immediately I saw the vivid yellow walls I had seen the previous night. I walked over to the silver coloured lounge suite and sat down. He quickly sat next to me as he had in the vision and then he began to pour out his heart.

He spoke of his Catholic boyhood in Sydney. His parents were staunch Catholics and he was raised in that tradition. He had an early fear of purgatory and hell which evidently stayed with him all his life. Even when he developed the reputation as the Wild One, it was still sub consciously with him, brooding beneath the surface.

Then he began to tell me about his accident in Wyong some years before. He was racing back to Sydney in a fast car. Driving through Wyong the car went out of control and left the road. Johnny was fearfully injured. In fact those early on the scene thought that he was dead. However, he was rushed to hospital where he later regained consciousness and subsequently underwent several serious operations. Eventually, though permanently scarred, he regained a measure of health and was able to start performing once again. Unfortunately, the scars in his mind had not healed like those on his face. In his mind, he believed that he had actually died in Wyong. He further believed that he had gone to purgatory and was now desperately trying to pay for his sins. This constant mental struggle and his consistent failure to atone for his sins plunged him into severe mental disorders that surfaced spasmodically. In London, for example, he plunged into deep despair and had to be hospitalised gaining unfair media coverage that clearly inferred that his wild life style had put him there.

As he retold his nightmares to me, the tears poured down his face and his whole body trembled violently almost to the point of convulsion. I quickly laid my hands on him and prayed and soon the trembling stopped and he was able to talk coherently again. We sat side by side on the lounge, the huge TV set in front of us. I told him, “Johnny, I want to tell you about Jesus and the price He has paid for all your sins. The price was tremendous and it has paid the debt for every sin we have ever committed.” I then asked him to listen carefully and imagine that he could see everything I described on the huge TV screen before us. I then began to vividly describe Christ’s crucifixion. The extreme agony He

experienced, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. I described the crown of thorns, the nail prints and the spear wounds. I read to him a portion of Isaiah 53, describing the intense sufferings of Messiah. Throughout this talk, Johnny looked towards the TV screen and saw the whole scene in his mind. He was sobbing the whole time. Finally, I told him, “That should have been you suffering Johnny, but Jesus took your place. He paid the whole price for your salvation and deliverance. There is no need for you to pay it too. All you have to do is believe that He died in your place, paid for your sins and bought your salvation. Believe that and receive Him as your personal Saviour.”

We then prayed together the sinner’s prayer and suddenly his sobbing subsided. He began to say, over and over, “Thank you Jesus, I do believe it! I gladly accept what you have done for me. Please enter my life, my heart and mind. Please heal my mind and release me from the tormenting thoughts. Give me your peace. I receive You now. Amen.” A wonderful peace came over his whole being. A big smile came over his face and he began saying, “It’s happening, I can feel it! The peace is filling my mind.”

I then explained to him more about salvation through faith in Christ and the Grace of God. I encouraged him to start talking to Jesus every day, just as simply as he had talked to me. Share with Him all your fears and thank Him for His peace. Realise that He will never cast you out and honour Him as your best and closest friend. I then borrowed his guitar and taught him a couple of choruses that we sang together over and over. It was late in the day. My wife wondered where I had gotten to. When I recounted the

experience of the day she laughed and said, “You are a character. Who else would borrow Johnny O’Keefe’s guitar and teach him how to sing a song!”

I talked with him numerous times after this, mostly on the phone. He frequently asked me to pray for him and we also talked about the Lord. I know he still had many struggles. Nevertheless, he had sincerely prayed the sinner’s prayer and the Bible says that “Whosoever calls on the Name of the Lord, shall be saved.” He did meet Jesus that day and learned to talk with Him and unburden his soul. Only the Lord knows those that are His.

A Tragedy Averted

Another remarkable vision related to Pastor George Forbes though I did not know this immediately. Again it occurred during a public prayer meeting at Klemzig. It was a Wednesday evening about ten days before a national Conference of the A.O.G. was due to be held at Windsor, N.S.W.

During the meeting, I suddenly had a vision which I began to describe to the congregation. I saw a car and caravan heading for the Conference. A pastor and his family were in the car. Suddenly another car coming towards them, swerved across the road and a head on collision looked inevitable. I knew that Satan wanted to destroy this pastor, but that if we really interceded for him the tragedy would be averted. We all began to prayer fervently and intensely. After about one hour of intercession, the burden suddenly lifted and we knew that the incident would be avoided.

In the meeting that night, were Pastor and Mrs. Harold Ridd. Harold was an elderly, blind preacher and retired A.O.G. pastor. The Ridd's planned to attend the Conference in Windsor the following week, travelling to it by train, through Melbourne where they planned to spend the weekend en route. Sunday morning found them in the Preston A.O.G. where George Forbes was the Pastor. When invited to greet the congregation, Harold Ridd told them about the amazing prayer meeting in Klemzig earlier that week. As he described my vision, the colour and make of the car and caravan, George realised that he was describing his vehicle. He further realised that he had his family were evidently the ones in the vision, so as he drove to the Conference he was constantly alert to the possibility of a car swerving into his path.

Between Sydney and Windsor, after driving defensively all the way, suddenly a car, on the other side of the road, was forced across the road and right into their direction. A head on collision seemed inevitable. But because George was pre warned he was able to take swift action to avoid the collision. The other car, clipped the back of Forbes' caravan, causing relatively minor damage, but no one was injured. A veteran Police Sergeant examining the site later said, "I cannot understand how you managed to avoid a fatal accident. All the measurements I have taken suggest that this would have been a fatal accident." George then told him of the vision and prayers. The old Sergeant replied, "I don't really believe in miracles Reverend, but I do believe that one has happened this morning."

Later, at the General Conference, George Forbes was elected as the Director of the World Missions Department. A position he has held ever since with great distinction. It appeared that Satan had not wanted George at that Conference or in that role, but God defeated his intention.

During this period of Charismatic renewal I needed to travel to Sydney for a national executive meeting. Because I was tired and needing a break, I decided to go by train and use the couple of days to just rest and recuperate. In Melbourne, it was necessary for me to change trains. Taking my seat in the Melbourne to Sydney express, I found that I was seated next to a Catholic priest. In those days we had little contact with any Catholics, particularly any clergy.

After discussing the weather and other trivia, the priest asked me, "What do you do for a living?" When I told him I was a Pentecostal preacher, he was greatly intrigued, never having met such a creature before. The trip to Sydney took some fourteen hours and we must have talked for at least twelve of them. When we took leave of each other in Sydney we exchanged addresses. He had informed me that he was at a Catholic Seminary in Melbourne and would love to arrange for me to visit there. He would tell the College Principal about our interesting conversation and suggest that I might be invited to visit with them.

Some months later the visit eventuated. With considerable trepidation I made my way to Melbourne and to the Seminary. This was my first real contact with any Catholic clergy and certainly my first visit to a Catholic Seminary. For the first three hours I was involved in discussion with the

Principal while he personally checked out what I had to share. He was a highly qualified Franciscan theologian having studied full time for fifteen years including a considerable period in Rome. Following our lengthy conversation, he invited me to speak in the chapel the following morning when all the faculty and student body would be present. Before I was invited to speak we all shared in the Mass. The liturgy was in English and I was pleasantly surprised to discover how biblical and beautiful it was. To my surprise, I was greatly blessed by the experience of the Mass. The fellowship and worship was very edifying and provided a lovely atmosphere for my message.

I gave a simple teaching on the Holy Spirit and His manifestations and concluded with a time of prayer during which we all lifted our hearts to God. How excited I became when I suddenly began to discern several voices, gently singing in the Spirit. God was graciously baptising many of the students and faculty, in the Holy Spirit. The whole weekend became a spiritual adventure as I talked and prayed with scores of people. It was the commencement of a new dimension in my experience and ministry. Subsequent to this I was invited to numerous Catholic events in various parts of Australia. Lasting friendships were formed as we drank together of the common cup of the Spirit's blessing.

I understand that the then Principal of the Seminary, later resigned and became an itinerant teacher travelling far and wide in Australia and overseas, teaching on the Biblical validity of the Charismatic phenomena.

From this time onward I found myself more and more involved in the Charismatic renewal, travelling far and wide across Australia to preach and teach in churches of many different denominations. It was a tremendous thrill to see many hundreds of denominational people filled with the Spirit and experiencing new charismatic dimensions. Many fellow Pentecostal ministers were not yet convinced that the “move” was truly of God. A considerable number of them could not believe that God would baptise Roman Catholics, particularly Priests and Nuns in the Spirit. I became the target of some criticism from numerous fellow preachers, some of whom believed that I should be dis-fellowshipped from my denomination for “fellowshipping with Catholics.” Thankfully, God thought differently!

Crisis In The Camp

In my own denomination, the Assemblies of God of Australia, there were many divisions of thought concerning the “New Move.” Some of the events and emphases that were happening did not sit well with the older more traditional church men. At one period the denomination seemed almost ready to fragment, so deep were the feelings of those opposed towards those who were embracing the new move. The hierarchy generally was basically opposed to embracing the new charismatic emphases, whilst many of the younger men were eager to experience whatever God had for them. A special emergency national presbytery conference was convened in Victoria to discuss the controversial issues.

At times the discussion and debate became quite heated as both factions presented and defended their positions, neither

side willing to concede to the other. It became evident to many, even those with a more neutral stance, that the differences could easily cause a real split completely dividing the existing denomination. Although I personally was strongly on the side of those supporting the new move, I knew that it was not God's desire to see such a split eventuate. I also knew that the move and its ongoing implications were here to stay. What was needed was some time for the newness and "novelty" elements to subside somewhat. This awareness kept me awake several nights as I prayerfully sought God for His solution. This actually came to me during the night as a Word of wisdom which I presented the following day as a proposal, namely "That neither side should either promote nor denigrate the controversial issues!" This was voted upon and passed. We then entered a period of peaceful truce which eventually led to a wide spread acceptance of the new emphases of the Spirit. The eventual result of this period of truce was manifest at the next annual general conference when a radical change of leadership and direction was approved. From that time the whole denomination began to move into an unprecedented time of growth and expansion.

The Charismatic Revival Spreads

Fortunately it was not too long before such prejudices began to melt in the warmth of the new revival. Old attitudes were forsaken and buried. New relationships blossomed across the former denomination barriers. Though this period was not free from both traumatic and some amusing experiences.

One such amusing event happened in Melbourne, Victoria. I had gone there to conduct a series of meetings in a small

A.O.G. church. The final Sunday of these meetings happened to coincide with the conclusion of a Catholic Charismatic Conference, the grand finale of which was to be held in St. Patrick's, the large Cathedral in Melbourne. I determined to attend this closing service and shared my intention with the local pastor who was obviously somewhat shocked. He expressed his personal concern and reservations but agreed that if I wished to go that was my business.

Closer to the actual day he obviously had a change of heart and suggested, rather tentatively that he would like to accompany me. A suggestion I gladly agreed to. Came Sunday and my friend was again in two minds. He wanted to come, perhaps out of curiosity, yet a part of his Pentecostal tradition warned him against doing so. However, we eventually set out together. Arriving a few minutes late at the Cathedral, the place was packed with some 3,000 people. It was so crowded we could not find seats together and had to sit separately which somewhat unnerved my friend. However, I encouraged him, advising him to watch what everyone did and do likewise.

He was becoming a little more relaxed when the convening priest announced that we would pause to share the sign of peace, something with which my friend was completely unfamiliar. But, remembering my advice, he determined to watch what happened and follow suit. A man immediately in front of him, turned and with a lovely smile, held out his hand in greeting and said, "Peace be unto you." Unfortunately my nervous friend thought that he had said, "Presbyterian" so he shook his hand and replied,

“Assemblies of God.” It was only after several other greetings that my friend realised his error and corrected it.

Another amusing incident transpired whilst we lived in Brisbane, where I was the pastor of Glad Tidings Tabernacle in Fortitude Valley. The Charismatic renewal was becoming much more widely known by then and many main line churches became open to its message and messengers. Rev Michael Harper, an eminent Anglican minister from England was invited to speak at St. John’s Cathedral in Brisbane. I had been asked to take part in some of the worship leading for the meetings. On the final night, the Cathedral was packed. At the close of the meetings hundreds of people, including myself began to make for the main exit. As I descended the wide steps, I suddenly became aware of a Catholic Priest in the robes of a Friar, blocking my path. He looked up at me and said, “You are the Reverend Rowlands?” To which I replied, “Yes, what can I do for you?” He then proceeded to ask me if I would pray for him to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I thought he was wanting to make an appointment and began reach for my pocket diary, as I assured him that I would gladly pray for him. However, to my surprise, instead of making an appointment for some future date, he promptly bowed his head as he stood on the step beneath me, and signified by his posture that he was ready to be prayed for NOW! People were surging all around us swarming down the steps to Ann Street as the priest prepared to be prayed for. I thought to myself, “If you are game to pray here, so am I.” I promptly laid my hands on his head and began to pray. Immediately he began to speak out loudly in other tongues. It was not a quiet, respectable baptism. It was a very public, noisy and to some

spectators, amusing one. The sight of a Catholic Friar in his robe and white sash, standing on the steps of an Anglican Cathedral talking loudly in tongues, amid a large crowd of intrigued spectators, was an experience not quickly forgotten.

We subsequently came to know each other much better. He introduced himself as Father Luke Newington, formerly a missionary to Papua New Guinea. It transpired that he had been in charge of the particular region of New Guinea adjacent to where the early Australian Assemblies of God missionaries went to. I vividly remembered many urgent prayer letters received from those missionaries. The vein of those letters was, "Please pray fervently for us, we are experiencing great opposition from the Catholic church and missionaries. They are withstanding our ministry and warning all the people to have nothing to do with us. It is making our work very difficult." It transpired that the instigator and leader of that opposition had been none other than "Father Luke Newington", whose scepticism and distrust of Protestants generally, and Pentecostals in particular had motivated him to discourage them in every way possible. He was particularly vicious in his condemnation of "Pentecostalism" and of speaking in tongues. What a sense of humour God must have! "He who once persecuted the Pentecostals, now preaches the faith that once he destroyed."

Although retired from the mission field when filled with the Spirit, Father Luke made it his business to return to New Guinea, visit every station of which he had formerly been in charge, and share with the clergy and people about his

change of heart and experience regarding the Pentecostal phenomena. He became a protagonist for the Pentecostal truth and experience wherever he went. I later had many opportunities to spend time with him in Sydney. He remained faithful and steadfast in his new conviction although suffering a good deal of discrimination and persecution within his own church. He was a splendid and inspiring person.

We were truly saddened to leave Klemzig in 1969. However we felt a clear leading to go to Brisbane where I had been invited to become the pastor Glad Tidings Tabernacle. In many ways we did not want to make the change, sensing that God still had a wonderful work to accomplish in Adelaide. Nevertheless, we obeyed the prompting of God, an action that would later lead us to Africa and the wider world.

Following a breakdown of negotiations to bring Pastor Bob and Noel Midgley to take our place, Andrew and Lorraine Evans were asked to take temporary charge. At that time Lorraine was quite ill following traumatic experiences in New Guinea as a missionary. I encouraged the Church Board to take them on at least temporarily and to look after them both so that Lorraine's health would have chance to recover. I told the Board, "If you lovingly care for this couple in this time of sickness and difficulty, I know that God will greatly bless you for that. Little did I realise just how greatly God would bless them!

Apparently, when he first took over the church Andrew was not impressed with a number of things. He began to "correct" some of those things and within some months quite

a lot of people left the church. Andrew became concerned about this exodus and began to spend special times in prayer for the well being of the church. As he sought God, he felt the Lord tell him, “You are not fighting against what Gerald Rowlands has done here, you are fighting against what I have been doing!” Andrew repented of his attitude and actions and the church began to grow once again.

That temporary call was subsequently extended and they remained there for some twenty-five years. During this period the church moved from Klemzig to Paradise and the growth of the church in splendid new facilities to some 5,000 members. How thrilled we have been ever since, to see that work grow and multiply. How rewarding to know that God’s purposes were so gloriously fulfilled when we obeyed Him, left for Brisbane and saw Andrew installed as the new minister. He and Lorraine have been a tremendous blessing to the church there since 1969. Andrew was also elected General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God some time later and served with great distinction in that role for some twenty five years. During that whole time he also remained senior pastor of the thriving and renowned Paradise Assembly of God. He has also served on the council of the Pentecostal World Conference and has more recently been appointed secretary to the Assemblies of God World Wide Fellowship. Eventually he retired from his position as senior pastor, formed a new political party and became a Senator in the South Australian parliament. It has been so exciting to witness the manner in which God has blessed and used Andrew. I thank God many times that we were able to be some small part of that years ago when we encouraged the church to take on he and his lovely wife.

What transpired in that church later is well known by most Christians in Australia. Following the retirement of Andrew Evans to pursue his political career, his eldest son Ashley became the senior pastor. Since then the church has grown exponentially. It has become one of the largest and fastest growing churches in the nation. As for the spiritual renewal that began in those early days I will add a chapter to this book from the perspective of the twenty first Century.

Chapter Four

Happy Years In Brisbane

In early 1969 we travelled to Brisbane where I became the pastor of Glad Tidings Tabernacle for the next six years. Glad Tidings Tabernacle, locally known as “The Tab” was one of the oldest Pentecostal churches in Australia. It was originally founded as the Christian Covenant Church, following a remarkable tent crusade conducted by Rev William Booth Clibborn. The pulpit had subsequently been filled over the years by many able and renowned preachers. It had become well known as a “pulpit church” in which the emphasis was very much upon preaching skills. It had also become the mother church of many new A.O.G. churches in Brisbane. In many ways I felt privileged to have been chosen to succeed so many renowned preachers but I was also very much aware that an effective church needed the activity of the Spirit as well as the preaching of the Word. I went there with an expectation that God would change certain things and equalise the balance somewhat. The church was in need of a fresh move of the Spirit.

They were certainly happy years and my family and I fell in love with Brisbane. Ever since then we have regarded it as our home town. Elizabeth and our daughters liked the city and the church so much that they would frequently say, jokingly yet half serious, “If you ever get called away from here Dad, you can go and we will stay here.” However, I did not have any thoughts of leaving there either until 1974

when God began to turn our comfortable little world upside down and move us out of our comfort zone.

About the only “low spot” we experienced in our years in Brisbane afterwards became a high spot in our memories. It was related to an accident that happened to our eldest girl, Christine. At that time she was only about 10 years old. One evening she volunteered to go to the local grocers to buy some bread. As the shop was just around the corner we agreed to let her go. However, when she failed to return after some twenty minutes, we began to be concern. Our fear was soon confirmed when we discovered that Christine had been hit by a truck whilst walking across a pedestrian crossing. The truck had sped down the hill, hit her and projected her young body across the road into the gutter. She was badly shaken and in a lot of pain. Fortunately the Royal Brisbane hospital was only minutes away and I took her immediately to the casualty department. Following several examinations, the doctor informed us that the news was not good. She obviously had internal damage and bleeding. The doctor’s verdict was that her spleen would have to be removed and perhaps some other abdominal organs. He could not be sure of the extent of the damage until he operated. He wanted my signature immediately. I felt loathe to give this, realising that once those organs were removed by surgery, she could be detrimentally affected throughout her life. I explained to the surgeon that we, her parents, were Christians and believed in the power of prayer. Could he possibly postpone the surgery to give us time to pray about her condition? Fortunately, the surgeon also was a Christian and understood our desire. He agreed to defer an immediate operation saying that she would be closely

monitored and unless her condition deteriorated the operation would be postponed until the following morning.

Elizabeth and I went home and really sought God in prayer. Both of us asked God, “Why could it not have been one of us injured instead of Chris?” We both would have gladly taken her place. Feeling the pain of parenthood in this manner, for the first time, we prayed throughout the night. The following morning a phone call came asking us to report to the hospital immediately. We were not sure what this urgency could mean but continued to pray and believe together.

How relieved we were on arrival to discover that the news was good. The surgeon himself was excited and so were we when we found that her condition had improved tremendously through the night. The tests, that had shown the damaged spleen, plus other possible problems, were run again. This time there was no evidence of damage or bleeding. Praise God! They kept her under observation for a few more days and then asked us to take her home to convalesce. Thank God she has never had any kind of after effect from what threatened to be a rather serious accident. We realised through this incident that God’s hand was on her in a special way and many subsequent events proved this to be true.

Some time later I asked God why He had allowed the accident to happen. I felt that he told me that He had allowed us to feel a parent’s pain for their suffering children so we could better understand the pain of His Father heart. A pain He experienced in giving His own beloved Son and

also the pain that we, as His adopted children, frequently caused His own heart.

Meanwhile we enjoyed some real times of Holy Ghost visitation, renewal and restoration in the church and entered a new dimension of praise and worship and spiritual blessings. Many of the members met God in a new way and the church was steadily increasing in numbers and blessing.

We also saw a wonderful phenomena occur in a Coffee Shop outreach we commenced at the rear of the Church. The outreach was called “The Good Shepherd” coffee shop and was located in the church basement. The young people painted and suitably furnished and decorated an area at the rear of the church to facilitate a contemporary outreach. Most patrons who came to the coffee shop in Alfred Street had no idea that it was in any way connected with the Church in Barry Parade.

From the commencement we were visited by many interesting, larger than life characters from “The Valley” the area immediately surrounding the church, which was a well known place for various night clubs, prostitutes and underworld characters. We trained many of the young people in street evangelism including how to invite people into the cafe. One Saturday evening, two young and very innocent girls went together into the night club area. I did not know they had done so and probably would have disapproved of girls so young venturing into those places. However, God was obviously with them.

They entered one night club where, unbeknown to them, a bunch of gangsters were providing an alibi for themselves. They were making sure that everyone knew they were there, intending later to do a break in burglary. When the police came looking for them as they inevitably would, they would plead innocence claiming they were in the night club all that evening. As the girls began to invite these characters to the coffee shop, the criminals began to take advantage of their obvious innocence. They began to make rude comments and suggestions to them. However, the gang leader, a real tough guy named Ken, defended the girls, demanding that the guys “break it up and leave the kids alone.” He then began to talk to them himself asking why they were there etc. On discovering their intended mission, he demanded that all his gang members follow him and the girls, they were going to the coffee shop. Minutes later, we were amazed to see the girls lead into the shop some twelve of the toughest men we had ever seen. They quickly spread themselves around, began drinking coffee, eating cakes, and making conversation with many of our workers.

I personally sat with Ken the gang leader. I began to share with him about my own experience of receiving Christ years ago. Obviously his background was far rougher and tougher than mine, but at least I knew how to talk with him convincingly. Eventually he expressed his interest in my story and conveyed some degree of envy. However, he went on to say, “That is great for you Reverend, but I could never become religious. My wife and kids left me two years ago and I now live with some prostitutes. I know that would never do if I became a Christian!”

I then asked him, “Ken, would you just let me pray for you and your situation? We don’t know what God may have in mind for you.” “O.K. Reverend” he said, “if your God really answers your prayer, I will come to church one Sunday and I will bring all the boys with me.” I then went ahead and prayed for him.

Frankly I was rather amazed when the very next evening, Ken and the boys turned up to our Sunday evening Gospel Service. Talking with me before the service he explained that an amazing thing had happened immediately after he left the coffee shop. He had driven home and to his shocked amazement, discovered that his wife and children had returned from South Australia after some two years absence. She had found a couple of girls in the house and had promptly thrown them out and established herself and the children. In her own way she was as tough as Ken himself.

True to his promise he got all his gang together the next night and brought them to church. The twelve of them filled an entire row. I preached the Gospel with every ounce of anointing and enthusiasm I could muster and finally gave an appeal. Immediately Ken rose to his feet, turned to his gang members and said, “Right gang, everybody out to the front like the Reverend said.” The twelve men made their way down the church aisle many of them looking rather sheepish and non-plussed. The line of “sinners” stretched right across the church as I came down to welcome them with a handshake and to lead them in the sinners prayer. Our church members were amazed, but thrilled to see such an unusual sight. Strange though it was that these tough guys would allow themselves to be forced out to the front, most of them

truly repented and received Christ. The few that did not left the gang believing that their leader had gone crazy!

After prayer and a time of sharing about Jesus and salvation by faith the gang came down stairs again, amazed to find themselves back in the “Good Shepherd” coffee lounge where they had been the night previously. They were all excited and so were we. It was thrilling to see these gangsters talking about Jesus and learning to pray genuine though often amusing prayers.

Ken was a notorious criminal having served numerous years in prison. He had the dubious record of having spent more time in solitary confinement than any other prisoner. Now he became really enthusiastic to be a true believer. After we had water baptised he and his mates, we went out one night to “baptise” their armoury. We threw numerous weapons including sawn off shotguns, revolvers and a few hand grenades into the river! One of Ken’s first questions was, “What’s on tomorrow night Reverend?” Instead of explaining that we did not have activities every night, I said, “You come to church tomorrow night and you will find out.” I did not have the heart to explain that we usually just met a few times each week. His previous life had been the seven day and night per week kind and I realised that these guys needed all the fellowship and encouragement we could give them. Plus, we needed to keep them off the streets and away from temptation. So I devised all manner of new activities, most of which took place in the commodious basement beneath the church.

After Ken and the guys began attending church regularly many interesting characters around the city began to come too. Numbers of them were transvestites. We always had a problem knowing which toilet, male or female, to direct them to! This kind of work was all new to most of us but we quickly learned many things. Unfortunately most churches in those days, including ours, had neither the mentality nor the facility to adequately and properly care for such drastically different characters. Nevertheless, I saw Ken and many of his mates many times long after our original encounters. They formed a concrete laying company that gave them a legitimate income and undoubtedly many of them were truly changed though not necessarily into orthodox church members. In later years, Teen Challenge, of which I became the first Chairman in Brisbane, together with Dr. Charles Ringma, the actual founder, began to provide the kind of facility and environment needed to care for such persons.

We had also conducted a crusade in the church with Evangelist William Caldwell, from Tulsa, USA. Commencing in Glad Tidings Tabernacle the meetings had finally moved into the City Hall where many other churches combined with us, to witness crowds of about 3,000 people with several hundred persons being saved, healed and baptised in the Holy Spirit. It was a truly charismatic, signs and wonders Crusade. Many remarkable miracles were witnessed and I was eager to see its impact continue in our church. God did bless us too. Many of the members received a new touch from God and entered a further dimension in their spiritual life.

It was about such matters affecting our church and city that I intended to pray in 1973. I wanted some strategies from God that would enable us to contain the many new and often very “different” people who were now attending the church. So I fasted and prayed and talked with God.

January is always a quiet month church wise in Australia. It is mid summer and the main holiday period when many businesses close down for the month. Most people take their holidays, the church year largely goes into recession too. I developed a policy of making January, the beginning of each new year into a time for personal prayer and fasting, basically seeking God’s mind for the forthcoming year. January 1974 was no exception.

I got into a routine of rising early, while the family were still sleeping, slipping into my office to pray with my Bible opened before me. My mind was usually on our church and the city of Brisbane. I had learned, much earlier than this, that effective prayer was much more than simply talking to God. In fact, it is very much a two way conversation and what God has to say is MUCH more important than anything we may have to tell Him. So, in addition to voicing petitions for God’s blessing on our church and the city, I spent lots of time quietly listening for His voice inside my spirit. Anything effective that we may ever do for God begins with a word from Him. It is as we begin to embrace and obey that word that our walk of faith begins. I have learned well that faith is not some strange emotion or physical reaction with hot or cold shivers down one’s spine. Real faith is simply obeying God’s voice.

Prayer And More Prayer

To my amazement one morning God spoke to me a completely unexpected word. It was not audible yet it might well have been, so powerfully did it register with me. God said, into my spirit, "I want you to taste some African fruit!" Initially I was so surprised that my mind did not grasp the significance of what I heard. I remember thinking to myself, "I wonder what is particularly African fruit?" In Queensland many tropical fruits grew profusely. We had bananas, pineapples, mangoes etc. How distinctly different was African fruit? The word came to me so naturally, quietly and gently within my spirit that it did not immediately register with me what God was beginning to initiate. God's callings often come like that. Not through an earthquake or a storm but in a still small voice

Of course I soon realised that this natural fruit was not what was on God's mind. As I began to pray specifically about this unusual remark I soon realised that God was actually asking to go to Africa and gather some spiritual fruit for His Kingdom. Initially, I imagined that the visit would be a brief one. Maybe a month or two at the most. I therefore began to think in those terms. However as the days passed I began to realise that God was challenging me to go for much longer than a couple of months. He wanted me to take my family to go and live there. In my early morning prayer times, God began to share with me messages He would want me to deliver to certain people in Africa. People who, at that time, I had not yet met nor ever dreamed that I would meet. It was amazing when we did move there how wonderfully God opened certain doors for me to share those prophetic words. On one occasion I saw myself standing before a group of

ministers, delivering a very serious and difficult to receive message. The vision was so distinct, yet it would be quite some time before it would actually happen.

It was actually fulfilled some three years later in Southern Rhodesia. I had been invited to be one of the speakers at a national conference organised by an evangelical organisation. Although my assigned subject was not about the Holy Spirit, numerous delegates evidently sensed that I was carrying an anointing of the Spirit on my life and ministry. Many delegates found their way to my room for counselling and all of them experienced a new release of liberty in the Holy Spirit.

On the Sunday morning, in the middle of the Conference, I was booked to speak at a local Assembly of God church in Salisbury. When I arrived there, I had no idea what I should preach on but I was just keeping my heart and mind open to the Lord. Sitting on the front row, waiting for my time to preach, God directed my attention to

Ezek 2:1-10

1 He said to me, "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you."

2 As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.

3 He said: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their fathers have been in revolt against me to this very day.

4 *The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says.'*

5 *And whether they listen or fail to listen-- for they are a rebellious house-- they will know that a prophet has been among them.*

6 *And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them or their words. Do not be afraid, though briars and thorns are all around you and you live among scorpions. Do not be afraid of what they say or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious house.*

7 *You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious.*

8 *But you, son of man, listen to what I say to you. Do not rebel like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you."*

9 *Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll,*

10 *which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe. (NIV)*

I initially thought that this was the scripture passage from which God wanted me to speak that morning. I began to ask Him to tell me exactly what He wanted me to say. However, it soon became clear that this passage from Ezekiel was not intended for this congregation. God told me, "Tomorrow morning, back at the Conference Centre, I want you to speak these words to the Conference organising committee." This committee, I discovered, was comprised of about 40 ministers from Rhodesia. Several of them were bishops. All of them represented the historic denominations of the nation. I requested the Conference Chairman to call them together

after breakfast because I had a word to deliver to them from God. The message included the reading from Ezekiel and the fact that God was repeating those words to them. “They were a stubborn, obstinate, rebellious house.” and unless they all repented and sought God’s forgiveness, not one of them would remain their ministerial role two years from that time.

5 And whether they listen or fail to listen-- for they are a rebellious house-- they will know that a prophet has been among them.

Sadly, the message went largely unheeded. Their attitude towards the Holy Spirit remained unchanged. It was actually two years later that I and my family moved up from South Africa to reside in Rhodesia and when I arrived, I discovered that not one of those ministers was still in the church or pulpit they had previously occupied.

Beginning The Biggest Adventure

It was only later, in retrospect that I realised that this was the beginning of a new, greater adventure than I had ever previously known. We were stepping into a new dimension of faith and obedience. For some years previously I had been “Living by faith”. Ever since I had left the Air Force and begun to travel in various forms of ministry I, and then my wife and myself, were living by faith. Nevertheless we did receive modest salaries from the various churches of which I became the pastor. However, the new phase of our life which was being launched as we set off together for Africa involved a greater degree of faith than anything previously.

As I continued to wait upon God for further clarification of what He wanted us to do I realised that this was a different kind of challenge than we had ever formerly encountered. Although we were going to Africa to reside and minister I clearly understood that we were not to go as traditional missionaries, supported by a missions organisation and being somewhat confined to working within the interests and program of that organisation. I knew that God wanted me to be free to minister in whatever situations He directed us to, regardless of denominational or doctrinal differences. We were to be free to move immediately into whatever challenge God placed before us.

At that time we had virtually no finances of our own nor did we have any idea where financial support might come from. Even when I committed ourselves to God to leave for Africa, this situation had not changed. We were committing ourselves to obey God by moving to a strange land before we had any idea how we might be supported or even what we might be doing there.

Obedience Is Essential

At this stage of my life I had gained a certain reputation and credibility as a preacher in considerable demand. Obviously my ministry had gained a certain measure of acceptance in Australia. It therefore seemed a reasonable thing to ask God, “How do I know that my ministry will be effective in Africa?” My name was not known there. I had no contacts to assist my acceptance there. I really wanted to know what kind of effectiveness or otherwise I might find there. I shall never forget God’s immediate response. I heard Him say deep within me, “If you don’t obey Me, you don’t even have

a ministry, but if you do obey Me I will open doors for you that no man can close!”

Confirmation To Elizabeth

Although I was excited about the idea of moving to Africa, Elizabeth, when I shared it with her, was much more reticent. She rightly thought about our three young daughters. What would such a move mean to them at such a formative stage in their lives? How would it affect their schooling and education? How might this impact on their future lives? All these were legitimate questions that any good mother would surely ask but they had not occurred to me. As we talked this through we agreed that if God truly wanted us all to go, He would speak to Elizabeth too and give her assurance and confirmation that her motherly instincts needed.

A couple of weeks later, I was praying again in my office early in the morning. As I prayed, God spoke to me again, He said, “I want you to resign this week from the pastorate and begin preparing to go to Africa.” This was now mid 1974 and I would be able to give six months notice of my intention. I immediately prayed, “Lord, you know the agreement that Liz and I have reached. You will have to tell her personally what you want us to do.” It was with some trepidation that I later entered the bedroom where I presumed that my wife was still asleep. However, she was wide awake. She said, “Do you have something to tell me?” I asked her, “Why do you say that?” She replied, “When I awoke this morning I was conscious of a presence beside the bed and soon realised that it was the Lord. He said to me, I want Gerald to hand in his resignation from the pastorate this

week and I want you all to prepare to go to Africa.” How gracious God was! How wonderful that he would take such pains to satisfy the need of a mother who wanted to be sure, for her children’s sake, that this was a genuine call from God.

On the Thursday evening at the regular Board meeting, I tendered my resignation. The men immediately asked, “Why are you resigning? Where are you planning to go?” I told them of my recent experiences and my decision to go to Africa. They kindly suggested, “Please remain as our pastor and we will allow you six months absence each year to go to Africa. We will continue to support you financially whether you are here or in Africa.” It was a tempting offer and I promised to pray about it, but at the next meeting I had to tell them that such an idea would not satisfy God’s requirement of me.

As I prayed about this possibility God clearly directed my attention to a scripture in Isaiah.

Isa 28:20

20 The bed is too short to stretch out on, the blanket too narrow to wrap around you. (NIV)

He showed me that the restlessness within me was because being the pastor of a church had become too limiting for what He was birthing in my spirit. My task was like being in a bed that was too short, with blankets that were too narrow. I remembered a night some years previously when I was teaching in a Bible College in Rome Italy. I had been given a bed that was very narrow and the mattress was shaped like

a mountain top. The blanket was also very short. I spent the whole night balancing precariously on the narrow mattress, trying not to fall off the bed and also endeavouring to keep myself covered with a blanket that was far too short. The following day this situation was rectified but I never forgot that night. God reminded me of it again through the scripture in Isaiah.

Whilst praying throughout the next few weeks, God began to show me many things he wanted me to accomplish in Africa and how the direction of our life and ministry would be radically changed. The assurance that we were doing the right thing increased almost daily.

Preparations For Africa

Since God had told me to begin preparing to go to Africa I realised that I needed to take some steps of faith. As I prayed, I decided that our new ministry would be called, “Global Evangelism Ministries” and that I needed to open a bank account to begin receiving moneys for the new ministry. Henry Baskerville was a member of the Assemblies of God in Brisbane and also the manager of a local Commonwealth Bank. I decided to seek his help in opening the account. After initial conversation in which I told him that I wanted to open a “Global Evangelism Ministries” account he commenced the necessary paper work and then asked me, “By the way, I assume this name is properly registered?” I was embarrassed then to explain that unfortunately it was not yet registered as I had only thought of it that morning. Since he could not open an account in the name of an organisation that did not officially exist, I had given him a problem. However, he solved it temporarily by

opening one in my name and calling it Gerald Rowlands - Global Ministries account. Eventually the new paper work was complete and he heaved a sigh or relief. “Right” he said, “Now how much do you want to deposit?” Now I had to explain that I did not actually have anything to deposit right now but I was sure that I would have shortly. A couple of the tellers looked at me rather strangely when they discovered I had opened an account for an organisation that did not exist and then had no money to put into the account.

Our Initial Deposit

Sitting around the dinner table that night I recounted my adventures to Elizabeth and the girls. As we chatted, the phone rang and I answered it. A rather gruff voice said, “is that you Pastor Rowlands? When do you want this money?” It was one of the church members. I said I had no idea what he was talking about and he then explained. “When my wife and I were praying some weeks ago, the Lord seemed to tell us, “The Rowlands’ are going away soon and I want you to give them \$2,000 towards their fare.” He and his wife had delayed obeying God and consequently had some sleepless nights. Eventually his wife had said, “For goodness sake, phone Pastor Gerald and arrange to give him the money so that we can have a good night’s sleep again.” The following morning, the bank teller was somewhat surprised when I came in to deposit \$2,000. which became the deposit on our fares. This was the first of numerous “confirmations” that happened to assure us that God was indeed leading us. Normally such confirmations will be given as encouragement as we endeavour to launch out in faith.

A Luxury Cruise

Looking through the Courier Mail shortly afterwards I noticed a P & O, round the world trip advertised. Leaving Sydney in January 1975 it would call at numerous ports in Asia and Africa, including Durban which would be an ideal port for us to disembark. Going by boat allowed us to take much more luggage than if we had gone by air. Since we had no idea how long we would be away and had little money to buy household necessities we wanted to take with us as much as possible.

I called into the shipping agency office and explained to the clerk that I did not want to take the whole trip but wished to leave the ship in Durban. He was not sure this could be done so I asked to see the manager. I explained to him that I was a minister and felt a call to Africa explaining that Durban would be an ideal port for us. The manager happened to be a Christian and was extremely interested in our venture of faith. He booked us in at the lowest economy price and promised that if better accommodation were available when the ship was ready to sail, he would place us in the best possible cabins, even though we had paid the lowest rates. True to his word, when we sailed we had much better accommodation than we could ever have afforded. Some of the friends we made on the journey were quite envious of our accommodation. It proved to be the very best holiday my family and I had ever enjoyed, cruising the oceans for one month, enjoying wonderful meals and visiting many new and fascinating places. This kind of adventure certainly taught our children how exciting a life of faith with Jesus could be.

The cruise, which took a month to complete was the first exposure our children had to the larger world beyond Australia. It was a thrilling experience for them though the idea of leaving Australia and living in Africa did not appeal to them. It was very difficult for them to leave all their friends and to begin studies in new schools. All three of them responded so well. There were no complaints from them as they adapted themselves to a brand new environment and lifestyle. In hindsight, it seems clear that this exposure to the bigger world prepared each of them for the ministries and lives into which God would later lead them. Our small family has often been scattered on all five continents. Even now we have Christine Newington and her family in Australia, Virginia Baker and her family in Singapore and Kathryn Rowlands in Jerusalem where she works at the International Christian Embassy. I have certainly been blessed with a wife and family that have willingly and happily adapted themselves to living in numerous different places around the world. None of them have ever offered any objections to the demands that my ministry has placed on us as a family and each one has gone happily into a ministry to which God has called them. I am so grateful that each one of them, in their own way, have been willing and happy to live by faith and accommodate themselves to the call of God wherever it might lead them. Even to this day one of the most exciting memories that our three daughters have is of that sea voyage and the exotic places we visited. The days of cruising around the world on luxury liners has largely disappeared now but indelible pleasant memories still haunt their childhood recollections.

Chapter Five

Next Stop Africa

Our ship left from Sydney where Pastor Duncan had arranged a farewell meeting at which we could say good-bye to many good friends and family members. The ship then also called into Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth, where we enjoyed similar farewell gatherings in each place. Altogether we were waved off with streamers and prayers by several hundred friends in these various ports.

Our first overseas destination was Bali, then Singapore, Colombo, Madras, the Seychelles Isles, Mombassa, Zanzibar, then finally Durban. Early on the journey I began to hold a morning prayer and Bible study from 10 a.m. till 11 a.m. After a few days we had a regular crowd of some sixty persons from many different denominations. Among them was a newly retired businessman and his wife, Methodist people from South Australia, they attended our meeting every morning.

Back From The Dead

However, one day, just as I was leaving for the meeting, the husband knocked on our cabin door. He was obviously distressed because his wife was evidently quite ill and could I please come and pray for her immediately? I explained that the meeting was due to start and some sixty or more people were waiting for me. I promised that as soon as that service was over I would come and pray for his wife.

Immediately after the Bible study, I reached their first class suite a few minutes after eleven and knocked on the door. No reply! I knocked again and tried the door knob, finding it open. I quietly entered the suite calling out, “Is anyone home?” but received no reply. Discreetly looking around the suite, I discovered the wife, apparently fast asleep. I did not want to awaken her so I stretched my hands towards her, and prayed, “Lord, let your resurrection life flow into and quicken this mortal body now and deliver her from everything that ails her. Amen.” I then left the cabin to join my family for lunch.

In the middle of our meal, the husband came racing into the dining room. When he saw us he shouted across the room, “Reverend, my wife is ALIVE AGAIN!” I said, “I know, I have just prayed for her.” But you don’t understand he replied, she died at about 10.15.a.m. The doctor went for his colleague to sign the death certificate and a nurse to remove her body. When they went back to the cabin at 11.20. a.m. she was alive, sitting up in bed. They were all shocked. And so was I. When I had prayed for her I had not realised that she was dead. I had prayed for healing and God resurrected her. That couple became our strongest financial supporters throughout our time in Africa.

Miracles In Matabaffin

We were fortunate to be met in Durban by David and Loreen Newington and their son in law Oskar came to meet us in a large truck and kindly transported all our luggage back to White River. We had met the Newington’s a few months earlier in Australia and when they discovered we were going to Africa they said, “please come to South Africa and we

will happily accommodate you until you know what you want to do.” True to their word the Newington family gave us a wonderful welcome into their hearts, so much so that our eldest daughter Christine later married Charles their son. I became a director of their exciting ministry, - Emmanuel Press and Tract Fellowship and Elizabeth and Christine began to work there.

Their home was in Witrivier, in the beautiful Eastern Lowveldt, near the famous Kruger Park. We were frequently able to visit this remarkable Game Park and enjoy the gracious hospitality of the Reserve. The Newington’s and their extended family graciously helped us to feel welcome on our new continent. A few days after our arrival, David introduced me to a man we had met in the street in Nelspruit, a nearby town. The man was the manager of a very large citrus estate in an area known as Mataffin, employing hundreds of black labourers. He told me how well his company provided for their workers including the fact that they had a sports stadium and soccer field including a “Grandstand” in their village. “Reverend” he said, “if ever you would like the use of the sports stadium please let me know.” I was not at all sure just what he meant but as we drove back to Witrivier. I wondered if he thought I might want to go jogging there in the mornings but the Holy Spirit whispered to me, “book the stadium for next week and conduct a crusade there.”

I hastily made the arrangements and organised some printed leaflets. The following Monday evening we commenced our crusade. I had a Swazi pastor Luke Mjaji as my interpreter and we stood before a group of some 300 people who sat in

the “Grandstand.” Most of them had come out of boredom, as there was little for them to do by way of entertainment there. Many had come to see this new white man and to find out what it was all about. Our attempt at community singing did not arouse much interest. Nor did my solo accompanying myself on the guitar. I sang in English, of which language they scarcely understood one word. Eventually I began to preach, thinking that this was what I knew to do best. However, it seemed that all my “wonderful” preaching disappeared down a huge hole in the ground between my rough table pulpit and the Grandstand.

In the middle of my message, as I preached like Oral Roberts, T.L. Osborne and Billy Graham combined, my confidence deserted me. Nobody seemed to be even listening. There did not appear to be one spark of interest in what I said. As I continued to preach I also whispered a quiet but urgent prayer to Jesus. I said, “Jesus, you must stand by me now, I need your help.” His calm reply intimated, “Where do you think I have been all the evening? You have been so busy doing your thing that I have not had chance to do anything yet!” I apologised and said, “Jesus, my little part is finished now, would you please take over the rest of this meeting.” I immediately heard Him say in my spirit, “There is a woman here, wearing a blue dress. She has a crippled son who has never walked and I want to heal him.”

As I quickly scanned the audience I could only see one woman in a blue dress. I told my interpreter, “Please ask that woman if she has a crippled boy.” She quickly confirmed that she had. He was fastened to her back with a

blanket in typical African style. He was five years old and quite big for his age. His legs hung helplessly. From his birth they had been diseased and had no rigidity in the bones. Also his little feet were deformed, pointing side ways instead of forward. I prayed for him from where I stood and told her to put him down on the ground. She later testified that as she lowered him to the ground she saw his little feet swing into the right position and when they touched the ground his bones stiffened and he was able to stand for the first time in his young life. Within minutes he was learning to walk and now the crowd, at last, had become animated and excited. Many were evidently beginning to identify me as a witch doctor.

I therefore told the people, "I cannot heal anyone. God has healed this boy and I am now going to pray another prayer for everyone else. Whoever believes can be healed." The people became very excited and after a few minutes I saw a labourer with an excited crowd around him. He was stretching forth his arms, one after the other to his friends. When I asked Pastor Mjaji to find out what had happened he discovered that when this man was only twelve, he had contracted polio. As a result one arm had never grown further, in fact it had shrivelled, the other had filled out like that of a middle aged labourer. God had healed him immediately and now as he swung his arms forward he was asking his friends, "Was it this arm or that one that was crippled?" Both arms were now exactly the same!

The following evening there were more than 1,000 people present including the young boy, complete with a natty new pair of blue and white shoes. He had walked to the meeting

with his mother, to the delight of all the neighbours. He later became an excellent athlete and soccer player.

Eventually, some 6,000 people attended the meetings about half of whom made decisions for Christ. Twelve new churches were planted with the converts. I had begun to sample some of that African fruit that God had wanted me to taste. However, I was also going to realise more clearly than ever that gaining “decisions for Christ” was one thing. Seeing those people solidly established in their new found faith and the Body of Christ was quite a different matter.

My African Mentor

About this time I met a young African preacher who became a powerful influence in my life. Elijah Maswanganyi from Tzaneen, had recently graduated from a Bible College and was endeavouring to function as an evangelist. He was evidently meeting with numerous discouragements as he sought to establish himself in his new ministry. One morning he called into Emmanuel Press in Nelspruit. I was out but Elizabeth was introduced to him. She immediately felt that I could be helpful to Elijah and encouraged him to call back that afternoon. Sure enough, it was a case of “love at first sight” for Elijah and myself. He was a big, strong African man in every sense of the word. He was proud to be African and loved his culture. Unfortunately many of the missionaries were uncomfortable with his cultural loyalties. Although his real name was Malembe, the missionary had refused to baptise him until he took a new name, either a Biblical or an English one. Thus he became “Elijah.” This kind of religious, “Western” attitude was only one of the smaller problems with which he felt uncomfortable. The

same missionaries had problems with his sun glasses, the style of trousers he wore, and numerous other petty things.

As the two of us merged into a mutual friendship I was able to become something of a mentor for him. I was able to assure him that true Christianity was much more than adopting religious traditions, especially when it meant that all semblance of African culture must be disposed of. Elijah became my associate evangelist. Though I was supposed to be his mentor, I learned many important things from this young man who had once been a goat herder and whose mother a Sangoma, (witch doctor)

Elijah accompanied me in many of our crusades and ministers seminars. He was so adept in teaching the implications of Christianity upon African culture. He knew the African heart and attitude far better than I could ever hope to. His assistance and ministry was invaluable. I have always esteemed him so highly, enjoying his fellowship and company and feeling greatly privileged to be one of his friends and associates.

It gave me enormous satisfaction and pleasure later to see him subsequently mature in God and in his ministry. He became widely recognised and eagerly sought after as a preacher, teacher, author and counsellor. His ministry flourished throughout South Africa among white people as well as Africans. He then began to receive many invitations from overseas and his ministry assumed international status. Some years later, after a period as a student at Fuller Seminary in California, he was invited many times to accompany his professor Doctor Peter Wagner, teaching in

his seminars around the world. The main subject he taught was “Effective cross cultural Evangelism.”

Revival in Lesotho

Soon after this I planned to have a crusade in Maseru, the capital of Lesotho. A pastor of a small Assembly of God church had pled with me to come and I answered his call. I was about to experience some realities of crusading in Africa. Some time earlier, Rev Brian Bailey, who had often visited Africa told me, “If you are going to be a missionary in Africa, there are three things that you will need. The first is patience and the second is...patience, and the third things is ...patience. I was about to discover what he meant.

Most of my plans, booking a stadium, getting some banners made, obtaining some space in the local newspaper, had been made from a distance. When I arrived, the banner was not yet painted. The adverts had not been placed in the paper. To top everything, the rainy season began. The pastor seriously told “Once the rains begin, it may last for three months!” Since we were to be in an open air sports stadium, this would not be the best kind of weather. It rained most of the week prior to the meeting. By Wednesday, prior to the Saturday, the ground everywhere was saturated with pools of water. What to do? God encouraged me to go and stand in the middle of the sports ground and rebuke the rain, commanding it to stop and for wind and sunshine to replace it. I did so and by Saturday morning the ground was almost dry. However, the pastor only had about twelve members in his church and no one else in town seemed to know that I was there. So I prayed even more.

On the Saturday morning I had breakfast with the pastor in his humble home. During the simple meal someone began to hammer on his front door and he went out to open it. He soon called me to join him and a dramatic sight met our eyes. A group of men were trying to control one man who had been bound with ropes. He had broken free and was tossing these men around the front yard. I soon realised that he appeared to be blind but was exercising enormous physical strength. He threw grown men to the ground with ease. It transpired that he had been chained up like an animal in his village for several years. Someone, somehow, had heard about the visiting preacher and they had driven him in from the village on the back of a truck bound with ropes, but now he had broken free.

As I stood outside the little house, he advanced towards me. Though he had no sight, he seemed to know exactly where I was. As I prayed the Lord said within me, "His name is legion, he has many devils." He headed towards me obviously intent on doing me harm. As he approached I began to shout out the name of Jesus. With every stride he sank lower and lower to the ground. By the time he reached me, he fell on his face before me. I then commanded the demons to leave him and after a struggle, they obeyed. Suddenly he could see and he sank before me in an attitude of surrender. He was completely free. After further prayer, he drove the truck back to the village. When the people saw him they were amazed and that night the whole village population marched to Maseru to attend the meeting.

Night by night God performed miracles and healings and the crowds increased accordingly until one memorable night we

had a real visitation from heaven. Initially the crowd seemed very restless and I begged my interpreter to try to settle them down. Instead of settling down, one man began to dance down the steps from top to bottom singing and shouting as he came. It transpired that he had arrived on crutches but God had healed him before any prayers had been made. He began to dance around my little pulpit area and was soon joined by another dozen or more people all singing, shouting and dancing! I gave up asking for quiet and decided to join in with them.

Then a huge obese woman who had been brought to the meeting in a wheel barrow, struggled out of the barrow and joined in the dancing. This woman evidently had a very bad heart condition and the doctor had warned her that sudden movement could kill her! But she danced round the pulpit like a child and as she did, God healed her! The noise of the shouting was now so loud that it reached the city where many were drinking, gambling and carousing. They thought there was a riot in the stadium and began to stream across to find out what was happening. As they would approach the crowd the power of God was flattening them. Soon people were lying all over the stadium. Hundreds stepped out for Christ that night and many were healed of all manner of sickness. The whole city came alive to the fact that Jesus was in town. Sometimes when we walked the streets during the day, crowds of people would surge after us begging us to pray for them.

A member of the Royal family had been present on that memorable night and later a high ranking officer brought an invitation from the Queen to have dinner at the Palace. We

did so, and following the meal had a private service at which many received prayer for salvation and healing.

Where Are The Converts?

We had numerous crusades like this, often with hundreds of decisions. However, I began to become very concerned about conserving the results of such meetings. Many huge crusades were being conducted in Africa with massive crowds attending and huge numbers of converts. But often after some months, the number of converts continuing in fellowship was often very disappointing. I began to realise that it was one thing to have a big crusade and quite another to disciple and conserve the results. I began to pray about placing more emphasis on training pastors in leadership, discipleship and church growth.

World Map Comes To Africa

At this time I was contacted by Dr Ralph Mahoney, of Burbank, California, who asked if I would assist in organising Minister's Seminars in Africa. I was thrilled. I wanted to meet pastors and help train and equip them to see their churches grow. Ralph and World Map, the organisation he had founded, have a tremendous burden for emerging world pastors. Their seminars, together with their bi monthly magazine ACTS, were a source of inspiration to thousands. It was just the kind of work I wanted to become involved in. I happily acceded to his request and also to his invitation to be one of the speakers and teachers at the Seminars.

In the subsequent two or three years I ministered with Ralph and his team at many seminars in various African nations.

Brian Bailey, Emmanuel Cannistraci, Dave Clark, Elijah Maswanganyi and Charles Newington also joined the teams at various times. The seminars were called SPIRITUAL RENEWAL SEMINARS and their primary purpose was to introduce Pastors to a new dimension of liberty and authority in the Holy Spirit. The seminars were mainly conducted with and at the request of, evangelical denominations. We experienced many times of great blessing and renewal.

One of the seminars that I remember vividly was held in Blantyre, Malawi in a Presbyterian church originally founded by David Livingstone. About 600 pastors were present filling the large church with many bodies and lots of excitement. The Presbyterian organisers had firmly requested that we please refrain from mentioning speaking in tongues and we had agreed to abide by this.

The first night that I was to preach, I stood before the pulpit, opened my Bible and began to pray and to read out the scripture from which I intended to teach. As I prayed, I became aware of a man sitting a few rows back in the crowd. He was beginning to shake and tremble in his chair. Quietly at first, then much more noticeably. I asked the Lord to please deal with him, but the man shook even more and began to speak in tongues. From the platform I then asked him politely to stop, but his actions became even stronger. Excusing myself momentarily, I left the platform, threw the offender over my shoulder and marched out of the hall and down the paddock where I dropped him rather unceremoniously. I left him there, returned to the hall and continued my teaching.

Two years later, we were back in the same venue, with the same organisers. I sat on the platform with my Presbyterian Elder friends, once again waiting to teach. During the worship, the Bishop whispered to me, “There is a brother here tonight who has just returned from holding big crusades in Tanzania and elsewhere, would you mind if we give him 15 minutes to bring a report?” Obviously, I did not mind and they called the man forward. As he walked to the platform I thought, “I know this man. Where have I seen him before?” Ascending to the platform, he pointed in my direction and said, “The last time I was in this hall, this man carried me from the meeting and left me in the field.” Of course, I immediately knew then where I had seen him previously. He then began to testify. “At that time I was a Church of Christ pastor who had never heard of the Holy Spirit. But God baptised me powerfully in the Spirit. When I returned to my church, I was a new man. God began to confirm His Word with many signs and miracles. Soon the church building was too small. Eventually I resigned from the pastorate and began to travel as an evangelist. Now I am seeing thousands of people in my meetings every night. Thousands are being saved, healed, baptised in the Spirit and several have actually been raised from the dead!” The audience burst into applause. Later we looked through albums containing scores of photographs of huge crowds and miraculous healings.

I rejoice that now, 25 years later, many of those pastors who attended the seminars have congregations with thousands of members. After arranging and speaking at numerous seminars in Africa, Ralph asked me to join their teams to visit Asia too. So every year I would join he and his teams

to visit numerous Asian countries. This became my initial introduction to many nations with which I would later become deeply involved.

Ministry in Asia

At Christmas 1976 I was invited to New Zealand to speak at a large conference in Tauranga. Rev David Wong, from Asian Outreach, Hong Kong was the other speaker. At that time the People's Republic of China was hidden behind the bamboo curtain. Virtually no outsiders were allowed to enter.

As I listened to David deliver his concern for China, a heavy burden of prayer came on me. Sitting on the platform that night behind David, I prayed quietly in tongues the whole evening. As I prayed I felt the Spirit within me say, "The door to China will soon be open and you will be among the first to enter!" Such an idea or possibility had never previously entered my head, but after that word I knew that I would soon visit China.

A few months later I was ministering in the Philippines when a phone call came through from Rev Dennis Balcombe in Hong Kong. He had heard of the word I had received and called to mention that a group of ex-patriate business people had been invited into China by the government to advise on various business ideas that might be helpful to them. The group was to include journalists and as I had an accreditation at that time would I be interested to go if this could be arranged? If so, I would need to travel to Hong Kong immediately for interviews and documentation should I be accepted. It was in May 1977 that I went to Hong Kong and

eventually joined the group. Happily, Dennis was also able to come in his capacity as a language teacher. He had prayed for years that he would one day enter China and now his dream came true. How excited he was and how ably he eluded our cadres and managed to witness to dozens of Chinese citizens.

The missing pieces of a puzzle

It took some time in Hong Kong to gain the necessary permission and visa I needed to join the group. I stayed in a hotel and preached in various churches while waiting for the papers to be processed. One evening I had been strolling the streets and wondering if it was worth all the apparent trouble I was having to obtain the necessary permission. Returning to my hotel I felt rather discouraged and uncertain.

As I entered my hotel room, I stepped right into a vision. The floor of my room appeared to be covered with thousands of pieces of what was obviously a huge jig saw puzzle. As I watched amazed, an angel began to put the pieces together and form a huge map of China, covered in Chinese faces. Soon the huge picture was complete, but wait, one piece was missing. There was a gap in the middle of the picture. Somebody's face was missing. The Lord said, "that one piece represents your imminent visit to China. It is only a small piece, yet if it were missing the whole picture would not be totally complete." I was tremendously encouraged on two counts. First I knew now that I would actually be going into China. Secondly I knew that the visit had some Divine validity and purpose.

I also spoke at a small church in Mongkok, Hong Kong. When I first saw the congregation I thought it was a young people's meeting. Everyone seemed to be so young, except the pastor who had formerly been an officer in the Red army in China. He assured me that the congregation were not as young as they might appear and most of them were actually refugees from the mainland who had swum through shark infested waters to reach Hong Kong! The first part of the service was a prayer time that ran for almost two hours. I began to think they had decided not to have a preacher after all. I launched into prayer with them receiving a real spirit of intercession.

As I prayed, suddenly I saw a vision of some huge, heavy iron gates. Initially they were secured by a heavy chain and a large padlock. As I watched two powerful angels appeared, broke the chain and began to pull open the gates. A voice within me said, "These are the iron gates of China that will soon open wide because of the intercession and prayers of many saints." When I stood to speak, I shared the vision and most of the congregation wept. Many of them had parents and loved ones inside China and longed for the time when they could be reunited. Amazingly, the day Dennis and myself returned to Hong Kong after our visit, the banner headlines of the Hong Kong daily newspaper said that China would soon open and receive visitors again.

Within a few days permission was given and we went into China. It was the first time that Dennis had been there too. He had prayed for the chance for years. He has also been back hundreds of times since, being arrested and expelled several times.

The Pied Piper

One afternoon in China, I was able to get away from the group and the inevitable “guide” who watched our every move. I took a walk through the city and came to a huge park. Strolling through the park I was amazed to find so many young people. It was evidently some kind of holiday. Most of the young people had never seen a white face before and they were obviously fascinated by mine, plus my beard! I began to feel like a pied piper as they followed me around. Suddenly I felt an urge to actually encourage them to come around me so I stood on a small platform and began to sing some African Choruses complete with the dance movements. The young folk were utterly fascinated. They began to come from all over the park until I had a couple of hundred youngsters around me listening to my songs and watching my antics. I asked the Lord, “What shall I do now?” The reply came, “Pray in the Spirit for them.” So I jumped on to a low brick wall, raised my hands towards them and began to pray loudly in Oriental sounding tongues. The effect was amazing. Though I had no idea of what I was saying, many of them began to weep copiously. Others began to laugh and rejoice. Some were obviously shaking and trembling. After some time I moved on to another part of the park and repeated the process. This happened about five times. Someone took some photographs and I was able to get some copies.

After the fifth occasion that I did this, suddenly my “guide” pushed his way through the crowd to the front and shouted, “Mr. Pied Piper, you come with me NOW!” I felt like a schoolboy who had been caught playing truant and meekly followed him back to the group, amazed at what God had

done so unexpectedly. The Spirit told me, “This was a preview of what is going to happen in China very soon.”

In those days we were not allowed to visit any church groups. It was too dangerous for them. However, Dennis, had been able to inform a local pastor that we were coming and we arranged to meet he and his small congregation one evening in front of a shopping Mall. We all gathered in front of one of the windows pretending to be engrossed in the meagre display of goods. Gazing into the window, Dennis introduced us to the pastor and people. We then moved on the next window at which we had a time of prayer. At the third window, Dennis shared a brief message with them. At the fourth window, I spoke and Dennis translated my message. In this manner we eventually walked around the entire city block by which time we had preached four times, prayed, shared news of relatives in Hong Kong and finally received a benediction from our Chinese pastor friend.

A Strange Way To Worship

I also remember visiting a Buddhist Temple that had been turned into a museum by the government. It stood as a relic, a memorial to an unenlightened religious past. Obviously all the “tourists” viewing the old Temple were Chinese. I noticed a young man deliberately place his cigarette on an altar that had originally been used for worship of the ancestors. I presumed that this was his way of showing his contempt for religion and I began to quietly pray for him. As I did so, the Lord whispered in my heart, “He is not trying to show contempt. He is worshipping in his own way. He is typical of millions of young people in China, born since the Communist revolution, yet inwardly aware of an innate

desire to worship. He and millions of his age group will soon hear the Gospel and respond to worship the One true God and His Son Jesus.” Little did I then know of the gigantic proportions that the church in China would soon achieve.

Me And My Big Head

An amusing incident also happened there. I wanted to buy what we then called a “Mao cap” as a souvenir. This was a simple little denim cap of the kind that almost everyone in China wore. I did not realise that they did not call them “Mao caps.” I wandered into several shops that looked like they might sell them. Not being able to speak much Chinese I approached a sales person, pointed to my head and said “Mao!” The sales girl nodded her head in agreement with an amused look on her face, but made no attempt to bring me a cap. I tried the process again, with someone else. It was only after about six failed attempts that I discovered that the Chinese word for head is “Mao.” So I had been pointing at my head and saying in Chinese, “head, head” and they had politely nodded and agreed, “yes sir, that IS your head!” Finally Dennis was able to help me and I managed to purchase my cap.

World Map Renewal Seminars

After I had organised and taught in several WORLD MAP seminars in Africa, Dr Ralph Mahoney asked me to join the ministry team that was visiting Asia. The seminars were known as “Spiritual Renewal Seminars” the objective of which was to introduce ministers, priests and nuns to the Baptism with the Holy Ghost. I was very happy to accompany the team and did so for several years. Each year

we would make a trip through several Asian cities including Hong Kong, Penang, Singapore and several cities in the Philippines.

The seminars were enormously successful and much credit must be given to Ralph for his vision and commitment to these Asian pastors. All of them also received the ACTS magazine bi monthly, an excellent teaching periodical that helped and matured literally thousands of grass roots pastors throughout the world, and especially in Asia. Thousands of grass roots pastors had never received any training except what they learned from the ACTS magazine. Articles and sermons from that magazine were preached all over the emerging world. I was privileged to become a regular writer for ACTS.

Kuala Lumpur

On my first trip to Kuala Lumpur with World Map Seminars two particularly exciting things occurred. The first of these developed shortly after we landed in K.L. by plane. Amongst a reception committee that met us at the Airport was an Indian, Methodist pastor and his wife at whose church I was booked to preach that very evening.

On the way to the church they told me a fascinating story. Both had recently been filled with the Spirit in a charismatic fashion including speaking in tongues. They were both very excited about this and naively throughout their congregation would be too. Some were, but many were not. Gradually over some months, the church became divided and it was determined that a members meeting would be held to determine the future of the pastor in that church. The

members meeting was scheduled for that very evening and would be held in the church immediately following the service in which I was booked to preach. The pastor and his wife were understandably rather nervous and tense and I was also very concerned for them and the situation.

I felt led to preach that night on Acts 2:38, “Jesus Christ, Saviour, Lord and Baptiser in the Holy Spirit.” There were about 150 people in church that evening, most of whom were members planning to attend the special members meeting. I preached the Gospel powerfully and to my astonishment, when I gave an appeal about half the congregation came forward forming several lines across the building to receive prayer for salvation. Having prayed for them all together at the front, instead of dismissing them, I then asked, “Now, how many of you would like to be filled with the Holy Spirit?” To my further astonishment everyone at the front raised their hands. I then began to move down the row laying hands on each person and praying for the Holy Spirit to fill them. In a remarkable manner, every person prayed for began immediately to speak in tongues. Suddenly the congregation that had largely been ready to sack the pastor for speaking in tongues, were mostly now themselves doing what they had accused their minister of doing. When the members meeting was convened later the pastor received an overwhelming vote of confidence to remain in that church.

The second interesting event occurred in the actual seminar. About 600 pastors and workers had booked into the Spiritual Renewal Seminar convened in a large hotel. Amongst the delegates were two businessmen, who were also leading elders in a local Brethren church. They had really come to

find fault with the Charismatic theology and experience. They sat together near the back of the meetings taking copious notes and generally trying to discover weaknesses and faults in the meetings.

However, one evening the Holy Spirit descended sovereignly on the whole crowd and many were baptised in the Spirit right where they sat in the congregation, including the two Brethren elders who had certainly not been seeking such an experience. The next Sunday morning they shared the news of their experience with their local fellowship and following the service they were asked to resign! Being suddenly without a place to fellowship, they met the following Sunday in one of their homes. With both families together were thirteen in number. They clearly felt that God encouraged them not to join another church but to commence a new one with their two families. This decision was obviously the right one because the new church, named “Full Gospel Assembly” eventually grew to some 5,000 members meeting in a former cinema in Kuala Lumpur which they transformed into a church facility.

Singapore

Singapore was yet another country in which the national church benefited tremendously from the World Map Seminars. Initially these were held in St. Andrews Anglican Cathedral at the invitation of the Bishop Chui Banit. With each subsequent visit a larger facility had to be found because hundreds of people, mainly from the Anglican and Methodist churches were wonderfully Baptised in the Spirit and released into fresh dimensions of Worship and spiritual activity. Both of these denominations today have thousands

of Spirit filled believers among them and the Charismatic scene in Singapore is extremely strong. The last seminar we held there was in the famous Singapore indoor stadium where some 6,000 delegates attended. These seminars changed the face of the church in Singapore enormously.

During one of our visits I met the Rev Derek Hong who was a young Anglican vicar. Following prayer one day he was gloriously filled with the Spirit and was extremely excited about his fresh experience. However, the next time I saw him he seemed quite depressed. When I asked what his problem was he recounted that he had eagerly told his congregation of some sixty members that he had now been filled with the Spirit and half of them promptly resigned. He was depressed because since being filled with the Spirit he had managed to lose half his congregation which was not what he had hoped for! As I prayed for him again, the Lord encouraged me to share with him the scripture, “Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord!” I advised him not to try to push the charismatic experience but just to stand faithful and let God do the work. That same congregation known as Church of Our Saviour, later grew to some 6,000 members and became one of the finest congregations in Singapore. Canon Hong is still the senior minister there.

In Singapore we made many good friendships that last until this day. These were mostly with members of the Anglican and Methodist churches who had come into renewal through the Seminars at which we had taught for several years. Canon James Wong and his delightful wife Esther became stalwarts of the renewal in the Anglican church. We are grateful to God for such good friends and for the

opportunities being with them in Singapore gave us into many other Asian nations.

The Philippines

Undoubtedly the nation most powerfully affected by the Renewal Seminars was the Philippines. The last time I visited there as a member of the World Map team in 1979 some 7,000 pastors, priests and nuns attended the four seminars conducted. Literally hundreds of these were powerfully baptised in the Spirit. Some of the priests took the new revival back to their parishes and established Catholic Charismatic groups with more than 5,000 people attending a single service. All manner of spiritual manifestations were witnessed as the Holy Spirit accomplished a fresh and vital work among them.

Many Evangelical pastors were also filled with the Spirit and a great surge of evangelism flowed through the islands of the Philippines. An Evangelical leader recently told me, “I recognise the World Map seminars in the 1970’s as the catalyst that launched our present harvest.” The Philippine Council of Evangelical churches which numbered some 3,000 churches a few years ago, now numbers 43,000 and is believing for 50,000 churches.

A young University lecturer was also filled with the Spirit in one of the seminars. He became so fervent for the Lord that the University gave him an ultimatum. “Make up your mind whether you are a professor or a preacher, because you cannot be both.” God encouraged him to resign his excellent position and plant a church in Manila. The young man was Rev Eddie Villeneuve and that was the commencement of

the “Jesus is Lord” Fellowship which now has more than 500,000 members throughout the Philippines and elsewhere. The visitation of the Holy Spirit that we witnessed then in numerous Asian nations still impacts those nations today.

ACTS Bible School Harare

Meanwhile, back in Africa God encouraged me to take my wife and children to Zimbabwe and establish a Bible Training Centre. It was a very difficult time in the nation which was in the midst of a fierce and costly civil war during which thousands were tortured and killed. Also some 83 missionaries were murdered during that period. Travelling was difficult and always had to be done in convoys that were protected by military vehicles. The convoys were told to travel at more than 100 mph and not to stop for anything. In the event of an ambush, the instruction was to keep driving faster than ever and let the army engage the insurgents.

I personally had a wonderful deliverance on one occasion. I had been ministering to some of the Rhodesian soldiers in camps on the border of Mozambique. I then needed to get back to Salisbury. An army captain was to drive me back but unfortunately we missed the convoy that had left from Birchenough Bridge. However, deciding to risk it alone we set off for the city. A few miles along the road we discovered the army engaging a “contact” (military skirmish) The soldiers re-routed us by another way. However, as we drove towards the road they had suggested, God gave me a definite witness not to go by that route but to drive even further out of our way. It was certainly God’s mercy that we did because the vehicle 10 minutes behind us that took the road we had been advised to take, ran right into an ambush

on that road and all three persons were shot to death. Their vehicle was also totally destroyed.

The Birth Of ACTS Bible College

We were fortunate to find an old motel for sale in an excellent position in Salisbury and it was purchased to accommodate the new Bible College we opened in 1980. The school was established under the auspices of Faith Fellowship, a Charismatic church that now has 29 branch churches in Harare alone. We decided to run a one year Course, divided into three semesters. The whole curriculum would focus on evangelism and church planting. I prepared the curriculum in three stages.

1. Personal foundations and Soul winning.
2. Ministry principles and Church planting.
3. Effective leadership and church growth.

We began in a small way with only 43 students the first year. After the first three month term teaching Module One, we declared a three week recess, instructing the students to go out in small groups, practising those things they had learned and seeking to bring people to Christ. When they all returned to commence the second term we discovered that all together they had brought more than 600 people to Christ in three weeks!

Following the second term when we taught ministry principles, such as Preaching, Praise and Worship, healing and church planting, we sent them out again. Back to the towns and places in which they had won the 600 converts, this time to initiate regular meetings and local church

activities. Several new churches were launched during that break.

After term three we held our first graduation after which the students left to undertake the various new ministries that God had opened to them. The school still continues to this day. It has been a thrill since then to see hundreds of graduates go out and plant churches all over the nation and in other surrounding countries.

The lessons I prepared and taught through those three semesters became the basis for our present training course in CPI. So the material and a similar influence has now been spread to numerous parts of the world.

Interesting Neighbours

The property purchased to house the Bible College consisted of a large old house and a somewhat more modern motel block. It was bought cheaply because the house needed considerable renovation, most of which was done by our college students. Eventually the property was very liveable and considerably more valuable. In the middle of our first school term the agent through whom we had bought it came to see if we would like to sell it. He said he could get a very good price for it and make it worth our while selling. However, the property was now ideal for our needs and moving would create numerous problems and interruptions, so we declined. He came back a week later saying that he could virtually get a blank cheque from his client who was VERY keen to buy the property. He declined to name his client and we declined the sale.

A few weeks later we discovered that the Russian Embassy had bought the houses on either side of our property. They had wanted our property too for security purposes and to provide accommodation for some of their embassy personnel. So our modest little Bible College was surrounded by the Russian Embassy. In our morning prayer meetings, our students would face the embassy, with hands raised towards it and pray for the fall of Communism and for its countries to be opened for the Gospel. Obviously this was many years before Mikhail Gorbachev and Perestroika emerged, but eventually our prayers, and that of many others around the world, must have helped to change the structure of the U.S.S.R!

During this period the Soviet President died in office and we began to pray for the situation this caused in the U.S.S.R. One of our women students took things a step further one morning when she passed the embassy gates en route to school. She felt that the Holy Spirit told her, "Go into the embassy and tell them that the college students next door sympathise with the Russian people concerning the death of their President and are praying for their nation." It was not easy to get past the guards, but eventually she talked her way in. Right into the Ambassadors office! She repeated her message to him and he asked if she would kindly write out the message. He wanted to send it as a special signal to Moscow! This incident opened a door for us to get to know some of the Russian staff with whom we had many interesting conversations.

A Dream Come True

I clearly remember our first graduation service for a number of good reasons. One of them is the conversation I had afterwards with one of our graduates. Lewyn was a very sincere and dedicated student but not our most outstanding one academically. He asked me if he could show me a plan that God had given to him. It was drawn on a page torn from an exercise book and consisted of a roughly drawn plan of a church building, including the dimensions. He said that God had given him the plan and told him that he was to build it. I quickly realised that this was quite a sizeable building, large enough to contain 800 - 1,000 persons. An ambitious plan for a young man who has had only one year of basic training. I certainly did not wish to discourage him, nor did I become too excited about it. I simply tried to make appropriate noises and say that if this were truly from God, then it would come to pass.

Imagine my surprise when some years later we again met Lewyn at a minister's seminar in Zimbabwe. After the initial surprise, he asked, "Do you remember the plan that I showed you after graduation?" I assured him that I did. He then pulled the same sheet of paper from his pocket, rather more creased than the previous time. "Would you like to see it?" he asked. Thinking that he meant the plan, I reached out to take it from his hand. "No" he said. "I don't mean the drawing, I mean the actual building. We have erected the building and it is filled every week with our congregation and we have planted a further twelve churches too!"

At the same seminar we also met many other graduates from ACTS Bible College who have planted hundreds of new

churches in several African nations. Only God knew what an impact that little College would eventually have on that great continent and ultimately many other parts of the world.

The Birth Of Glad Tidings

One of my lecturing staff at the commencement of the ACTS College, was Rev Richmond Chundiza a youth evangelist. His main area of ministry lay in High Schools and Colleges, where he ministered to thousands of students. However, whilst teaching at ACTS, he began to get excited about church planting. One morning he told me, “Brother Gerald, I feel that God is challenging me to plant a new church in Harare, what do you think?” After prayer, I felt strongly to encourage him with this idea.

The beginnings of “Glad Tidings” were very humble. In a small, rented school room he had seven people including his wife and children. This continued for several months, but then gradually more people discovered the meetings and began to attend. Today, Glad Tidings has some 10,000 people attending its several congregations and has planted a further 130 new churches in various parts of Zimbabwe. Richmond is recognised as an Apostolic father amongst his people and his ministry is in great demand in many nations.

Dear People With Wax In Their Ears

About this time I was asked to speak at a Convention in a Pentecostal Church in South Africa. When praying about the invitation the Lord gave me some information about the congregation that had invited me. He said, in effect, “I want you to be gentle with this congregation. They are very dear to Me but they have wax in their ears.” Not really

understanding the significance of this information I nevertheless accepted their invitation.

It was a very old, conservative, Pentecostal congregation but many other Christians in that city, knowing that I was a “Charismatic preacher” attended the meetings. Over the course of four days and nights we had some unique and powerful meetings at which scores of people experienced new dimensions in the Holy Spirit, many speaking in new tongues, prophesying and exercising other spiritual manifestations. One Baptist pastor, who had brought numbers of his members told me later that it was the start of a new era in his church.

The interesting thing was that although so many others had been powerfully blessed by what they heard and experienced, the local congregation seemed to hear and receive nothing. They were exactly the same on the final day as they had been previously. It seemed, in retrospect, that this congregation of precious people, had been sitting for three days with “wax in their ears.” However, on the final day, after preaching and ministering tenderly, the wax melted and they joyfully entered into what God was doing. Many of them received new dimensions of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

The Renewal Conferences in Johannesburg

Whilst living in South Africa, I was privileged to speak at two huge national renewal seminars in Johannesburg in 1977 and 1979. At the first of these, I had not been invited to speak but just before I left home to attend as one of the delegates the Lord told me that I would be asked to take a

seminar each day. I accordingly prepared my heart and thoughts. Arriving at the seminar, the main organiser, Rev Derek Crumpton a Methodist minister from East London, sought me out. He said that one of the proposed speakers, an American preacher had cancelled his trip due to sudden ill health. Apparently Derek was quite relieved that I accepted his request and even more surprised when I told him that God had shown me before leaving home that I would be asked to teach there. These conferences proved to be a launching pad for a fresh move of the Holy Spirit throughout South Africa. Hundreds of churches were impacted by the rivers of new life that began to flow in those conferences.

Filled With New Wine!

An amusing incident took place at the close of the conference, which was a Sunday evening. That afternoon all the delegates and speakers had celebrated Communion together, the first such inter-denominational Eucharist ever held in South Africa involving both Protestant and Roman Catholic participants. It was also the largest such gathering ever held with a congregation of more than 8,000 persons present. The meeting was a great success, but it also provided a particular problem.

Just prior to the closing service in the evening I met the Anglican Bishop who had been responsible for the logistics of the Communion Service. When I congratulated him and remarked on how successful the event had been, he agreed with me but also said, “Yes, but it has left me with a real problem.” The problem ensued from the fact that no one on the committee, had ever organised a Eucharist of that size before. Consequently none of the members knew exactly

how much wine and wafers would be needed. Preferring to have too much rather than two little an abundance of the elements had been provided, more than was actually needed. “My problem” said the Bishop, is that “having consecrated the host it must now be totally consumed.”

Since there were some sixty conference speakers and their wives present my suggestion was, “Why not have another farewell communion service after the evening meeting for the all the speakers?” My idea seemed to solve the problem. All the speakers were duly informed and later gathered together for this additional service. Unfortunately, a further problem emerged when we discovered just how much wafer and wine remained. The bread came in the form of a tiny circular wafer that tasted like plastic. The wine however, was the real thing!

The bread was served first, the Bishop urging us all to “take plenty, there is a lot to consume.” Unfortunately this made one’s palate very dry so that when the wine came round in large cups, which were also abundantly available, everyone tended to take a deeper swig than normal. The servers of both wafer and wine had to go round several times in an effort to use up all the consecrated host and after some 5 or 6 mouthfuls of wafer, followed by the same amount of wine, the congregation were becoming decidedly happier! We were all singing choruses throughout this period but after some forty minutes some were becoming very happy. And it wasn’t necessarily the joy of the Lord that was causing the merriment! The meeting concluded in a very happy fashion and I am sure that all the delegates slept well that night. Including the Bishop.

God's Word About Israel

At the second of these conferences, I had been asked to speak again and Elizabeth and myself attended the huge conference of some 8,000 leaders. The ministry was undertaken by many well known preachers and teachers from around the world. One evening, whilst sitting in the large congregation, God spoke to both Elizabeth and myself in a manner that probably altered the direction of our life. The message that night was on the Second Coming and Derek Prince was the preacher. Towards the end of the service God spoke powerfully to both Liz and myself. Not through the sermon but internally to our spirits. The gist of the message was, "I want you to get your attitude towards Israel straightened out because your effectiveness of your ministry from now on will depend on you having a right attitude to my ancient people and their land." He then told me, "Very soon, you will be invited to speak at an International conference in Jerusalem. I want you to accept the invitation but remain in the land for a further three weeks, I want to speak to you there about Israel and Jerusalem." Imagine my surprise when the following week, the phone rang in our home outside a rather remote African village and a voice said, "This is the Women's Aglow International office in Washington State, USA. We want to ask you to please be one of our speakers at our forthcoming World Conference in Jerusalem, Israel." They also were apparently surprised that I was able to accept immediately until I explained that God had already told me that such an invitation would be forthcoming.

Elizabeth and I flew into Jerusalem from Malawi in Central East Africa where we had been staying in a primitive mud

hut in a remote African village. It was quite a contrast when the Aglow Conference organisers placed us into the five star Hilton hotel in Jerusalem. We were certainly learning how to be abased and how to abound.

However, the first few nights in Jerusalem, before the conference began we had booked ourselves into the Christ Church Hospice, by the Jaffa gate, in the old city of Jerusalem. We arrived at 3.a.m. after a long flight from Africa but so great was our excitement to be in Jerusalem that we arose at 6.a.m. and began investigating the fascinating city, walking around it for the next eighteen hours. Eventually we returned to Christchurch utterly exhausted but elated. Before tumbling into bed, Liz and I had a short time of prayer. I had been very conscious throughout that day of two perspectives that most pilgrims to Israel experience. On one hand we saw the city through the rose coloured spectacles of Bible believers, excitedly viewing all the places where Jesus had been. On the other hand, in the natural, we were conscious that Israel was very dry, rocky and barren looking, especially compared to Africa. The city was also very dusty and even dirty. To the natural eye it did not appear to be “The City of the Great King.”

In my tired mind as I prayed late that night I remember saying to God, “Dear God, Why did you choose THIS place?” Immediately His response came to my spirit, “Why did I choose YOU?” I quickly realised that God was saying “I don’t choose the beautiful places and improve them slightly. I take the things that are nothing and glorify them. I

take the beggar from the dunghill and place him amongst princes!” “All right Lord” I said “I get the message!”

Once again, the main featured speaker became suddenly ill and I was asked to take her sessions as well as my own. Since my mind was already excited by what God had told me and then shown me about Israel and Jerusalem, I found myself sharing much revelation on those subjects with the wonderful delegates to the conference. For years afterwards we would meet members of Aglow all over the world and many would tell me, “Your messages on Israel at the Jerusalem conference changed my life!” It also changed our lives and even those of our two daughters who frequently came to Israel with us for many years. It has been an ongoing love affair with the people and land of Israel that has taken us back there about twenty times. It has also given us many opportunities to share with Jewish people in many nations.

A Personal Experience

My wife and I have spent a great deal of time in Israel. During some of this time we have often acted as leaders for groups of Christian tourists to the land. I well remember leading a group some years ago, for which we also had an Israeli tour guide with whom I became very friendly. I genuinely liked this man and enjoyed his company and his sense of humour. One evening, after our group had retired for the night, he and I sat together talking together into the early hours. Our conversation led me to share my testimony with him and tell him my experience of salvation through Jesus. He listened quietly and attentively, and then said something to this effect, "I am very interested in what you have shared and very happy for you that you have found such

a wonderful experience of faith, however I personally cannot believe like that." He then proceeded to detail the reasons why he could not believe as I did. Shortly afterwards the conversation concluded and we went our separate ways to bed.

The following morning as Elizabeth and I entered the dining room, I saw our guide sitting alone and we went over to join him at the breakfast table. After a few minutes of normal conversation our guide suddenly said in a somewhat terse tone, "What is it with you Gerald, what are you up to?" I was stunned. "I don't know what you mean", I said, "Please explain what you mean." He then began to relate the following. He said, "I have been an official tour guide in Israel for some twenty years. During this time I have acted as guide for hundreds of Christian groups. The pattern has always been the same, with slight variations. At the beginning of the tour, the Christians are extremely friendly towards me and we usually enjoy a good rapport that almost becomes a friendship. But once we have established this rapport and they feel they have won my confidence, then comes the crunch. They share with me the "way of salvation." I have heard the message hundreds of times, but I cannot sincerely accept it for myself, and I have to tell them this, as I did to you last night. Unfortunately, once I tell them that I cannot believe that Jesus is the Messiah, that usually concludes the beautiful friendship and from that moment it becomes a purely business relationship." He went on to add, "last night after we parted, I was mad with myself for allowing this to happen with you. I was convinced that our friendship was now over and I was deeply disappointed. But you are talking with me now as though nothing

happened last night, and I am confused. What is it with you?"

Of course I explained that my enjoyment of him was genuine. I really liked him. Not simply because I was cultivating a friendship with a view to "winning him for Christ", but because I truly appreciated and enjoyed his company. "I would be delighted if you discovered that Jesus is the Messiah", I told him. "But that was not the reason that I pursued a friendship with you. I want to be a friend to you whether you accept Jesus or not, and I sincerely hope that we can continue in our friendship just as before." I am pleased to report that our friendship has now continued for many years and does to this day.

The Synagogue in Harare

In our ACTS College in Harare, Zimbabwe, we also taught the students about God's relationship to His ancient people, the Jews. Every Friday night, we encouraged the students to accompany us to the local Synagogue service. Initially the Synagogue congregation were quite suspicious of us and what our real motives might be. In those days there was quite a lot of anti-Semitic feeling around and the Synagogue had been stoned several times. But after some months of patient attendance, on Simcah Torah, at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles, the Rabbi and members invited us to carry the Torah with them and dance together in the Synagogue. From then on, we were great friends and the Jewish people greatly appreciated our identification with them. It was the beginning of a special friendship and relationship between the Synagogue and the College.

The Chief Rabbi From Capetown

One evening the Synagogue hosted a special visit from the Chief Rabbi of Southern Africa who lived in Capetown, South Africa. An elderly gentleman, with great wisdom and dignity, he gave a remarkable sermon that night. Afterwards when introducing everyone to him, I was presented as “The Reverend Rowlands, Principal of the Christian Bible College.” The Rabbi’s eyes pierced mine as he inquired, “Are you a Charismatic?” Not knowing the reason for his question, I quietly acknowledged that I was. A bright smile then lit up his face as he said, “I thought so. It is the charismatics vot luv de Jews!” I was delighted to hear his observation.

Our Love Affair With Israel

It was also whilst we were living in Africa that I was first invited to speak at the Christian Celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. Johann Luckhoff, the Director of The International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem is a South African and we met first in Capetown when I was conducting an evangelistic crusade. Some time later I received an invitation to speak at the 1983 Feast Celebration in Jerusalem which I happily accepted. God had sown into our hearts a tremendous love and high regard for His ancient people from whom Jesus Himself, according to the flesh, was born. Elizabeth actually has Jewish ancestry through her Grandmother who was a French Jewess from Nice in the South of France and I suppose this became some small part of the reason why we feel such an affinity with the Jews. However, much more than this is the fact that the physical ancestors of our Lord are all Jewish as are the Bible Prophets, our forefathers in God. (Rom 9:4)

I was also booked again to speak at the next Feast in 1984. However, a few weeks prior to the Feast I received a further message from Jerusalem asking if I would take over the responsibility for the Praise and Worship at the forthcoming Feast. Although not musically qualified in a technical sense, I agreed to do so. I then continued to fill that position for eight years having asked my good friend and colleague, Rev David Johnston to be the music director. David has been greatly used by God to make this annual event a glorious occasion. His musical knowledge and skills have advanced the dimensions of the audio-visual aspects of the Celebration. His sweet humility of spirit has also been an inspiration and example to all the music staff there. I personally found great fulfilment and satisfaction during the many years I led the praise and worship. Every year we saw hundreds of lives powerfully impacted among both Christians and Jews. Our close association with the Feast in various capacities has continued ever since. Two of our daughters, Kathryn and Virginia were also deeply affected by this relationship. Kathryn became personal secretary to the Embassy Director and Virginia met Joel Baker who later became her husband when they both served on the Embassy staff.

The International Christian Embassy was formed in Jerusalem in 1980. The Israeli Knesset, (Parliament) had moved their offices from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and the Arab oil nations had persuaded all other nations to do the opposite, as a form of protest against the Israeli decision. Such blatant political manoeuvring had greatly disheartened the Israeli people. So a group of Christians meeting in Jerusalem, determined to open a “Christian Embassy” to

convey to the Israeli's a message that "if all the nations object to your official presence in Jerusalem, Christians around the world believe that it is right."

The International Christian Embassy of Jerusalem has continued to function and grow ever since. It has ministered remarkable encouragement to the Jewish nation for more than twenty years. Literally thousands of Jewish citizens have been confronted by the love of God through the lives of tens of thousands of Christians who have visited the Embassy and its varied activities. A strong social assistance program has flourished giving help to thousands of Arabs, Jews, and new migrants to the land.

One of the many things they have done to indicate their love for Israel has been to hold a large celebration each year in Jerusalem. Held at the time of the Jewish Feast of Succoth, (Tabernacles) it is called "The Christian Celebration during the Feast of Tabernacles." For many years now it has been the largest tourist event of the year for Israel. Some of the events have attracted some 8,000 people, Christians and Jews. The consistent presence in Jerusalem of so many Christians every year, even at times of considerable crisis and tension, has been an enormous source of encouragement to Israel. Several Prime Ministers of Israel have publicly declared, "You Christians are the greatest friends that Israel has beyond her borders." The activities of the Embassy are predicated on the scripture,

Isa 40:1-2

I Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

2 *Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.* (NIV)

I later became the Australian Director for the Embassy and have been closely involved with it ever since. We came to understand that our love for Israel, God's ancient covenant people, is part of our love for Jesus who Himself, according to the flesh, was Jewish. Caring for the Jews is caring for His brethren. (Matt 25:40)

It was about this time that I learned this little saying about God and the Jews.

How Odd of God
To choose the Jews,
Yet odder still are those,
Who choose the Jewish God
But not the Jews.

Our affinity with the Jewish people became an obvious extension of our love for Christ. How can one love someone and yet despise the very people from whom they have descended?

I know that many Ministers and Christians are puzzled by our great love for and interest in Israel. I am equally puzzled by their lack of interest and love. When pastors sometimes ask me, "Why all the interest in Israel?" I usually say, "Because I have been reading the Bible and it is filled with God's love for Israel." Approximately 2/3rds of the Bible is

taken up with God's relationship with Israel. If God wants us to read and study all this He obviously wants us well informed about His love for Israel and His patient dealings with them. It is always a genuine source of amazement to me when I discover so many "Bible loving Christians" who feel little interest in Israel, the land and the people of the Bible.

We had some truly amazing experiences in Israel whilst sharing at the Feast. One night at the Feast was particularly memorable. During the evening service held in the largest auditorium in Israel, the praise and worship developed in an extremely powerful manner. Times of intense worship were interspersed with several powerful prophetic utterances. The atmosphere became so electrified that many Jewish people spontaneously fell on their faces before God. The theme of the utterances was how much God loved His people Israel and that He would protect them in their times of danger.

Later that night, unbeknown to anyone, scores of fanatical Arabs crept on to Temple Mount throughout that night, all armed with heavy rocks and pieces of concrete. The following morning hundreds of Jews, including many elderly and children, gathered before the Western Wall of the Temple to pray. Suddenly the silence was broken by the strident noise of amplifiers on nearby Mosques. Voices were yelling loudly, "Kill the Jews! Kill the Jews!" The Arabs on Temple mount, high above the Western Wall, began to throw down their heavy rocks on to the unprotected heads of Jewish worshippers some 60 feet below. The worshippers were virtually shoulder to shoulder, hardly able to move or raised their hands as the huge rocks rained down on their unprotected heads. Miraculously not one person was

injured. Many later commented, including Teddy Kolleck, the Mayor of Jerusalem, that it was truly a miracle from God that none were killed nor even injured. Those who had experienced the service the previous evening acknowledged that the Holy Spirit had anticipated the event through prayers, intercession and prophecies of assurance that He would protect His people.

One evening the Chief Rabbi of Israel was due to speak at the Celebration. He had wedged his visit into several commitments for that night and was due to arrive at our gathering about one hour after its commencement. I was leading the worship and mindful of the fact that he would arrive at 8.30.p.m. and needed to speak immediately in order to keep faith with the remainder of his engagements. But the worship really “took off” that night. At 8.30.p.m. the whole congregation was caught up with the choir and orchestra, singing and worshipping in the Spirit. The auditorium was electric with God’s presence. The Rabbi arrived on time and someone asked him to kindly sit on the platform for a few minutes until we could fit in his speech. Initially he refused to come on to the platform saying, “Ha Shem” (God) is on that platform in such a dynamic way that I cannot sit there!” As the worship subsided somewhat, he did come up to deliver his talk. Amongst many other interesting comments, he said, “When Messiah arrives in Israel, the first thing I will ask Him is, Excuse me Sir, is this your first visit to the Holy Land?”

Welcome To The Messiah

Each year, during Succoth, the Feast of Tabernacles, a Jerusalem March is sponsored by the Jerusalem City

Council. Thousands of Israeli's march representing their unions, businesses companies etc. The delegates to the Christian Celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles have also been welcomed to participate each year. Usually some 3,000 to 4,000 of them join thousands of Israeli's and in colourful costumes, with exotic banners, they march and dance down the streets shouting words of encouragement to huge crowds of local citizens.

I still vividly remember the first occasion that I too marched. I was thrilled and amazed to see the thousands of spectators who lined the long route. Obviously they were there mainly to cheer their fellow citizens and rejoice with them in the city of the Great King.

As we approached one of the many intersections, I noticed a large crowd of orthodox Jews in their traditional black coats and hats. They were all staring at the huge contingent of Christians that were approaching them with banners held high proclaiming "Shalom Jerusalem" peace to this city. The Jews began to shout loudly and wave their arms enthusiastically. At first, I could scarcely believe what my ears were hearing. I checked with a fellow marcher. "Do you hear what I hear?" His eyes were running with tears as he nodded, speechless. The crowd was roaring, "Baruch Haba ba Shem Adonai " "Blessed are you who come in the name of the Lord." I remembered the words of Jesus to Jerusalem spoken 2,000 years ago,

Matt 23:37-39

37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to

gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.

38 *Look, your house is left to you desolate.*

39 ***For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'***

(NIV)

Friends In High Places

Through the many years that we have consistently visited Israel it has been our privilege and joy to meet and talk with numerous Prime Ministers and Presidents of Israel, including Mr. Shamir, Mr Shimon Peres, Mr Rabin and Mr Netanyahu, President Herzog and long time popular Mayor of Jerusalem Teddy Kollect.

Each of these men impressed us enormously with their strength of character and personal modesty. Every one of them inherited an extremely difficult task, battling against enormous opposition to maintain the important place of Israel as the only democracy in the Middle East. Each of them, in seeking to win peace for Israel and Jerusalem, has been faced with problems that ultimately only the Messiah can solve. Contrary to a widely held view amongst Christians that Israel is strongly anti Christian, each of them has expressed to us at some time their deep appreciation of Christians around the world who love, pray for and support Israel. Every Christian needs to be mindful of and obedient to the injunction of God,

Psalms 122:6-7

6 *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May those who love you be secure.*

7 *May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels." (NIV)*

In 1998 I was once again invited to teach again at the Feast in Jerusalem. The theme for that year was "The Harvest of the Nations." As I sought God for a specific subject on this theme I sensed that God gave me, "The seed of Abraham and the End Time Harvest," My mind immediately began to dwell on the Abrahamic Covenant in Gen 12:1-3, and the fact that God had promised that through Abraham's seed, "All the nations on earth would be blessed." I began to make notes along the usual line that Israel is the seed of Abraham, Jesus is his seed, the church is his seed etc. I realised also that in the deepest sense of this prophecy, the seed particularly refers to Jesus.

Gal 3:16

16 *The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ. (NIV)*

But as I delved more deeply into the study of Abraham's seed I particularly noted, that the Greek word for seed (sperma) in the Septuagint refers also to biological seed. (sperm) I also noted another reference to Abraham's seed concerning Ishmael.

Gen 21:13

13 *"Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, (Ishmael, son of Hagar) because he is your seed." (NKJ)*

Gen 21:13.

*I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, **because he is your offspring.**" NIV*

Although I vaguely knew this, reading it so clearly now came as a shock to my system. I became intrigued and excited to follow through what God was trying to tell me. The more I read, the more clearly I realised that Ishmael is also a seed of Abraham and though he was not part of the primary covenant of Abraham, yet God has made prophetic provision for him precisely because he is of Abraham's seed.

Gen 17:18-21

18 *And Abraham said to God, "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!"*

19 *Then God said, "Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.*

20 **And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation.**

21 *But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year." (NIV)*

I instinctively knew that many delegates at the Feast might never have seen this truth. Sadly there are also many Christians who subconsciously feel that to love the Jew, one must also inevitably despise the Arabs. Nevertheless, despite some warning bell in my mind, I knew that I had to expound the view that God does have a special prophetic destiny for

the descendants of Ishmael, notably the Arab people. I therefore pursued my study, realising afresh that because of the whole circumstance of God's promise to Abraham and the manner in which it had eventuated in Genesis, Isaac and Ishmael, were in conflict all their lives. That is until the death of Abraham. It took the death of a mutual relative to eventually bring together these two sons of Abraham.

Gen 25:8-9

8 *Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people.*

9 *His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite, (NIV)*

Isaac later died and was buried near his father. As for Ishmael,

Gen 25:16-18

16 *These were the sons of Ishmael, and these are the names of the twelve tribal rulers according to their settlements and camps.*

17 *Altogether, Ishmael lived a hundred and thirty-seven years. **He breathed his last and died, and he was gathered to his people.***

18 *His descendants settled in the area from Havilah to Shur, near the border of Egypt, as you go toward Asshur. And they lived in hostility toward all their brothers. (NIV)*

Following the burial of Abraham the two brothers had evidently parted in peace. Could it be prophetically that a revelation concerning the death of a common relative

(Christ) might eventually heal the faction and bring together their descendants? What might happen in the “Peace Talks” if both sides could meet as “brothers” instead of enemies?

Our love for and interest in Israel has taken us there some twenty times since 1979 when God first spoke to us about His ancient land and people. Every time we go we learn something new about the Lord whilst we are in His Land, the “Land of the Bible.”

As life moves on and the years pass by, Israel is becoming more and more the centre of world attention. Many people are beginning to predict that the future of world peace and stability now depends on what happens in the Middle East. The descendants of Isaac (Jews) and those of Ishmael, (Muslims) will obviously come face to face in a major confrontation that will powerfully affect every nation on earth. We, who are members of the Body of Christ need to realize that we are living in extremely critical days on the verge of catastrophic events relating to Israel and God’s prophetic purposes. Israel will soon be confronted by her Messiah and will experience a national transformation as a direct result of this revelation. But the church needs to recognize that just as Israel will undergo a great transformation, so the true church too will experience a major transformation with respect to our understanding of the Hebraic origin and destiny of a church in which Jesus has broken down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile in the Body of Messiah. (Ephesians 2:14-18)

Chapter Six

“Down Under” Again

In 1982 we sensed once again that God was encouraging us to move. When first we had arrived in Africa our three daughters were all youngsters and under our control as parents. However, Christine, our eldest, had since married Charles Newington and her sisters had now both graduated from school and college. We felt that it was time for them to return to their homeland and give them a chance to discover their own destinies. Accordingly we flew back to Australia to Sydney where Elizabeth’s parents and family lived.

Reverse Culture Shock

Our return to Sydney was in December and the shops were both decorated and stocked for Christmas. For the first time in several years we were to do our Christmas shopping in Australia, the “Lucky Country.” It was precisely in doing this that we learned the reality of “reverse culture shock.” We had heard of this, but not experienced it until then. The shops in Sydney were so replete with food, clothes and luxury goods that we felt guilty just being in them. Zimbabwe at that time was experiencing real food shortages. For example, we might find cheese in the shops once every three months and find ourselves eagerly awaiting that time. Now, in Australia, there were dozens of different kinds of cheese available at all times. We felt guilty and uneasy walking through the shops so laden with goods. We often felt that soon someone would throw us out because we were not really supposed to be there.

My Back Problem

Several years earlier, in Tel Aviv, Israel, I had injured my spine lifting a car on to the pavement. I had thought at the time, “This is not really a sensible thing to do!” But it was only later that I realised how crazy it had been. My spine began to give me such pain and trouble that I was almost totally incapacitated. I had to spend weeks in bed, only getting out to visit a chiropractor seeking some relief. One morning, whilst Elizabeth was out, it took me more than one hour to painfully crawl some ten feet from the toilet to my bedroom. I actually feared that my preaching and working days were definitely over. It seemed that I would be a virtual cripple. Praise God, through prayer and perseverance things eventually improved.

God Is Our Provider

I now found myself with a back problem that threatened to make me an invalid, unable to work. Plus we had returned to Australia with very little money and nowhere to live. Paying out rent in Sydney was not a good proposition but how could a man in his mid fifties with no income and no prospect of work obtain a loan for a house or apartment?

After much prayer I decided we should look for a small apartment in outer Sydney. I thought to find one that was a little dilapidated in need of repairs and decoration. This should get us something at the lowest possible price. I saw an advert in the local paper and assumed by the price that this would fit the category for which we were looking. However, when we saw the apartment it was almost new and in fine condition. Certainly a drop of fresh paint would improve it a little, but otherwise it was very liveable and in a

great position in Carlingford. Now we had to pray about the loan!

Encouraged by the Lord I went to the local Commonwealth Bank and asked to see the manager. I then explained my situation, my missionary work, my age, back injury, no income and little prospect of work etc. I laid all the negative factors on the table. The manager said very little at first as he quietly reviewed my situation. Then he said the most amazing thing. He began, “You know Reverend it is amazing that you should come today with such a request. I have a brother in law who is in the Anglican ministry and I have spent this past weekend telling he and my sister that they should buy a home of their own. I have rehearsed with him all the reasons, pointing out that they might spend all their working life in manses and then find themselves on retirement without a place of their own. I have promised to help them to the best of my ability. Now that you have come along in need of a home, how can I not help you?”

He then told me that if he sent my request to head office it would be surely rejected but if the proposed loan were smaller, he was authorised to make the decision without head office approval. Could I possibly find a deposit somewhere so that I could manage with a smaller loan? Of course this proposition sent us back to our knees and to prayer. The following day a letter came from the U.S. from a missions organisation. They had just realised that they had not paid me for some of the writing I had done for them. They apologised profusely and enclosed a cheque for \$15,000. Then another letter arrived from another organisation announcing that they had accepted some of my

books for publication and enclosed was my first royalties cheque. Praise God, the two amounts added up to the deposit we needed and we were able to get our loan from our friendly bank manager! The following month we were able to move into the apartment.

Shortly afterwards I received an invitation from Pastor Bill Abbenbroek to assist him in the pastorate of the New Life Assembly in Nambour on the Sunshine Coast, Queensland. We stayed in our little apartment until we moved to Nambour, by which time its value had accrued to the amount that we would soon need to buy a house in Queensland. My role was to be an associate pastor in a teaching capacity. However, when Bill resigned shortly afterwards, I was invited to accept the role of senior pastor. We soon erected a new and larger building to accommodate the growing congregation. It seats about 900 people. The small ACE program school also began to grow rapidly. That school today has approximately 1,100 students and has an excellent educational facility on a campus of which any college would be proud. One of the best things I did at Nambour was to form the School Committee of management. These people, together with the excellent Principal, Bruce Campbell, have accomplished a phenomenal task building one of the finest private schools in Queensland. The campus, which has been built in several stages, will be a lasting monument to the faith and vision of the School Board.

We enjoyed many happy years in Nambour. The Sunshine Coast is a truly delightful place to live. The members of our thriving congregation were extremely loving and supportive. Many of them also developed a real love for Israel and

accompanied us there to help in various capacities at the Feast of Tabernacles where they were tremendously appreciated. The New Life Centre, Nambour became well known for its love for Israel. We often conducted Passover meals in the church that attracted Christians, and some Jews, from far and wide.

Fighting The Man In Black

In 1990 I had a very dramatic and significant dream in which I was walking towards the church. The members of the Church Board were with me though somewhat behind and detached from me. As I approached the church a fierce some man in black emerged from inside the church and began to approach in a distinctly menacing manner. He had a sharp knife rather like a small sword in right hand and obviously intended to attack and destroy me. I looked down and on the ground quite close to me was a large, two pronged tool something like a garden fork. I immediately seized it and held it before me. The prongs fitted on either side of this strange man preventing him from getting close enough to stab me. He wriggled and ducked, trying to shake himself free but I managed to keep one step ahead of him though I became utterly exhausted by the struggle. Eventually both the fight and the dream ceased. I was conscious of feeling glad to be alive yet also realising that the fight had completely depleted my strength. I was dreadfully exhausted.

That Sunday morning in church, I retold the dream to the congregation asking them to pray for me that whatever the dream meant, God would give me the victory over this strange figure in black who appeared determined to destroy

me. The following Sunday, in the middle of the morning communion service, a strange man dressed completely in black entered the church and made his way in a sinister manner to the front row where he sat down. Many of the members told me afterwards that their hair stood on end as he walked down the aisle. Initially he sat quietly but later stood to his feet and began to hurl verbal abuse at me. I quietly rebuked him, commanding him to desist. Some of the deacons also gathered around him and “encouraged” him to leave the building. I neither saw this strange man before or after this occasion. No one knew who he was. In a small community where everyone knew everyone, nobody knew this man.

The impression I had later was that his appearance was prophetic. That somehow a dark figure wanted to attack and destroy me. God was obviously going to save and spare me but in the fight that would ensue, I would become utterly exhausted. It was a few months later that I began to develop symptoms of Burnout and severe depression.

In retrospect I realised that this experience was evidently connected to a previous spiritual incident that had occurred some months previously. I had been overwhelmed by a strong spirit of intercession for Israel and found myself praying “Lord, let me experience something of what your ancient people have experienced throughout the ages that I may more closely identify myself with them.” Following this prayer I was suddenly overcome with weeping and groaning that seemed to erupt from my deepest innermost being that persisted for some time. My mind was also directed to find a scripture in,

Deuteronomy 28:65-67

65.Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the LORD will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart.

66.You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life.

67.In the morning you will say, "If only it were evening!" and in the evening, "If only it were morning!"--because of the terror that will fill your hearts and the sights that your eyes will see. NIV

This scripture describes the kind of dark depression that I experienced for several months one of the results of which was a far deeper empathy for suffering souls. This began a tortuous experience of battling against darkness, an experience that several times seemed to have power to destroy me. So deep was my depression at times that I literally felt that death would be a happy and desirable release. Many have called this experience, “The Dark Night of the Soul” and I discovered why. I had to ask Richard Whittington, my associate pastor to take charge of the church affairs. I continued to attend almost every week but for almost one year, I was so exhausted, depressed and depleted that I could take little or no part in the oversight of the church. The dream and subsequent visit of “the figure in black” symbolised the worst period of my life. I plunged to depths of despair that I did not previously know existed. Eventually I recovered, having gained a far deeper insight and compassion for all who suffer from and experience such fearful attacks. It was while I was still basically recovering that a call came from Singapore to “Come over and help us!”

The experience of severe burnout changed me in several ways. I changed my lifestyle, determined to work smarter and delegate much of the work that I would normally do myself. I had never been a natural delegator, preferring to do things myself. In hindsight too, I can see that had I not suffered that burnout we would probably have remained in Nambour much longer and may have missed God's next move for us which was into a full time teaching capacity, training leaders to accomplish the work of the ministry. Unfortunately, after we left, the whole emphasis of the church was changed by the legalistic and negative preaching of the pastor who succeeded me and sadly this virtually emptied the church within the next few years. Unfortunately it has never recovered. How different to what had happened at Sutherland and Klemzig when the congregations were multiplied many times over after we left.

Our Invitation to Singapore

One of the persons I had befriended during my numerous visits to Singapore was a lawyer named Khoo Hin Hiong. A member of Wesley Methodist Church, he had received the Holy Spirit in a new Charismatic dimension and became eager to do something for God. He and Margurite, his wife, later founded a missions organisation called International Christian Mission Inc. (I.C.M. Inc) The purpose and objective of this organisation was to facilitate the opening of Bible Colleges in "frontier nations of the world" particularly S.E. Asia.

By 1991 they had helped to start some 31 Bible Schools in various parts of Asia. However, they had not introduced a standard curriculum and were not sure what everyone was

actually teaching nor how effective the schools were. Knowing that I had established an effective and successful school in Zimbabwe, Hin Hiong and Steven Ng visited Nambour, Queensland to ask us, "If the Lord ever releases you from this pastorate, would you consider moving to Singapore and placing your training material in each of our Bible Schools." After some prayer, we gladly acceded to their request. Being still in a recovery mode after my Burnout experience, I naively thought that God was organising a nice cosy spot for me to rest and recuperate. Instead of which it became one of the busiest (and most fruitful) periods of our whole lives.

Sent To The Nations

As we prayed about the new direction that God seemed to be opening to us, we realised that in addition to leaving Australia we might also be unable to follow our ministry to Israel as we had. As we sought God about this He brought a scripture clearly before us.

Isaiah 49:6

6 He says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." (NIV)

Obviously this scripture applies in the first place to Messiah. God is saying that His servant will re-gather and restore the tribes of Israel. But, in addition to that He will also be a light to the Gentiles unto the very ends of the earth. In a very clear manner God showed us that He was now also applying this

scripture to us. An intimation that we would one day, “bring His salvation to the ends of the earth.” This promise gave us immense reassurance and confidence and the permission to change our main emphasis from Israel, to the Gentile nations. We have never lost nor lessened our interest in Israel, rather we added to this a zeal to reach the nations of the world with the good news concerning God’s Messiah and His soon coming Kingdom.

Chapter Seven

Singapore and Asia

We arrived in Singapore in early 1992 and began the task of placing our training curriculum and teaching material into the Bible schools associated with International Christian Mission. As we travelled around Asia doing this I became aware that even if they had 1,000 Bible Schools this still would not be sufficient to train all the workers that would be needed to reap the great harvest of Asia. Plus the fact that many potential workers would never be able to attend a Bible School. The idea was therefore birthed within me to re format my material into a highly portable model and offer it to local churches and pastors, encouraging each one to commence a training centre in their local church. Our philosophy was, and still is,

1. Every local church should have a training program.
2. Every local Pastor (or his associate) must train more pastors.
3. Every local church must plant new churches.

I then spent some months in front of my computer in Singapore editing and re formatting my material into a Three Module, twelve lesson Course of training. It was produced in a very portable format and became known informally as “A Bible College in a Briefcase.”

With regard to the training of leaders, our ministry has always been an inter-denominational one. We have never

tried to build any particular denomination. We have worked closely with leaders from hundreds of different denominations. Our strategy has been to contact as many local pastors as possible to challenge them with the need to begin to train potential leaders in principles of Christian leadership, evangelism, church planting and church growth. We wanted to co-operate (network) with as many leaders as possible to train them in the skills of training and releasing others. Wherever we have gone we have tried to establish personal relationships with the leaders and pastors. We have been so fortunate and favoured by God to establish personal friendships with so many fine pastors and leaders all over the world.

By early 1994 the newly formatted Course was ready and we were able to launch it at several World Map Conferences in the Philippines. In March 1994 the first 3,000 churches registered for the Course and began to open training centres throughout the nation. Under the capable leadership of Rev Willy and Mrs. Susan Abbott, field directors of I.C.M. Philippines, the work there and in several other nations, has gone forward in a most amazing and encouraging manner. Eventually some 9,000 churches in the Philippines have received our courses.

Of the many “success stories” that have emerged since in the Philippines, one stands out prominently. Rev Franklin Pascua, of the Wesley Methodist Church, Manila had ordered some letterheads from his printer. Arriving to collect them, the printer was momentarily busy finishing a printing run. He requested Frank to kindly wait for few minutes. As Frank watched the material coming off the

Press he realised that it was some form of Christian training material. He asked for a couple of sample sheets and took them to show his Bishop, who authorised Frank to obtain some copies and use them in his church. Frank promptly recruited 26 church members into a discipleship class which he personally taught three nights per week. By the time I met him personally he was able to tell me, “Reverend Gerald, in two years my students have planted 22 new congregations.” For a small denomination this represented remarkable growth. When I expressed my pleasure on hearing his news, he said, “The best part is that I now have more than 80 students in the present class and we are believing to increase our productivity four fold.” (in 1998 they planted a further 36 new churches a total of 58 churches).

The Myanmar Team

On our first visit to Myanmar, (formerly Burma) I was invited to speak at the annual conference of the Methodist church there. It seemed to Elizabeth and myself at the time that it was a fairly ordinary Conference, but evidently the emphasis I brought on evangelism and church planting was revolutionary. Many wonderful things have since emerged as a result of that week.

One of the exciting things that emerged immediately began when six young men asked to talk with me at the end of the week. They were all young laymen. None had ever undergone any Bible training previously. However, they had been so challenged and inspired that they had all prayerfully determined to form an evangelistic band and tour their nations practising what they had learned that week. I asked if

they had consulted their pastor and discovered that he too was very excited with the concept. Several of them had to resign their precious jobs, which is a very courageous thing to do in Myanmar. Employment is scarce and so is money.

I spent more time with them and their pastor and then we jointly commissioned them with prayer and the laying on of hands. I did not hear anything more about them until one year later. We were back in Yangon and the Methodist pastor informed me that the young men had just returned to Yangon for a break. A dinner had been arranged to welcome them home, would we please join them? What a tremendous thrill it was that night to hear their testimonies. Travelling from village to village for twelve months they had won more than 700 people to Christ and planted three new churches. They told of the latest of those churches.

Arriving in a small village, they had run out of both money and food. They managed to rent a room but had nothing to eat for three days. They spent most of those days praying. Much of their prayers about food! On the third evening, as they sat around an empty table praying, there was a knock at the door. Opening it, they discovered a tiny woman holding a large basket. She apologised for disturbing them explaining that she had noticed them arrive three days ago. She had also noticed that they never went out to the market or brought in any food. Would they be offended if she offered them some food??? Obviously they were not offended. As they tucked into the welcome food they began to question her. Was she a Christian? No! Did she have a family? Her husband had died two years previously. She had been widowed with three smallish children and no

relatives to help her. Now she had been diagnosed with terminal cancer and she was desperately afraid of what would happen to her children when she died. The boys told her about Jesus, led her to salvation and then prayed for her healing. Two weeks later, the doctors could find no trace of her cancer. A house meeting commenced in her little humble home and that became the third “church” they had planted that year. The members are friends and villagers who came to Christ as a result of her healing.

Subsequently the Course was also taken to Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, India, Cambodia, Vietnam and several other smaller nations. Its impact in numerous Asian nations is still gathering momentum. We actually spent six years in Singapore that proved to be very exciting and most fulfilling. It was here that I compiled the training Course that would eventually reach into many nations around the world. Since then I have compiled several other variations of the Course.

I vividly remember one of the seminars we held in Hyderabad, India. We had been there some months previously and distributed Module One which includes the teaching on Soul Winning. Now we were returning to bring them Module Two. One of the Indian pastors met me eagerly at the door to the building we had rented. He had two fine young men with him that he was eager to introduce me to. He excitedly recounted this report.

When he received Module One he was the pastor of a church with some 50 members. He began to teach the first module to the whole congregation each Sunday morning. One day he was prayerfully preparing his talk on the subject of Soul

Winning. As preachers usually do he was asking God, “Please speak to my heart and tell me how I can make this lessons more effective!” Apparently God did speak to Him but not in the manner he had anticipated. The voice of God that spoke clearly into his spirit said, “You are a hypocrite!” This was not the message he had hoped for. “Why am I a hypocrite?” he asked. “Because you are preparing to urge your people to do things that you do not do yourself. You will urge each one to witness to their immediate neighbours. When did YOU witness to your neighbours?” The pastor initially protested that his neighbours knew he was a pastor and if they ever needed him they knew where to find him. But God was not satisfied with that reply. Eventually, the pastor visited his neighbours on either side of his house. He told them, “We have been neighbours for a long time but there is something very important that I should have told you previously, may I come to your house some time to share this with you?” Each household graciously invited he and his wife for an evening meal, following which they would gladly listen to what he needed to tell them. The immediate result was that both families, one Muslim, the other Hindu, came to Christ. The two young men who accompanied him that day were each members of one of those families! They were now an integral part of his newly formed discipleship class.

When he eventually delivered that talk, he was able to tell his members the account of what had happened when he had witnessed to his neighbours. His testimony was so inspiring that many of his members applied the same approach with similar results. Within six months his congregation had increased to some 260 people.

We also visited a nation that is 85% Buddhist, and where some of the Christian leaders told us that it was *impossible* to win Buddhist converts. Within days of our arrival we had the unexpected opportunity to preach in a certain church in which approximately 300 former Buddhists had come to Christ within the past few months. No visiting preacher or evangelist had visited there. No Crusade had been held. That church had conducted a seminar on Soul Winning after which they organised groups of their members to visit houses, witness in the park, and generally share their testimonies wherever and whenever possible. Whilst this was happening, those members who did not go out witnessing met in the church to conduct 24 hour prayer meetings. The result, - 300 Buddhists saved and baptised and the harvest still continuing.

I am presently in the process of producing more training materials, eventually planning to integrate all the teachings into one compact curriculum. Although the courses are intended primarily for use in local churches to provide a training syllabus for evangelists and church planters, they have also been incorporated into numerous Bible Colleges around the world and even into a couple of Christian universities.

John And Lila's Conversion In Singapore

One of the tremendous things that God did for us whilst in Singapore concerned my younger brother and his wife. John and Lila owned a bar and restaurant in Scotland. They had both been in the entertainment industry for a long time and most of their friends and acquaintances they had met in their bar or at the golf club. For most of his life, John had been

what I termed a “benign agnostic.” He did not make a big thing about it but he just did not have any time or interest in God, church or religion as he would put it. His wife, Lila, is a Somalian from a family of Muslims that could be traced back over centuries. Mainly because of these two facts, our families had little contact and even less in common when we did meet. There was no animosity. We did not argue or fight. I guess we just agreed to differ and saw very little of each other. We scarcely even wrote to each other.

So it was something of a surprise when we did receive a communication from them to say that they were both extremely tired. The business had severely depleted them. They were selling the business and would like to come and spend a couple of months visiting with us. Obviously, we would be glad to see them, especially as they both seemed to have reached some kind of impasse, but what would we ever talk about for two months? The weather and other trivia would occupy our conversation initially but we had few other interests in common. Anyway, we told them to certainly come and we would welcome them.

Privately, Liz and I agreed that we would not try to preach at them simply because they were “on our turf.” We agreed that we would simply love them and try to give them a good time. Their holiday period coincided with our Christmas visit to Australia where we had planned to have a family reunion near the beach. So they joined us, our children and grand children for a beach holiday after which they came to our house in Brisbane.

On the first Sunday morning we told them, “We are happy for you guys to do whatever meets your fancy but Liz and I are going to a church where I will be preaching today.” To our amazement and delight, after some deliberation, they said they would like to accompany us. They had never heard me preach and were curious to see what it was all about. To our horror, in the early part of the service the pastor announced a “special week of prayer for the Muslims.” Fortunately he did not clarify that it was for the conversion of the Muslims and my sister in law was favourably impressed. “That’s wonderful” said she, “We never pray for the Christians in the Mosque!”

They both sat through two services and two sermons. Elizabeth said afterwards that they both wept a good deal in each meeting. We still did not preach at them afterwards but just loved them and sought to have a great holiday with them. They came with us wherever we went, mostly for meals and fellowship to Christian friends. They were both immensely impressed with the calibre of friends we had. Everyone knew the situation ahead of time and nobody preached at them but with every visit, they became more impressed. Eventually we returned to Singapore and they accompanied us for the remainder of their holiday. It was here that they both came to know Christ.

The first Sunday morning we were together in Singapore I was booked to preach at Bethesda Cathedral. Once again John and Lila happily accompanied us. I preached that day on Paul’s words in Phil 3:10, “That I may know Christ.” It was a great service and when I presented an appeal for people to receive Christ, quite a crowd came forward in

response and among them were John and Lila. Tears were running down their faces as they stood hand in hand to make a public commitment to Jesus. Later that week, in our house in Manis (Sweet) Street, we had a small, private communion service at which just the four of us were present. Here I shared and explained the Gospel in the fullest manner and they made a thoughtful and decisive commitment to follow Christ.

On their return home they determined not to re-enter the restaurant and liquor industry choosing instead to buy a bed and breakfast business. Most of their old friends, relationships mainly made in the atmosphere of their bar, lost interest in them. But a new family of friends embraced them when they began to attend a local church. It has been a tremendous thrill to see them growing in God and His Word. At last, we have so much in common, enjoying their company whenever possible and always having lots of things in common about which to talk.

PS. 2010 John and Lila have since retired from business and are living out their days in Dumfries, Scotland. They are a loyal part of a local church, living in fellowship with the Lord and the local members of their church family. They are also praying constantly for and witnessing to their many family members who are still devout Muslims believing to see them too come to a realization that Jehovah is the One True God whose beloved Son will one day soon be manifest as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Chapter Eight

A Gateway To The Nations

Towards the close of 1997 God began to show us that it was time for us to move on again. The prospect of leaving Singapore was not an easy one. The time had been very fruitful in so many ways, we had many good friends there, plus our youngest daughter, Virginia, and Rev Joel Baker her husband and their children were living with us. Joel was the Dean of Tung Ling Bible College which is housed at St. Andrew's College in Potong Passir, Singapore. They have two delightful children too, Elise and Noah and we were all very happy and fulfilled together. However, whenever we prayed about the future we knew that it would inevitably entail our leaving Singapore.

We had received numerous invitations to launch the program in other regions of the world and were considering them all. We both told God that we were willing and happy to go wherever He led. Eventually it became clear that God was taking us back to Brisbane, Australia, the city we regarded as our home. In addition to our commitments in Asia we were also receiving requests for the Courses from Eastern Europe and the Middle East, plus we had recently introduced it into the U.K, so a base in Brisbane would evidently suit us fine.

Added to which we had bought a town house in Brisbane six years earlier, prior to leaving for Singapore and had hardly

been able to spend any time there or enjoy its little conveniences. Many years ago, when we were first married, God had told us, “If you go and work in the field for Me, I will provide you with a home to enjoy later in your lives.” The house in Nambour on the Sunshine Coast is just such a place. It is a place to enjoy slowing down from our international travels. God had helped us to purchase this place just as remarkably as He did the apartment in Sydney years ago. In fact, those royalties that provided the deposit for the Sydney apartment, finally helped to purchase our present home in Nambour.

The Latin American Conference

In November 1998 a Latin American Congress was to be convened under the sponsorship of DAWN2000. It was originally scheduled for Bogota, Colombia but the Colombian government discovered that a possible terrorist attack might be made upon it and advised the sponsors to hold it elsewhere. A quick decision had to be made and it was felt that moving the conference to Miami, Florida, USA, would be expedient.

Hundreds of leaders from every part of Central and South America came together. It was an exciting time for us together with our brethren from so many Latin America nations. We learned so much about their continent that we had visited many times previously. An old friend, Rev Hector Prado, whom we knew well from Jerusalem, is the President of the Evangelical Council of Latin America mentioned in his official report that the evangelical (born again) believers in Latin America now exceed 60 million. In

some countries they are growing four times faster than the natural population increase rate.

We were also thrilled and amazed, to hear from the delegates from Guatemala that the Christian evangelical presence in their nation now exceeds more than 43% of the total population of their country. At the present growth rate this will exceed 50% within the next 3-5 years!

The Congress delegates determined that since they are already on target to plant a further 500,000 new churches within this five year period, they must begin to make firm plans NOW to plant yet another 500,000! This will mean ONE MILLION new churches planted throughout Latin America in ten years!

As things transpired we did not launch a Latin American project. The task was too large numerically for our small organisation and the churches are obviously well able to handle church planting anyway! However, as often happens in the unfolding of God's purposes, another totally unexpected door opened to us at this very conference.

Meeting The IBRA Representative

Immediately after the Latin American congress closed, a further world conference was conducted by DAWN2000 in the same hotel. This was to discuss strategy for church planting around the earth with delegates from all over the globe. We had a good opportunity to present our training material and strategy here too. Interest in our concept of "every church becoming a training centre" was extremely

high, but the interest that thrilled us most came from a very unexpected source.

Several brethren were present from the Middle East including the Director of IBRA Christian Radio broadcasts from Cyprus. IBRA of course is a Swedish ministry that has been effectively sharing the Gospel over the airwaves in many parts of the world. However, their broadcasts in Arabic with programs that reach the entire Arab world are breath taking. These programs are actually beamed out of Russia from the powerful towers that were once reserved for KGB propaganda broadcasts. Since the KGB no longer use them, private enterprise had found good use for them, including Christian broadcasting. Someone has laughingly suggested that the KGB has become the Kingdom of God Broadcasts.

The brothers from Cyprus took a good look at our material and informed us that they had been looking for just such materials for a couple of years. They felt that our program would be ideal for broadcasting. Would we agree to having the material translated into Arabic and broadcast weekly into the entire Arab world, including Iraq, Iran, Syria, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, the Arabic peninsula and North Africa reaching as far south as Sudan? Would we agree? We were ecstatic. For a long time we had been burdened with a desire to see an Arabic translation and now we would have it, plus a glorious method of getting it into the Arab world in a greater way than we had ever envisaged.

The IBRA representatives were further delighted to know we have a Russian version of the Course, would we be willing to have this broadcast across the entire former Soviet Union?

These two programs in Arabic and Russian have a potential listening audience of some 450 million people in two of the most strategic and explosive parts of the world. What a fantastic opportunity!

Numerous other doors are being opened to us by the Lord, several of them in what I personally term the “hot spots” of our world. One of these is in Yugoslavia where so many cruel and meaningless small wars are being perpetuated. Ethnic majorities are dedicated to wiping out minority population groups. The bitter process of “ethnic cleansing” has been added to the world’s vocabulary and list of mindless crimes.

Another strategic opening came in Afghanistan. Evangelical Workers amongst the Mujahedeen and the fanatical Taliban, are now using several of our translations including a Farsee one which we are also using in Iran. God seems to be witnessing to us that more and more of these strategic, potentially explosive trouble spots will be opened for the effective use of our programs. We have recently introduced a more complete program we have named, “The Church Planting Training Program.” It consists of four modules and contains fifteen subjects, all relevant to the issues of evangelism, leadership development and church planting. It is also available on CD’s to facilitate re-printing in various nations and situations. Our training program and manuals have been embraced now by some 32,000 churches and colleges around the world. We constantly receive encouraging reports from various pastors concerning the effectiveness and success of the concept and of thousands of new churches that are being planted by the graduates.

These programs are so portable and low profile. They can be and are used very effectively in house groups and churches where it is either unwise or impossible for orthodox missionary methods to be used. An awareness is growing within us that much of the End Time Harvest will be stored in private houses rather than public churches. Millions of new workers need to be trained and prepared for reaping and conserving the swift harvest that will be garnered throughout the earth. I want to devote a brief chapter to this prophetic harvest.

Chapter Nine

Entering The New Century

Psalm90:12

12 So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. (KJV)

Psalm 90:17.

*17. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us,
And establish the work of our hands for us;
Yes, establish the work of our hands. NKJV*

Reading through these pages, I can scarcely believe that so many years have passed so quickly. When I started out on this adventure as a young man, I could hardly conceive that one day I would be seventy five, but that day has now come and gone. The 21st Century seemed so far away, it appeared to be an eternity before we might ever reach it. But now, the first years of that fascinating new century have already passed. Inevitably it is a time for reflection and pondering. Where have the years gone? And, if I could have them over again, what changes might I want to make? The pace of life seems to be accelerating but my ability to keep pace with it is definitely slowing down.

The final year of the old century held some further surprises, yet God is bringing us through them and teaching us to number our days and apply our hearts to wisdom as never before. When one is young and strong, there is always a

tendency to be self reliant. I once hated to be dependant on anyone but myself. But the passing years and diminishing strength are changing that attitude.

1999 proved to be an exhausting year, in more ways than one. It began, as so many years in the past twenty five, with a trip “overseas.” This time I was in the Philippines to attend a Conference of TOPIC. (Training of Pastors International Consultation) This is an organisation dedicated to providing non formal training to pastors in the emerging world who have little or no opportunity to receive training in the various aspects of ministry. TOPIC commenced in Wheaton some years ago, at the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association Centre. It was afterwards brought into being by Dr Ramesh Richard, Professor of homiletics at Dallas Theological Seminary. I had met Ramesh some years before in Myanmar when we spoke together at a pastors seminar. He had later invited me to become part of the TOPIC program as a member of its steering committee. It was great, at Subic Bay near Manila, to meet so many other ministers involved in various aspects of training for leaders in the emerging world. It was exciting also to renew fellowship with so many Philippine pastors who are effectively using our training program to train evangelists and to plant new congregations.

During the conference, I was not feeling unwell but I did recognise that for some time previously I had been feeling unusually tired. In March, I was ministering throughout Indonesia, keeping a hectic schedule of sometimes teaching 5 or 6 hours each day. Travelling from one end of the nation to the other and engaging in various other commitments and

forms of ministry. Returning home, I felt exhausted and needed to rest completely for several days. Strength returned to some degree but I still felt exhausted. The year continued very much as it started, undertaking numerous ministry trips including one to Nepal where I felt that God wanted me to make our training course available. Later, in September, Elizabeth and I went to Jerusalem, where I was booked to teach at the Christian Celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. I had also been asked to bring with me some “harvesters” from various parts of the world, for the theme of the conference was “Reaping the World Harvest.” In addition to several other pastors from Africa and Eastern Europe, I also invited three from Indonesia where I had been ministering earlier that year. They were pastors from the Bethany Church who are all experiencing revival and harvest in their churches. Two of them have seen their congregations grow from a handful of people to over 90,000 in just a few years. Instead of just the three pastors coming they brought with them some 600 of their church members. The pastors preached with great power in the conference and hundreds of visitors and Israeli’s were powerfully ministered to. In addition to taking care of them, I spent much time with various other delegates from the emerging world. It was an extremely exciting and stimulating time. I was able to fulfil all my ministry commitments, but I still battled with feelings of exhaustion.

From Israel, we flew directly to Uganda for a minister’s seminar in the north, towards the Sudanese border. Again, I taught those hungry pastors for hours every day and God gave us a tremendous time of rich blessing. Ministers had gathered from all over the nation and I taught them for six to

seven hours each day. Eventually, leaving Uganda, we flew to Zimbabwe, from where I was supposed to travel to Zambia again for another pastor's conference. Arrangements for this conference had become a little blurred and because I now felt really exhausted, I cancelled my visit to Zambia and spent two weeks on a friend's farm near the Mozambique border. Here I had little to do but rest. I spoke at a few meetings but the remainder of my time was spent in pleasant idleness, enjoying the lovely farm house and gracious African hospitality. During those lazy days, I recovered some strength, but could not shake off the tiredness and exhaustion. I was pleased to be heading home after a long eventful trip, back to our little house in Brisbane where we could close the door and retire from the world for a while. During the trip home, I suffered the worst jet lag symptoms I had ever experienced. My time clock was completely disoriented, I hardly knew whether it was day or night. At the end of each day, I would be so utterly weary, but sleep would completely elude me. I would be so tired, I could not even muster the strength to clean my teeth.

I visited my doctor, had numerous tests including ECG's, but nothing came to light. My doctor, who is a Christian, was extremely aware of the kinds of pressure I had been under. His advice was, "Gerald, you are not a young man any longer, but you are still working as though you were. You have been overworking yourself for so many years now, why not take a one year sabbatical?" I tried to heed his advice and discovered again how difficult it is to rest when you are so work oriented. However, I was actually so weak and exhausted that I really did not have sufficient strength to do anything but simply laze around the house. Fortunately,

there was plenty of Test cricket on the TV. I watched this day after day, because I was simply too weak to do much else.

By March 1999 I was experiencing very severe chest pains, chronic shortness of breath, regular indigestion and was unable to walk more than a few yards without sitting down to rest. Back to the doctor's and this time a referral to a cardiologist and a new series of tests including an angiogram. For this last test I had to book into the Wesley Hospital for one day and a night. By this time I was experiencing bouts of severe chest pain regularly and could not wait to find out what was really wrong. Let me share with you a letter I wrote to numerous friends and supporters of our ministry shortly afterwards.

4th August 2000

Dear Friends,

Just a brief note to fill in a few details regarding my recent bypass operation on 11th July. I needed to contact a large number of you quickly to update you with recent events and also to thank others who have written expressing your loving concern.

Last year was another hectic one in terms of overseas travel and the number of seminars in which I taught. I visited the Philippines, Indonesia, Nepal, Israel, Northern Uganda and Zimbabwe. Our final trip in November was a further visit to Singapore. Looking back, the whole year was a battle with weariness and fatigue. I felt as though I was wading through

treacle the whole time. By the end of '99 I was really exhausted and my good doctor strongly recommended that I take a sabbatical. Doing this was made easier by the fact that I had little energy to do anything anyway and I was forced to take things easier. Unfortunately I lost contact with numbers of you during this period.

In late June certain other symptoms began to emerge and my doctor referred me to a cardiologist and a series of new tests culminating in an angiogram that revealed that I had suffered a heart attack and had five severe blockages. Two were 100%, two 70%, and one 50%! The cardiologist said that I was like a “walking time bomb.” I stayed in hospital and underwent by pass surgery the following day.

When I consider the miles I have travelled, many of them in countries with very poor if any medical facilities, I am so grateful that God brought me safely back home, preserving me from a stroke or even death. I am now resting and recuperating from the operation and undertaking a rehabilitation program.

Elizabeth and I are deeply grateful for the prayers and good wishes of so many friends from all over the world. Please keep up your prayers for my recovery and the renewal of my strength. Also for Elizabeth who has been a tower of strength for me, lovingly undertaking lots of extra responsibilities and tasks.

Obviously many things in my life style need to be adjusted. Please pray with us for God's wisdom and guidance for the

future. We are both deeply appreciative of you and greatly value your prayers and good wishes.

Yours faithfully,

Gerald Rowlands.

When the cardiologist told me that I “was like a walking time bomb,” and that I could have dropped dead at any moment, I realised how wonderfully God had preserved me, especially in places like Nepal and Uganda where medical facilities can be very primitive or even non-existent. He had brought me safely back to Brisbane, to my own doctor and to a fine hospital like “The Wesley.” I realised that I had been “walking through the valley of the shadow of death.” and the Good Shepherd had obviously kept me all the way. As I lay in the post-operative ward thinking about the fact that my heart had been out of my body for some time in the theatre, I realised afresh just how fragile our life can be. During the period of introspection and meditation the words of David in Psalm 90:12, came powerfully to my mind. The gist of that verse might be, “If we knew before hand how brief our life on earth would eventually be, we would want to live it far more wisely.” Towards the end of this beautiful and inspiring psalm, David also prays these heartfelt words.
Psalm 90:17

17. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us, And establish the work of our hands for us; Yes, establish the work of our hands. NKJV

The word translated "beauty" means "pleasantness;" then, beauty, splendour; then grace or graciousness. The wish is clearly that all that is in the divine character, which is "beautiful," might be manifested in the petitioner that others might see the excellency of God's character in them. And that His dealings with them might be such, as to keep the beauty and loveliness of that character constantly before them.

And establish thou the work of our hands, "What we are endeavouring to do." Enable us to carry out our plans, and to accomplish our purposes. The repetition of the prayer here indicates an intense desire that God would enable them to carry out and complete their plans. At the same time it is a prayer which it is proper to offer at any time, that God would enable us to carry out our purposes, and that we may be permanently established in his favour

My paraphrase of these verses is, **"If we make the most of our days, by applying our hearts to Godly wisdom, God will undertake to fulfil our life's purpose before the end of our days.**

I also saw again that all the years of our life can vanish like vapour.

James 4:13-17

13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit";

14 *whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? **It is even a vapour that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.***

15 *Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."*

16 *But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.*

17 *Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. (NKJ)*

God sees the end from the beginning. He sees the time, the manner, and the state of affairs in which our earthly life will one day end. Although He has wisely hidden that information from us, yet He can enable us to act as if we saw it for ourselves; to have the same objects before us, and to make as much of life, "as if" we saw when and how it would close. If anyone knew when, and where, and how he was to die, it might be presumed that this would exert an important influence on him in forming his plans, and on his general manner of life. The prayer is that God would enable us to act "as if" we had such a view.

I remember having read some years ago, that Dr. Billy Graham had once been asked by a reporter, "If you could have your life to live again, what changes might you make?" Billy had evidently replied, "Well first of all there are some things I would never wish to change. Firstly, I would not wish to change my calling, I would still wish to be an evangelist. Secondly, I would wish for the same wife and children. Probably one thing I would change would be that I would gather twelve men around me very early in my life and pour my life into them and multiply my life by twelve."

Obviously the idea was not original to Billy Graham. Jesus did this with his disciples too. But the idea of multiplying ones life effort by training others to do the same thing is a very worthy one. I would wholly agree with Dr. Graham. I would still wish to be a preacher, though hopefully a much better prepared and effective one. I would definitely wish for the same wife and children. The main change I would wish to make would be to better prepare myself and then to begin sharing with others and preparing them much earlier in my life. To some small degree I have been able to do something like this through our training course that has been made available to thousands of pastors in these past few years. However, if I could have my life to live again, I would want to begin doing this much earlier. The concept of multiplying ones efforts by training others is an extremely effective and rewarding one.

Obviously after such major surgery as I had undergone one has to make some adjustments in life style in order to obviate the chances of the same thing happening again! The first change has to be in one's eating habits. The sad truth is that most of the things we really enjoy eating are actually bad for our health. I suddenly realised that I had been digging my own grave with my teeth and that my eating regimen must change considerably. I also "discovered" that coconut oil was one of the worst things one could eat. I remembered a period of our life in Singapore when I ate Malaysian Laksa (a kind of curry soup with noodles and bean sprouts) almost every day for lunch. I loved it so much I could never get enough of it. The fact that it is made from the dreaded coconut milk, never occurred to me. Unfortunately many

other items that I relished like chocolates, chips, cheese, animal fat etc, are now also forbidden fruit.

Another aspect that must be adjusted is that of physical exercise. Although I have done a lot of travelling in recent years, I have also done a lot of writing. Sitting before a computer, exercising my mind and my fingers does not constitute a good fitness routine. So Liz and I have now joined a health club, gymnasium and swimming club. Although we are now into our seventies we are going to integrate some regular exercise into our lives.

The other big adjustment will be to my work load. I need to work smarter. My doctor had remarked, “Gerald you are now 66 yet you are chasing around the world and working like a 26 year old.” So, I am now writing again rather than travelling quite so much. Fortunately the past few years have connected me to thousands of pastors all over the emerging world. Most of them are using our training course to multiply leadership and to plant new churches. Thousands have expressed how helpful and effective the materials have been to them and asked for even more such helpful lessons. Since I have so much more to share with them, I am able to keep writing and publishing the same kind of material and continuing to share it with “my Timothy’s.”

I am constantly receiving exciting reports from various parts of the world from pastors and ministers who are effectively using our program to raise up church planters. Whilst at the graduation convocation of the Haggai Institute in Singapore one year, I was approached by an excited young pastor from the Philippines. He introduced himself and told me he had

been using the CPI program for seven years. During this period, using our training program, his church membership had grown from 70 to 600 and they have planted nine new congregations in addition.

Yet another report came from the International Christian Mission of Singapore. One of their representatives in Cambodia is using our program as the curriculum for a one year course of training. At their recent graduation service 106 graduates from 17 of the 24 provinces in Cambodia received their “Certificate of Ministry”. Amongst this graduating group were 43 pastors, 28 assistant pastors and the remainder are church elders, worship leaders and cell group leaders. This was the largest leadership training or Bible School graduation in the history of Cambodia! More than 40 new churches have been started and each of them is seeing growth. One pastor testified that he started a congregation with 13 people and now has 67 members within a few months. Testimony after testimony was given by the graduates thanking God for this training, the only training they have ever received. The graduates pledged to teach others and more than 200 new students were enrolled to teach the CPI course in other villages.

I am so grateful to God for encouraging me to compile this training course. I often feel like the young lad who possessed a small lunch just large enough for himself until Jesus took it over. Blessing and breaking it, Jesus fed a huge number of people with the meagre offering the boy contributed. I am under no illusions concerning the simple material I have been able to compile. There is nothing remarkable about it. They are really a “smorgasbord of

various teachings written from my experience over the years. It is not the food itself. It is the fact that the Lord has deigned to use it to feed hungry multitudes in many desert places.

I want to keep writing and publishing similar, basic materials for my brothers and sisters who are so poorly provided for. They are doing such a tremendous job with so little equipment. I am immensely privileged to be allowed to assist such wonderful people in my own small way. The national and indigenous Christians of the world are so dedicated and committed to the work of Christ. Most of them labour sacrificially on very small incomes. They are so passionate about sharing the Gospel with their fellow countrymen. They are often persecuted and are even tortured for their faith, yet they remain faithful, determined to lead as many people to Christ as is humanly possible.

Our latest project has been to launch a web site that makes it possible to down load our training material in any part of the world. The initial launch involves only the English language modules but we will soon make the program available in Bahasa (Indonesian) Chinese, and Russian. This medium of distribution will also make it possible for us to offer interactive studies in church planting whereby thousands of church leaders will be able to study evangelistic concepts in their own home towns. The international web site is undoubtedly a great communication tool of the future and we are endeavouring to use it to reach thousands of preachers around the globe. We want to place into their hands the kind of training materials that will enable them to prepare the reapers that will gather in the End Time Harvest of the ages.

The website has become immensely popular and thousands of church planters from all over the world have availed themselves of our training materials. Many have subsequently written to tell us of the new churches they have planted and how helpful and instructive the lessons have been. Through the internet we have been able to share our knowledge and experience with thousands of fine men and women whose lives are dedicated to winning people to Christ and establishing new churches.

We also have another website that features our ministry on behalf of Israel. (www.israelspropheticfuture.org/ -)

From this site we are endeavouring to help fellow believers to recognize that we, as members of the Body of Christ, are amongst numerous other things, descended from the spiritual seed of Abraham. In these End Time days through the eternal purposes of God we will be joined together with a veritable multitude of Jews and former Muslims in a great army of witnesses rejoicing in the Messiah. We are rapidly approaching the time when Jesus will return to earth to be manifested as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Chapter Ten

The Pathway To Adventures In God

“The steps of a good man are ordered (ordained) by the Lord.” Psalm 37:23

“You will show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy.” Psalm 16:11

“The paths have fallen unto me in pleasant places.”

Psalm 16:6

“All Her paths are pleasantness and all His ways are peace.” Proverbs 3:17

“The path of the just is as a shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day.”

Proverbs 4:18.

I am personally convinced that God has a “path of life” (a preferred path) for every Christian. A direction in which He wants them to walk through life. A path along which all things work together for good to them that love God and walk according to His purpose.” (Rom 8:28) Obviously not all paths are the same but all have some common and familiar features, some of which are mentioned in the scriptures above. Where does our path begin and how can we find that commencement and follow it throughout life?

1. A Place Of Complete Submission And Total Surrender

I am convinced that it begins at a point of surrender and submission in our life that God wants everyone of us to reach. It is a point at which we absolutely desire and determine to do His Will and we surrender our will to His Will.

It is a place of surrender at which we are ready and more than willing to do God's Will whatever that might require. God may have some heavy ways to bring us to that point and the road to it is not always easy. Often times a battle is waged between our personal will and God's highest purpose. There may be a brutal clash of wills, ours against His as He seeks, for our good, to bring us to His desire for our life and destiny. However, without our total surrender, He will not even show us the path.

John says, "If anyone wills to do His Will, he shall know the doctrine." (John 7:17) In other words we have to be committed to do God's will before we actually know what it is. We cannot find out first what He wants nor where He might send us so that we can then decide whether or not we will do His Will.

Jacob reached such a point in his life.

Gen 32:24-28

24 *So Jacob was left alone, and an angel wrestled with him till daybreak.*

25 *When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man.*

26 *Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."*

27 *The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered.*

28 *Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome." (NIV)*

Jacob was a man with an exceptionally strong ego and self will that frequently caused him problems. Yet God had a “preferred path” for his life. Something in Jacob’s makeup had to be broken in. God finally apprehended him at a low point in his life. The struggle of their wills is depicted as a wrestling contest that lasts all through the night until eventually God’s messenger inflicts a permanent injury on Jacob’s thigh. After that he always limped, but he walked straight in the path that God had appointed for him.

Hosea also refers to this. Hosea 12:2-5

2 *The LORD also has a dispute with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; He will repay him according to his deeds.*

3 *In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his maturity he contended with God.*

4 *Yes, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed; He wept and sought His favour. He found Him at Bethel, and there He spoke with us,*

5 *Even the LORD, the God of hosts; the LORD is His name. (NAS)*

2. A Specific Word From God

The Bible calls such a specific word a “rhema” (specific) word as distinct from the (general) logos. For example, the whole Bible is the logos, but a particular word that is revealed to us specifically at some appropriate time is a “rhema.” Jesus said that we should live by the rhemas that come from the mouth of God. We need to get a specific, definite word of revelation and guidance from God.

Matt 4:4

4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word (rhema) that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" (NKJ)

Once we are willing to do God’s Will whatever it might be, God will begin to reveal His path for our life. I say reveal because He does not usually show us the whole course at once from beginning to end. He may give a clear intimation of the ultimate goal but He will not show us every sequential step that leads to that eventual objective. He usually reveals the path, one step at a time.

David said of God, “*Your Word is a light unto my path and a lamp unto my feet.*” (Psalm 119:105)

A lamp, that shines on one’s path usually just reveals the way immediately ahead. It does not normally shine all the way to our destination. For one thing, there are curves and certain detours that the light will not yet immediately reveal. It is only as we begin to walk, trusting God one step at a time, that He then reveals the rest of the way. Probably this is for our own good. If we knew before hand every

experience we must face, we might balk at leaving on that path in the first place. But God matures us as we go and ensures that before we reach every dramatic landmark, He has strengthened and enlightened us sufficiently to go through triumphantly.

Jesus emphasised that there must be a willing commitment to DO the Father's Will before that Will is fully known.

John 7:16-18

16 Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me.

17 If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.

18 He who speaks on his own does so to gain honour for himself, but he who works for the honour of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.

3. Accept A Formidable Task

The truth about most people is that they have a spirit and a capacity far greater than the challenges they have so far accepted in life. Most people tend to be conservative in planning the course of their life task. God has placed far more potential within them than their chosen role will ever use. Their faith, vision and innate ability, plus God's grace and enabling has equipped them for far bigger things than they ever attempt. God wants to stretch such people and make of them far more than they would make of themselves. God challenges us to accept a venture that we could not possibly fulfil without complete dependence on Him. Something that is far beyond our own natural strength and

ability to perform. A venture that, unless God signally helps us, cannot possibly succeed.

Life itself is a challenge but the call of God and His vocation for our life, is an even greater challenge. William Carey, a renowned and effective missionary in the past said, “Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God!” This was evidently the maxim that shaped his perspective on life. By practising what he preached he did accomplish great things for God. He helped to pioneer and shape the whole history of modern missions.

Another powerful old saying that has inspired many lives to greatness is “Nothing ventured, nothing gained.” Too many Christians today have settled for the mediocre in their life being unwilling to accept a challenge to venture something for God. Consequently life for them has become an existence rather than a glorious adventure. The church today needs more members with the spirit of Joshua who accepted God’s challenge to “Arise, go over the Jordan into the land that I have given to you.” Josh 1:2. God promised him “great success” if he would be strong and courageous.

The call of God will always be a challenge to natural man because it is a call to accomplish something in the power of God rather than one’s own strength. The tasks that God calls us to cannot be accomplished by human talent or ability. The source of our sufficiency is not in ourselves but in God.

“And we have such trust, through Christ, towards God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything of ourselves, BUT OUR SUFFICIENCY IS FROM GOD.

Who also made us sufficient as ministers of the New Covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit. For the letter kills but the Spirit gives life.” (2 Cor 3:4-6)

4. Make Sure That It Is “Born Of God”

I Jn 5:4

4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world-- our faith. (NKJ)

One of the things we Christians have to discern in life is whether a particular idea is a “Good idea, or a GOD idea.” Is it simply born of our imagination or was it conceived in the mind of God? Our good ideas may be good ideas, but are they simply born of human desire or are they birthed from God? One of the scriptures about which I did not initially understand the real significance is

Matt 7:21-23

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

22 "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (NKJ)

The dialogue obviously refers to a judgement seat scenario when many Christians, including leaders, stand before a throne of judgement. They all announce the wonderful things which they have done “in the Name of the Lord.”

They have prophesied, cast out demons and done many other “wonderful works” in His name. Yet Jesus declares to them, “Depart from Me, for I never knew you!” What is the true significance of this scene? Are these persons cast out from heaven? Did they never actually know Jesus? Are they to be forever doomed? All of these possibilities may occur to an unenlightened mind.

However, I believe that the truth is more like this. A huge crowd of believers stands before Jesus in eternity. Many of them have been involved in “the work of the Lord.” Some have preached and prophesied. Others have exorcised demons. Yet others have done all manner of “wonderful works” in the Name of Jesus. (Christianity)

Perhaps they are located at the rear, on the outskirts of the crowd, feeling envious of those who are found closer to Jesus. Maybe they resent not receiving what they perceive to be their just and proper public recognition. They are not slow to claim a better deal. They cry out, declaring their accomplishments and religious works and basically crying for greater recognition and reward. But, to their amazement, Jesus responds, “I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.” What did He mean? Were they not even Christians, whose names were recorded in the Book of Life? I do not believe that Jesus was inferring that.

In the Bible, there are several words that are translated “to know”. One refers to knowing in the sense of knowing about someone. Do you know this person? Yes, their name is..., they come from, ...their occupation is,...but you have never even actually met this person.

Another dimension of “knowing” some person, is to meet them, make their personal acquaintance, get to know them personally, spend quality time with them. Get to know them reasonably well.

There is a third Biblical dimension to “knowing” someone and it refers to having a sexual, procreative relationship with them.

Genesis 4:1

I Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the LORD." (NKJ)

This is the quaint manner of old English that equates with sexual intercourse and consequent reproduction. I believe that what Jesus was saying to those workers was, “Yes, YOU may have done many wonderful works IN MY NAME, but I did not sperm those works. They were not born out of a deep, intimate, personal relation whereby we “knew one another” spiritually and that knowing inevitably birthed something as a direct result of the union. Therefore, stand back somewhat, make room at the front for those whose lives were lived so intimately with Me, that the relationship automatically produced the appropriate fruit. What is asked here is, “Was yours a good fruit, or a GOD fruit?” Perhaps this is also what Jesus alluded to in

John 15:16-17

16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-- fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

17 This is my command: Love each other. (NIV)

Not only is this fruit only produced out of a vital, intimate relationship with Christ, it is also essential to truly and deeply love one's fellow man also in order to produce such mutual fruit that will remain into eternity!

In a similar manner to that in which the Holy Spirit, "overshadowed" Mary and fertilised a seed within her, so the Holy Spirit wants to cover our lives with His presence and bring to birth a work of God.

Luke 1:35

35 And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. (NKJ)

So, one of the important things we need to discern, especially if we want "work smarter" is that we only pursue those projects in our life that God has truly birthed within us. As someone once said, "Find out what God is doing and do it together with Him." Another phrase might be, "Find out WHERE God is working and work there with Him." One of the important things we have discovered in recent years is how powerfully God is working in certain humanly under privileged parts of our world. In those parts of God's earth that we Westerners have often patronisingly called, "The

Third world”, God is at work in marvellous and powerful ways. Evidently to Him it is not the third world. Its peoples are not somehow second rate citizens of our globe. In God’s estimation they may actually be part of the meek of whom Jesus says,

Matt 5:5

5 *Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*
(NIV)

These may be those areas of our world, beset by many human problems and heartaches, where God’s Kingdom more clearly emerges! True they have enormous needs. Yes they have apparently insurmountable problems, but in their human extremity might this not also be true of them,

Matt 5:3

3 *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* (NIV)

Our world wide travels have sometimes taken us into some of the poorest nations on earth, including Nations where the national annual per capita income is about \$100. Yet in some of those countries we have at times discovered among faithful Christians more generosity, joy and gratitude than we often find in the affluent West. What kind of lessons might we learn from them?

James 2:5-10

5 *Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?*

6 *But you have dishonoured the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts?*

7 *Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?*

8 *If you really fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself," you do well;*

9 *but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.*

10 *For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. (NKJ)*

Seeing The Bigger Picture

One of the things that God has been telling me during these days of ultra-realism, after realising that I could have died at any moment, is to LOOK AT THE BIGGER PICTURE. When we are younger, stronger, more intense, we tend to focus our life more fiercely on the immediate. We are often driven by our vision. We narrow all the angles and sublimate life to our viewpoint. We think that we know everything and are often brash and ambitious. When we become older, especially if we have glimpsed the valley of the shadow, we begin to realise how little we truly knew and how small was our picture of life. We suddenly see that the canvas of life is much broader than we had ever realised. God Himself becomes bigger, as do His great purposes. Things that previously seemed so ultra important are no longer so huge. We begin to see our life from more of an eternal perspective.

5. Take Steps Of Faith

“Without faith, it is impossible to please God.” Heb 11:6.

Heb 11:1

I Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Faith is the daring of the soul to go farther than it can see.

WILLIAM NEWTON CLARKE (1841–1912)

Faith does nothing alone—nothing of itself, but everything under God, by God, through God.

WILLIAM STOUGHTON (1631–1701)

Pursuing and fulfilling the Will of God always requires faith. This is not merely true of the earlier stages. It is a principle that pertains all through a life that fulfils God’s highest calling for that life.

Referring once again to Joshua, God told him, *“Everywhere the soles of your feet shall tread I have given to you.”* Joshua 1:3. God had already given the land to Joshua and Israel. Nevertheless they had to actually place their feet on it to inherit it. They had to actually walk the walk of faith, placing their feet on to the territory that God had reserved for them.

They had to steadfastly set their wills to utterly obey God in every detail and every instruction for He had said,

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do all that is recorded in it. For then you will make your

way prosperous and then you will have good success.”
Joshua 1:8.

It was therefore imperative to success to :-

- a. Meditate in God’s Word day and night. (continually)
- b. Always have it in your heart and mind.
- c. Always have it in your mouth. (verbal affirmation)
- d. Obey everything God says.
- e. Be strong and courageous.
- f. Do not be afraid nor dismayed.
- g. YOU will then make your way prosperous.
- h. God will give you good success.

Faith does not struggle; faith lets God do it all.

CORRIE TEN BOOM (1892–1983)

6. Get Confirmation

God is a strong advocate of confirmation. He does not see it as a compromise or as reticence on our part. Throughout His Word, He advises us to seek and obtain confirmation. He certainly does not regard this as a lack of faith or obedience. Walking with God is a spiritual and therefore somewhat subjective exercise and we need confirmations periodically to ensure that we don’t unwittingly wander from God’s Will. Our confirmation however, should always be from a spiritual not a natural source. The natural sources may be objective but they usually emanate from the intellect, natural experience or logical deduction.

Certainly God requires us to have “common sense.” Unfortunately many good and sincere Christians have failed

for not having used this. However, we are not to be led primarily by our senses, whether common or otherwise. Our real guidance must originate from God, by His Spirit, to our inner spiritual man. Vital confirmations should also come from spiritual sources, but in the performance of our spiritual guidance, common sense must frequently be used.

The Confirmation Of God's Word

The Bible, God's written Word is our safest and best source of confirmation. Firstly through its stated principles. God will never guide anyone contrary to His principles. The Bible, amongst other things, is a book of righteous ethics and God would never lead anyone to do anything unethical.

The Bible also clearly reveals God's righteous nature and character and He would never encourage anyone to do something that is not wholly in keeping with His own nature and character.

The Bible can also be used for guidance and confirmation through its stories and narratives. God can lead us to read a certain incident or scripture that either confirms or not the correctness of our perceptions and decisions. We must always be careful though not to use the scriptures to suit our own persuasions or desires. Paul calls this, "handling the Word of God deceitfully" (2 Cor 4:2) i.e. bending it towards our own purposes. He further calls this, "walking in craftiness" which is a shameful and dishonest thing that God will certainly never sanction nor bless.

Seek Good Counsel

“In the multitude of counsellors there is safety.”

Proverbs 11:14; 24:6.

Always seek the counsel of your spiritual peers or fathers in the Faith. Never ask counsel indiscriminately or inadvisably. The person who asks counsel of a fool is himself a fool. Make sure that your chosen counsellor is more knowledgeable and more mature than you, particularly in the issues on which you seek counsel. Preferably ask those who have already gone the way that you purpose to go and have been through the same kind of experience that you are currently encountering.

“In the mouths of two or three witnesses, shall every word be established.” Matt 18:16.

Always ask more than one counsellor. Don't rely on the opinion of one person unless you are certain that their counsel is 100% correct. In Old Testament times, the elders of a city always sat in its gates, readily available to give sound counsel to all who sought such.

The Confirmation Of Providential Circumstances

The experience of many people concerning God's purpose for their life is that once one takes an initial step of faith, circumstances will confirm that step in a remarkable way. However, you have to “get going” before you can receive this kind of confirmation. One step in faith will often initiate circumstances favourable to the accomplishment of your given task. In fact, if this does not happen, you need to pause to make sure that you are really doing the right thing.

Paul confirms that “ALL THINGS work together for good to them that love God and are called according to His purpose.” Rom 8:28. All kinds of doors begin to open once we move out in faith. But we must take that initial step.

7. Check And Re Focus From Time To Time

Fulfilling God’s purpose throughout a lifetime inevitably requires us to stop periodically, check that we are still on course and make any directional adjustments that may become necessary. In aeronautical terms this is known as mid-flight trajectory adjustment. You cannot make such adjustments in the pre flight planning stages. It is only when you are in full flight that you can make such checks and corrections.

It is also true of the fulfilment of our vision, we may need to pause momentarily from time to time to make sure we are still on course. Moses was required by God to do this regularly to ensure that everything he did was according to the original plan (pattern) revealed to him on the Mountain of God.

Exodus 25:40

40 "And see to it that you make them according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain. (NKJ)

Hopefully, our ultimate vision and objective remains the same as the authentic original but the method of its fulfilment may alter.

8. Renew Your Commitment

As we follow through on our commitment to accomplish God's Will and purpose for our life it often becomes expedient to renew our commitment periodically. Sometimes the vision grows dim. At times we may be side tracked to things of lesser importance. On occasions we may experience some measure of failure or reversal. All of these possibilities can render it necessary to go back to the occasion when we first embraced the undertaking and there renew our vow to God. Jacob had occasion to do this. His initial vision and dream is told in

Gen 28:10-19

10 Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran.

11 So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep.

12 Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

13 And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: "I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants.

14 "Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

15 *"Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."*

16 *Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it."*

17 *And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!"*

18 *Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it.*

19 *And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously. (NKJ)*

Following this dramatic incident many things occurred that tended to distract Jacob from the centrality of his God given vision. So God spoke to Jacob again and instructed him to return to Bethel once again to build an altar to God and to renew his vision.

Gen 35:1-3

1 *Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother."*

2 *And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments."*

3 *"Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone." (NKJ)*

It was after this experience that God changed his name from Jacob, (cheat) to Israel. (Prince with God)

Gen 35:10-12

10 *And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name." So He called his name Israel.*

11 *Also God said to him: "I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body.*

12 *"The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land."* (NKJ)

This in accordance to God's earlier prediction.

Gen 32:28

28 *And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."* (NKJ)

9. Achieve Ultimate Success

Josh 1:7-9

7 *Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.*

8 *Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. **Then you will be prosperous and successful.***

9 *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.*" (NIV)

The book of Joshua is the only place in the English Bible, where the word success is used. God promised to Joshua, prosperity and good success. In our contemporary world these words usually indicate material prosperity and success but this is not necessarily so in a Biblical perspective. Experiencing and enjoying good success in a Biblical sense means, "Discovering, fulfilling and accomplishing God's Will for your life!" This may or may not involve material prosperity depending on what God's Will and purpose for you may be. Our own experience in this respect has evidently been somewhat like Paul's.

"As poor yet making many rich: as having nothing, yet possessing all things." 2 Cor 6:10.

In one sense we have never possessed much of anything, yet we have never wanted for anything either. We have had an interesting and fulfilling life, travelling the world, seeing exciting places, meeting many interesting people yet we have never had (nor desired) great riches. God has always supplied our needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Phil 4:19

We have also experientially proved Phil 4:11-13. to be true, *"Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am therewith to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in*

all things I have learned both how to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.”

The key Hebrew word in the book of Joshua that portrays his good success is “Yaresh” which means to “conquer and drive out your enemies and possess their possessions.” Joshua and Israel’s success and prosperity came through conquering and possessing Canaan. Ours will eventuate when we, by God’s help, conquer our personal, individual enemies, including Satan and possess the territory that they have ruled in our lives. True success, from God’s perspective, is to find His Will AND DO IT!

10. Give To God All The Honour And Glory

Someone has wisely said that anything is possible through God for those who are willing to give Him all the credit and glory for it. Certainly, God’s desire and purpose is not to glorify us. The opposite is true, we are on this earth to glorify God our maker and redeemer. The Apostle Paul accomplished many mighty things for the Kingdom of God but his attitude always remained,

Dwight L. Moody, a beloved evangelist, a man of humble beginnings who accomplished tremendous things for God, said, *“There is no limit to what God can accomplish through a person who will give Him all the credit!”*

Chapter Eleven

My Challenge To The Next Generations

I realise that my own generation is nearing the end of its time and should be passing on the torch to the generations to come. As in a relay race, we must realise the extreme importance of a good baton change. I remember, in my young athletic days, how important those changes were and how many times we had to practice them until they became second nature. Each runner in the team could run their personal best, but if the changes were not executed efficiently, the race could be lost. I am convinced that the next few years, will belong to the next generations. They will train and run differently than we did. We older runners must take great pains to ensure that we hand on the baton efficiently and expeditiously. We must morally support them as they run the great race. In order to accomplish this we need a good mutual understanding. We also need to value and appreciate those to whom we will pass on the baton. Unfortunately, many members of the older generation feel they cannot understand or recognise the value of younger generations. The elder generation become impatient because “young people today are not like we used to be!”

The truth is that the young people of today are largely a result of the kind of world that their elders have handed down to them. The world today is vastly different than that

of generations gone by. It is faced with challenges unknown in preceding generations. Fearsome challenges confront today's generation which needs all the assistance that we can give to them.

They face the most frightening yet the most exciting and fulfilling period of human history. Firstly because we are drawing very near to the return of Christ to rule the nations. Secondly because before that happens, I believe the greatest spiritual harvest ever known will take place.

The present generation of young people have been labelled by some as "the X generation", X being generally recognised in mathematics as "the unknown factor." Yes, to a large degree, they are an unknown generation. Nobody yet knows what they may be capable of. Their true potential is still unrealised. Their opportunities will be limitless, as will be their potential in God. However, I prefer to think of them as "the Joel generation", i.e. the generation of whom the prophet Joel prophesied,

Joel 2:28

*28 'And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. **Your sons and daughters** will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, **your young men will see visions.*** (NIV)

The Visionary Generation

Joel clearly predicts three major things concerning the young generation of the Last Times. Firstly, God will pour out His Spirit on them in a signal and remarkable manner. Secondly, they will be both male and female, God's sons and

daughters. Thirdly, they will receive supernatural visions of what God purposes to do in their day. While the older generation are still dreaming their dreams the young people will be possessed by a vision to evangelise the world.

My main purpose in fulfilling our present ministry is to raise up, train and inspire the next generations of Christian leaders around the world. I have great faith in the young people of this time. I believe they will impact the world for Christ in a greater way than has any preceding generation.

The Golden Arches

Some time ago I believe that God spoke to me about today's young people. At the time I was sitting in a McDonald's restaurant, eating a Big Mac. I had been impressed again by the service and smiling efficiency of the young people who stood behind the service counter. I thought to myself, "This is one of the most successful companies in the world today. It is spreading throughout the world more rapidly than any other business. It is immensely successful on the Stock exchange, yet it is run mainly by teenagers, with a minimum of senior oversight. These young people are making this company one of the greatest success stories of our times. Yet, when they go to church, they are largely disregarded and undervalued. The church feels they must entertain and amuse the teens, yet they are really capable of accomplishing tremendous things for the Kingdom of God." I am sure these thoughts came from the Lord. These young people will have their own "Golden Arches" through which multitudes of people all over the world will march into the great Kingdom of God.

I frequently hear the old adage, “The young people are the church of tomorrow!” I loudly refute that saying. **THE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE THE CHURCH OF TODAY!** One of the greatest challenges facing today’s church is to effectively pass on the torch to the next generations. The church must truly value and validate the younger generations, winning their whole confidence and trust. We must realise that the younger members of the church are its greatest human asset. Every effort must be made to solidly establish them in the Faith and help them to discover a deep relationship with Jesus. Older Christians must not resent that church services are becoming contemporary in nature. The church **MUST** be contemporary, modern, current, up to date, and present-day. It must also be thoroughly Biblical, spiritual and practical. When we think of the early New Testament church we often tend to think of a first century community, but we must always remember that as such, it was abreast of its time. It was contemporary to that period. Just as the 21st century church must be contemporary, relevant to its times.

A Remarkable Rain

Joel 2:23,24.

23 Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.

24 And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil.

Rain is always a sign of God’s faithful blessing to promote fruitful abundance and plenty.

Psalm 65:9-13

9 *You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you have ordained it.*

10 *You drench its furrows and level its ridges; you soften it with showers and bless its crops.*

11 *You crown the year with your bounty, and your carts overflow with abundance.*

12 *The grasslands of the desert overflow; the hills are clothed with gladness.*

13 *The meadows are covered with flocks and the valleys are mantled with grain; they shout for joy and sing. (NIV)*

The rain in Israel falls mainly at two seasons.

1. **The Former Rain**

Also known as “the sowing rain” falls in the first month, following the Feast of Tabernacles. This opens the year and the agricultural season, softening the soil hardened by the long summer, making it suitable for ploughing and sowing.

2. **The Latter Rain**

The “reaping rain” follows roughly four months later, providing a heavy deluge and frequent thunder storms that enlarge the grain, preparing it for a bountiful harvest.

There is usually a four month span between sowing and reaping, prompting Jesus to remark to His disciples,

John 4:35

35 *Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. (NIV)*

However, Joel foretells a time when (spiritually) God will send both the former and the latter rains together in the same month. The sowing and reaping rains at the identical time. A swift harvest that will see both sower and reaper working together at the same time, a phenomena also referred to by Amos.

Amos 9:13

13 "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills. (NIV)

This great phenomena will cause the greatest spiritual harvest in history, greatly eclipsing and superseding all previous in gatherings. This is the prophetic harvest into which God will send the "Joel generation." (See the Postscript on Page 261).

The Growing Importance Of Kingdom Commitment

We have certainly entered that period predicted by God when "*Everything that can be shaken will be shaken.*" Heb 12:27. It is a time of world-wide uncertainty and insecurity never previously experienced. A time described as a "Day of dark clouds." Everything that man has attained will be shaken. Every institution he has built will be rocked. The economies of the world will falter and fail. Social problems will flood the world. Previously unknown diseases will plague mankind. All manner of disasters will be experienced. There will be an alarming increase in earthquakes, floods and natural disasters. Human governments will fall because they can no longer cope with

fearful phenomena shaking the earth. The only things that remain stable will be those things planted by God. Amidst the chaos and confusion, the Kingdom of God will emerge in a new purity and power. Every human effort of man will ultimately fail, but God's glorious Kingdom will prevail. From the smouldering ruins of humanism will arise the Phoenix of God's Kingdom rule. Every human government will acknowledge ultimate failure and declare that "Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father.

Phil 2:9-11

9 *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,*
10 *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*
11 *and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (NIV)*

Rev 11:15

there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever." (NIV)

We are rapidly approaching a time when the emerging Kingdom of God will be the only sure and stable factor of life. The only thing worth investing in that represents lasting quality and security. Every humanistic venture will falter and fail. Only those things established by God will prevail.

An Army Of Reapers, Where Will They Come From?

The End Time Harvest will obviously require a great army of reapers to successfully gather it in a very short time space,

but where will those reapers come from? There are certainly not thousands of potential workers presently in the seminaries and Bible Colleges, preparing for the harvest. The reapers are actually in the congregations of local churches. They are the so-called Lay people. There is neither time nor reason to recruit them into seminaries. They must be trained and prepared right where they are. Every local church must provide training opportunities through short term courses. Every local pastor must be prepared to duplicate his ministry by raising up around himself a small army of trained workers. They will not be theological graduates. Their training will be minimal but the zeal of God and a mighty anointing of the Holy Spirit will be within them.

The harvest of the End Times will undoubtedly be greater than any that has preceded it. The prophet Joel describes it this way:-

Joel 2:21-24

21 Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things.

22 Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength. (KJV)

I believe that, in the Spirit, I have “seen” that army of reapers. Some of the most significant factors I noticed were

1. It was not a predominantly white, Caucasian army. In fact it was mostly comprised of darker skinned people from Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America.

2. It was predominantly a young army. Thousands of young people, many still in their teens, were reaping the harvest with enthusiasm and skill.
3. They were not using traditional Christian methods. They were involved in all kinds of service ministries, ministering to and meeting the real needs of desperate people. None of these events appeared to be taking place in traditional, institutional church facilities.
4. The harvest period was obviously one of great crisis and urgency among people who had become almost paranoid about the uncertainty of the future and their security.
5. It was a rapid and swift harvest. Thousands of reapers were working swiftly and expeditiously as though trying to gather in the harvest before a great storm would break upon the earth and ruin the grain.
6. The harvest was being reaped in a world which was obviously being made ready for the emergence of its Messiah in that it was filled with chaotic situations and problems to which man had no solution. Only the direct intervention of God would rescue humanity from self destruction.
7. The reapers were fully aware of God's prophetic purposes for Israel that were being fulfilled in the earth. They worked in harmony and unity with a Jewish remnant who had embraced the Messiah. The reaping company were one body that was neither Jew nor Gentile but a new redeemed company with no wall of separation.

Postscript: September 2011

Forty seven years have passed since I received this vision and many things have changed greatly since then. For one thing the Klemzig church in which I received the vision became the Community Church in Paradise which now has some 5,000 people attending regularly. In Sydney, where I had been a pastor prior to going to Adelaide, there had been four relatively small AOG churches at that time and now there are more than 200 in the greater Sydney area. In those days, Sydney was often referred to as “the preacher’s graveyard.” Now just one of those churches has some 18,000 members. The AOG fellowship nationally was comprised of less than 100 churches and now has something in the region of 1,200 churches. This kind of transformation could only be wistfully dreamt of in those days. I believe that this transformation was what I saw in the first two parts of the vision.

However, the third phase has obviously never yet been fulfilled. I did not fully understand at the time just what the real significance of that third phase was. I saw clearly that it was transpiring in a time of great confusion and grave consternation. As I watched crowds of men marching and demonstrating I could only presume that some great crisis had hit the nation. At that time, more than forty years ago, I presumed that the social and political unrest had to do with a time of economic recession. I believed that local industries were undergoing down sizing and serious economic problems resulting in massive dismissals. These in turn caused many families to lose their homes and suffer extreme

financial hardships. However I had no clear understanding of what the exact causes of unrest were.

However, I have been concerned of late as to how and when this aspect of the vision might be fulfilled. I have prayerfully asked God what that phase was all about and just what it meant. I certainly have not received another vision about it but I do believe that God has shown me some further details of what may take place. I found my attention directed to

Hosea 6:3

Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth. (KJV)

If I might presume to paraphrase Hosea 6:3 it might read like this

Then shall we experience, if we follow on to know God at the deepest level, that His arising will be as the dawning of a new day and God will come to us as the latter and the former rain in one great deluge.

This verse speaks of three major themes which are vitally significant to us in these days.

1. It speaks of a New Day dawning in the future associated with the “going forth” (emergence) of the Lord.
2. God’s emergence, bringing the New Day will come to us as the Latter and the Former rain together as promised in

Joel 2:23. The sowing rain and reaping rain falling at one time will cause the sowers to overtake the reapers Amos 9:13-15. The direct result will be a gloriously bountiful harvest.

3. This New Day will dawn for those who “follow on to know the Lord.” They will discover God at the deepest and widest levels and He will draw near to them in reviving power and blessing. (James 4:8)

I believe I began to see that in the midst of the renewal that our nation experienced, we neglected to “follow on to know the Lord” in a deeper dimension. I was not in Australia during those days. My family and I had followed the leading of God to go to Africa. So I cannot say what actually happened from first hand experience. However, my sense is that the churches and pastors enjoyed and appreciated the time of refreshing and the fresh growth it caused but never actually followed on to know God in the deeper dimensions He desires which would have included a greater understanding of His prophetic purposes. Churches grew and increased and in some respects a new day dawned but it has lacked the deeper heart searching and repentance that would have led into a far greater and deeper experience of God’s presence with all that can mean.

The original prophecy which Hosea delivered was actually in respect of Israel as a nation. In the preceding verses God had said, - Hosea 5:15-6:2

15 I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.

CHAPTER 6

*1 Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.
2 After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. (KJV)*

Because Israel had failed to truly walk in God's ways, God had withdrawn His presence from His people. He said, *"I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction"*

Fortunately the people responded positively to God saying,
*1. Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.
2. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.*

I believe that the church in Australia is presently enjoying a measure of God's favour and blessing but our response to it is rather shallow and superficial. In order to experience the latter and former rain as promised by Joel, we need to realise and acknowledge that we are currently living far beneath what is God's finest and best. We desperately need to repent and return to the Lord in humility with fasting and prayer that He would visit the land in a powerful and awesome manner. We need to move from "programs" to prayer and really seek the face of God.

With the benefit of hindsight I can also see something extremely important that frankly did not occur to me 42 years ago. I refer to the unleashing of terrorism around the world by religious terrorists and the great crises which this

has brought upon us all. I can better understand the concern and consternation I saw in the vision when I realise the effect that global terrorism will yet bring upon our world. The whole world is heading towards a time of tribulation and testing never before known on earth. It will eventually affect and impact every nation. In the context of that time of fear and uncertainty Almighty God will manifest His awesome power before all mankind. There will also come a tremendous outpouring of His Spirit on all flesh. The scenario in which the visitation will take place will be much more frightening than a mere economic downturn. It will transpire in a world that is threatened with annihilation when the hearts of people everywhere will be filled with fear.

Luke 21:26

26 Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. (KJV)

A further vitally important aspect is that when we “return unto the Lord and come to more fully know Him” we will understand His heart and plans for this day. Among the numerous things we will then understand is God’s End Time plan for Israel the world and God’s earthly kingdom. I believe that the 3rd day resurrection God spoke of in Hosea 6 refers to the visitation God will bring upon Israel which will also coincide with the fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy concerning the former and latter rain in the last days.

Joel 2:23

Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God; for He has given you the former rain faithfully,

and He will cause the rain to come down for you-- the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. (NKJ)

Israel's Restoration Will Be "Life From The Dead."

Rom 11:15

For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? (NKJ)

Events transpiring in Israel today are evidently and inevitably leading towards the direct intervention of the Messiah to rescue and redeem His ancient covenant people from their enemies. (Zechariah 12) This intervention will lead to the recognition by Israel of their promised Messiah redeemer.

Zech 12:10

And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. (KJV)

It will also bring men and nations everywhere to their knees before Jehovah God and His Messiah as they recognise His supreme unquestionable authority over all mankind.

At present the church worldwide seems to be largely oblivious regarding the significance of what is happening in the Middle East and specifically in relation to Israel. Current world events are happening in line with Bible Prophecy which predicts that a huge spiritual "beast" will arise in the

form of an alliance between Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. (See Daniel 2 and 7 and Revelation 12) This beast will be dedicated to the destruction and conquest of the Jewish nation Israel. The world stage is obviously now being set for the final confrontation between the powers of darkness and the kingdom of God. At the same time God is preparing to gather in the greatest harvest ever. When mankind sees the awesome power of God displayed as He steps on to the scene to rescue and redeem Israel, they will all recognise that Jehovah God is truly the true and living God. Multitudes from every religion and those with no religion will then respond to His Gospel and be swept into God's glorious Kingdom. It is interesting and important to note that in Jeremiah 41, the scripture that seemed to confirm the vision it says clearly that it was "The Lord God The Holy One of Israel who would perform it to "show us things that will happen at the latter end.

Isaiah 41:20-22

20 *That they may see and know, and consider and understand together, that the hand of the LORD has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it.*

21 *"Present your case," says the LORD. "Bring forth your strong reasons," says the King of Jacob (Israel).*

22 *"Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; let them show the former things, what they were, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare to us things to come.(NKJ)*

Here Are Some Further Thoughts From Hosea

Hosea 6:3 (a paraphrase)

3. Then shall we know, (experience) if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth (emergence) is prepared as the dawn of a new day; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

The Bible portrays rain as a very special blessing from God. Unfortunately, as with the natural rain, we are inclined to take this blessing for granted and regard its importance lightly.

Deuteronomy 11:14

'then I will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain (Sowing Rain) and the latter rain, (Harvest Rain) that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil.

There are three ways in which God wants us to know Him

1. From His Word in a much deeper way, studying with our hearts rather than our heads.
2. Experientially, through spiritual intimacy, prayer and intercession.
3. Reproductively, as Adam “knew Eve” “*and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the LORD.”* Genesis 4:1

The years of renewal we experienced came from the Lord. No humans became exalted and well known for their role in it. However, its results have not (yet) led to the revival for which we hoped.

What Happened To It?

1. We failed to follow on to more personally and intimately know the Lord Himself.
2. Many Pastors became CEO's, organizing programs. Worship became spiritual entertainment for an audience.
3. We settled for reasonably good results rather than the best.
4. We failed to humble ourselves before God and to be surrendered in utter reliance on Him.

What Can Be Done Now?

1. We need to earnestly seek the Lord of the Harvest
2. Follow On to know Him. Paul in Philippians said "That I might truly Know Him."
3. Earnestly "chase after" -to know His heart, to see through His eyes and discern His Will.

What will happen as we follow on to know Him?

We will develop deeper intimacy with Him. Knowing His mind and feeling with His heart.

In accordance with Joel's prophecy, the church and especially its leaders need to blow the trumpet in Zion to "sound the alarm.

What Might God Tells Us At This Prophetic Moment?

In accordance with Joel's prophecy, the church and especially its leaders need to blow the trumpet in Zion to "sound the alarm. Christian radio and TV is ideally

positioned to Sound the Alarm. Reaching the church AND the un-churched, believers and non-believers. The Bible says that a son who is idle in the time of harvest brings shame to his father.

Proverbs 10:5

5 A wise youth works hard all summer; a youth who sleeps away the hour of opportunity brings shame. NLT

Joel has some tremendously encouraging prophecies for Israel and the Church in the Latter Days calling upon them to “Fear not. Be glad and rejoice.” E.g.

Joel 2:21

21 Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the LORD has done marvellous things! (NKJ)

Joel 2:23

23 Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God; (NKJ)

However, these wonderful promises are all conditional for Israel as indeed they are for the church too.

Joel 2:12-19

12 "Now, therefore," says the LORD, "Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning."

13 So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm.

14 Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him-- a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God?

15 Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly;

16 Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and nursing babes; let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, and the bride from her dressing room.

17 Let the priests, who minister to the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar; let them say, "Spare Your people, O LORD, and do not give Your heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"

18 Then the LORD will be zealous for His land, and pity His people.

19 The LORD will answer and say to His people, "Behold, I will send you grain and new wine and oil, and you will be satisfied by them; I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations. (NKJ)

Let us look again at what God promised Israel (and the church) in Hosea 6:1-3

1 Come, and let us return to the LORD; for He has torn, but He will heal us; he has stricken, but He will bind us up.

2 After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight.

3 Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD. His going forth is established as the morning; he will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain to the earth. (NKJ)

What It Is We Need To Do?

1. "Come, And Let Us Return To The Lord, v. 1

This involves the acknowledgement that we have strayed from the true righteous paths of the Lord. We have fallen short of His best.

2. Let Us (Earnestly And Diligently) Pursue The Knowledge Of The LORD. Let us determine to seek the face of God rather than His hand. For so many Christians God has become just an inanimate source of supplies. He is somewhere to go with our needs rather than someone with whom to relate in intimate fellowship.

3. The Expectation They Had Of His Favour:

"He that has torn will heal us, he that has smitten will bind us up," as the skilful surgeon with a tender hand binds up the broken bones or bleeding wounds so will God bandage and heal us. The same providence of God that afflicts his people also relieves and heals them, and the same Spirit of God that convicts the saints comforts them.

4. They (Israel) Realise That Deliverance Out Of Their Troubles Will Be To Them As Life From The Dead (v. 2): (Rom 11:15)

"After two days he will revive us and on the third day, when it is expected that the dead body should putrefy and corrupt, and be buried out of our sight, then will he raise us up, and we shall live in his sight, we shall see his face and it shall be a reviving to us. Though he forsook us for a small moment, He will gather us again.

5. That Then We Will Mature In The Knowledge Of God

(v. 3): Then shall we know if we follow on to know, the Lord. “*Then*” when God returns in mercy to his people and demonstrates His favour for them, He will, as a sign and result of his favour, give them more of the knowledge of himself; and the earth shall be full of that knowledge, (Isaiah. 11:9).

6. All Shall Know God

Then shall we know the Lord, when we return to God in repentance we shall be brought into a deeper and fruitful knowledge of Him as per.

Jeremiah 24:7

7 And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart. (KJV)

Jeremiah 31:34

34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (KJV)

7. His Going Forth Will Be As The Dawning Of A New Day

(Hosea 5:15) prepared and secured for us as surely as the return of morning after the darkest night. He shall also come to us as the latter and former rain unto the earth, which refreshes it and makes it fruitful. Now this projects much further than their deliverance out of captivity, and was to

have its fullest accomplishment in the coming of Messiah Christ.

We are as those who wait for the morning after a long dark night, and are sure that it will come at the time appointed and will not fail. The light of his countenance will be both reviving to us and growing upon us, unto the perfect day, as the light of the morning is. His appearance shall be as the morning the dawning of a new day after the darkest night, as Messiah appears as the sun of righteousness, and the Day-Spring from on high to visit us.

As predicted by Joel, the former and the latter rain in the last days will produce a glorious harvest for both Israel and the Church.

Joel 2:23-24

23 Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God; for He has given you the former rain faithfully, and He will cause the rain to come down for you--the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.

24 The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil.(NKJ)

The Bible clearly teaches that some prophecy speaks to potential, to possibilities, to probabilities--to what we call Kingdom options or choices. It does not necessarily express certainties, guarantees, or inevitabilities. Prophecy expresses God's best, His ideal, His ultimate, His perfect purpose for you--whether realized or not. Or to put it another way, some prophecy expresses the conditional will of God, not necessarily the imminent will of God.

Prophecy Expresses the Conditional Will of God

For example, God spoke prophetically to the children of Israel that ALL would possess the promised land, and He also knew only two out of two million would. Still, God spoke; He expressed His intent. God spoke prophetically that Saul was to be king, and He also knew his reign would end disgracefully, prematurely. Still, God spoke; He expressed His intent. God spoke prophetically that Hezekiah would die, and God also knew he would live. Still, God spoke; He expressed His initial intent, and then He extended mercy to Hezekiah and granted him fifteen more years. God spoke prophetically that Nineveh would be destroyed, and God also knew He would spare it. Still, God spoke; again, expressing His original perfect intent in prophecy. God promised prophetically that the priesthood would never leave Eli's household. He expressed His intent. Yet God also knew Eli's sons would forfeit this promise by the very next generation. Still, God spoke, expressing His perfect, prophetic intent.

God Speaks His Perfect Intent in Prophecy--Whether Realised or Not

If prophecy only expresses inevitabilities, then all the children of Israel would have possessed the land regardless of their (unbelieving) hearts. Saul would have continued his reign as king indefinitely, regardless of his (disobedient) actions. Hezekiah would have died--there could be no other option. Nineveh would have been quickly destroyed, and the priesthood would have remained indefinitely in Eli's (evil) household. Yet, none of these prophetic things happened! Why?

God is never limited in prophecy even by His own perfect

foreknowledge! He still chooses to announce His plans and purposes through prophecy even when He knows the final outcome might not conform exactly or even remotely. All personal prophecy is highly conditional, and key individuals and certain natural circumstances must cooperate for it to come to pass in its entirety.

God Is Never Limited in Prophecy Even by His Own Perfect Foreknowledge!

The truth is that prophecy is a limited gift with a limited application. God speaks to prophets on a strict need-to-know basis. He does not always reveal His hidden prophetic purposes. The Bible says, "God has glory in what He conceals." (Proverbs 25:2) "The secret things belong to God." (Deuteronomy 29:29) Elisha said, "The Lord has hidden it from me." (2 Kings 4:27) Paul said "we prophesy (only) in part" (I Corinthians 13:9). God conceals things from His prophets. He has certain secrets He does not reveal to them. He hides things from them. He only allows them to see and speak "in part" on a limited need-to-know basis. In this sense, prophecy is a risk for everyone involved. It's a risk for the God who initiates it, and it's a risk for His representative, the prophet, who speaks it.

So, will we as Christians experience the perfect fulfillment of every true prophecy spoken over our lives here on earth? Probably not. Is anyone to blame for this? Is anyone at fault? Not necessarily. It is neither the prophet's fault nor God's fault. That is just the nature of personal prophecy.

God's word says, "**These men (and women) of faith,**

though they trusted God and won His approval, (*notice: they trusted God, and won His approval!*) none of them received ALL that God had promised them (prophetically)." (Hebrews 11:39)

Footnote: These sound words of Scripture remind us that every promise of God, including a prophetic word, need to be seized and appropriated by faith on the part of those to whom the promises are extended. Although we believe God has spoken several words over Australia there is a vital need for believers to obey the conditions that God makes in regard to His promises. - Gerald Rowlands

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