

"... healing for all the nations" Revelation 22:2



"... the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified" Isaiah 61:3

The Tree of Life

Volume 1, Issue 5

"... for the testimony of Jesus"
Revelation 1:9

January-February, 2007

Beloved Brethren,

Greetings in the mighty name of Jesus Christ! I pray that your holiday season was blessed with His presence! I pray that his peace and joy will be with you as we enter a new year!

As we start this new year, I would share with you what the Lord has laid on my heart for the new year. We need to be the change that everyone is talking about. Christians have the answers that many people are looking for. I am not talking about governmental problems or other politics, I am talking about hope, joy, peace. We are the salt, the light, that Christ has left in the world to show them those things. Miracles are great, but the real power of the Christian life is a deep and lasting peace and no fear of today or the future.

We as Christians need to resume the things that once made us the greatest force the world has ever known. We are to be feeding the hungry. We are to be taking care of the drug addict. We are to be taking care of the poor, oppressed and down-trodden. We have abdicated our role as the agents of change. I am not just talking about the initial experience of salvation, but certainly including that. Remember, Christ healed ten lepers even though only one came back and thanked Him. We never read of the widow of Nain again. What we read of is the compassion that Christ had for the people around Him.

I know that this the correct way. This is the overwhelming testimony of Scripture. But I also know this by experience. I remember all too well when I was not serving the Lord. There were people who shared the Lord with me, but they shared not only Scripture and admonition to be saved, they shared love, food, and companionship. Then after I was saved, they looked past what I was as a sinner and looked at the hope and promise of what I could be in Christ!

Let us press on to compassion, and hope. Let nothing keep us from the completeness of the Lord's work for us!

Pour Out My Spirit

Jason Newman

Joel 2:28-32; Ezekiel 36:21-27; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Acts 2:1-39

This is one of the more famous passages of Scripture in the Old Testament. If you have been in church very long you have read or heard this text preached. Indeed, the first Gospel message not preached by John the Baptist or Jesus Christ was from the text. One of the reasons this passage is so famous is there are lots of people who interpret it in many ways. My design here is not to say one is better than the other. We are going to look for a basic understanding of the text.

As we start to read the passage we see the “I will.” This is God speaking, as is indicated by verse twenty-seven. So it is the Spirit of God that is going to be poured out on all flesh. This does not mean the animals. This is talking about all classes of men, beggars, lepers, harlots, rich men, poor men.

The other amazing thing about this passage of Scripture is at the end, in verse thirty-two. When the Spirit is poured out, whosoever calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved. This is a foreshadowing of salvation, deliverance and healing because of the Spirit of God being poured out. So what we have is a bookend of promises. “I will pour my Spirit out ... will be saved.” One is the action of God, the other is the effect of God.

Before we look at the New Testament I want to look at a couple of Old Testament passages first. As we start in the book of Ezekiel, we find God saying basically the same thing that Joel was saying. The people are polluted in my sight because of sin. In the messages before this one I have made the point that Israel knew the prophecies literally. They saw and experienced the Hand of God in a awesome way. I also made the point that the principles of these passages are true for the church. The reason that there is no difference between the church and the world is that we are not following after God. He is allowing His name to be profaned to get our attention.

Verse twenty-three says that He will sanctify His name for his own sake. Why? Because he is God. We talked last time about that God comes because He is God, not just because we have fasted, done good things, or prayed. We should be doing these things simply because He is God. These things welcome and petition His presence, but God is God and does as He pleases. Here we have the principle laid out why He does the things He does. So that His name will be sanctified in our eyes and in the eyes of the world.

As we read on, we see that He is going to start to do some things. He is going to cleanse us. This is going to be in our hearts and in our spirits. He is going to take out the old stony heart and replace it with a heart of flesh. I would remind you of the passage in Jeremiah where he talks about breaking up the fallow ground of our hearts. Why does that happen? To take out the stones that are in the fields of our hearts. This heart of flesh is not flesh in the sense of in. Here the Lord is saying this new heart will be full of life, supple, easily moved for Him. It was full of sin, like a stone in His sight. Now it will be changed, have a new birth and have life.

God then says that it will be His Spirit within us that causes this to happen. This is so important for us to understand. The promise of God is My Spirit will come and cause you to live the way that is right and good.

Now as we come to Jeremiah, we come to the mountain top of his book. We see God talking to Israel and saying there is going to be a new covenant. Not that the old covenant was bad. God had been faithful to the covenant. The problem was that the people had not been. It was a covenant of outward things, not a inward reality. The new covenant is going to write the laws of God on their hearts. The purpose of God is still the same. He wants to be our God, and He wants us to be His people.

We know the history of God’s dealing with man. We know that Adam fell. But God did not change in His plan or purpose. How God blessed Seth, Enoch, Noah. We read how with Abraham God started to make a nation unto His name. We read of the nation of Israel that at times they followed after God, at times not. God is saying that a change is coming. The change is going to be this: Instead of it being a codified system of laws, a outward work, it is going to be a inward law, a inward work. No longer would the priest have to stand and admonish them, the prophet rebuke and

exhort, every one will know personally the the Lord. This was new to the whole world. The High Priest was able to see the Glory of God once a year. Occasionally a prophet would, occasionally a king.

As we now go to the New Testament, see the fulfillment of these passages come to pass. What we read in Acts 2 is the first time that God does this. Verse two tells that the sound, the wind, came from heaven. What did all the prophecies say was going to be the starting place? God would do all the pouring of His Spirit. The presence of God was in the house that all in attendance could see and feel it within themselves, but also see it in everyone else. Some of the people did not understand, some were curious. Then Peter stands up and quotes the passage from Joel.

As you start to read the sermon of Peter you find that there are a couple of additions. The first is right at the beginning, in verse seventeen. "... saith God ..." Peter wants to remind the devout men of Jerusalem who was the Promise-giver and the Promise-keeper. Sometimes we take it for granted that since we quote the verses out of the Bible, people know that God has said these things. Peter is not leaving this to chance.

The second addition is the word prophesy in verse eighteen. Now the word prophesy has a broad meaning and a narrow meaning. The broad meaning is that you speak for God about God. Any witness of God is prophesying about God. The narrow meaning is give a prediction about the future or some hidden revelation. Based upon what is going on here, it is simply speaking of the goodness of God. This does exclude the narrow meaning, but rather God was empowering these men to speak of His wonderful works (Verse 11; Luke 24:52,53). The first passage that the Holy Spirit brings to Peter is about the men praising God, even as they are seeing it happen.

Peter quits quoting the prophecy with the words "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. That is how men and woman get saved. The Holy Spirit of God gets poured out on men. Men seeking after God, the Holy Spirit drawing men to God. Let us grasp fullness and awesomeness of these words.

"He Wrought His Work on the Wheels"

By T. Austin-Sparks

Jeremiah 18:1-3

We are seeing that God Himself has taken the place of a potter and is at work forming a vessel for Himself. His work has a very special and definite purpose in view, for the vessel which He is making is a *chosen* vessel, that is, it is governed absolutely by His sovereign will and purpose. He will have this vessel, and nothing, and no one, can deny Him. The supreme idea connected with this vessel is that it is designed to serve a special purpose throughout eternity. There is an eternal thought in the Mind of God which He is going to realize and express in this vessel, and all believers are called according to this purpose. So what we are concerned with at this time is to be led into that divine thought.

There are two vessels presented to us in the Bible, and yet these two are one in divine purpose. There is Israel, which was called to be an earthly expression of the divine Mind, and was chosen from among the nations for this particular purpose: to set forth the Mind of God on this earth in history. On the other hand, there is the Church, spoken of in the New Testament as "the elect" (1 Peter 1:1). But the Church was chosen from eternity for a *heavenly* purpose, not only an earthly one. Israel was for an earthly and 'time' purpose, while the Church is for a heavenly and timeless, or eternal, purpose.

Now we, of course, are called in relation to this eternal purpose. In this present dispensation God is mainly concerned with this Church. It is being gathered out of all the nations for a great purpose in the ages to come. At present it is in the process of being formed, but at the end of this dispensation it will be completed and will begin its eternal purpose.

The Lord is continually rebuking us in relation to one thing: that is, that we make everything of this life and of time. We think that this life is everything, and therefore we have quarrels with the Lord because we cannot understand Him. For instance, the Lord does a deep, deep work in some life and brings that one into a very real knowledge of Himself. We draw our conclusions from that and say: 'The Lord is going to do something very wonderful in this world through that life.' All our hopes and expectations are bound up with that one - and just at that point, when we think they are ready to do some wonderful thing for the Lord, He takes them away; and we get into trouble with the Lord over that. We cannot understand why He does that kind of thing, but He has done it very many times. The Lord is working, not for time, but for eternity; not for earth, but for heaven. All that the Lord does with us here in time is related to the purpose of the ages to come.

We had better settle this matter very quickly. Nothing in any one of our lives will be completed in time. We shall never reach the end in this life, and only eternity and heaven will make our life perfect. Just when we think that we might be useful to the Lord, He takes us away.

This is the supreme idea of the Church, and we must recognize that it is in course of formation. Nothing is going to reach an end in our lifetime. I think we had better settle that, because it touches the heart of many of our problems.

In our summary of all the references to the potter in the Bible, we said that the driving force of the Potter's wheels is the Holy Spirit, and it is very important that we should all be perfectly clear and certain as to why the Holy Spirit has come into this world. There are many aspects to His work, but what we must guard against is regarding any one aspect as the whole. It is possible to draw a circle round the Holy Spirit and over that particular circle write the word 'MUST'. 'It *must* be like this. If it is not *this*, then it is not the Holy Spirit.' So we put the Holy Spirit into a box of doctrine. The New Testament makes it very clear that we must leave the Holy Spirit out of boxes and in the open.

But when we have said that, we have to realize that there is an all-inclusive work of the Holy Spirit. However many aspects there are, there is only one purpose, and that has two things in it. In all His different works the Holy Spirit just moves along two lines, and these two lines ought never to be separated. The one line is revealing Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit came for this precise purpose. Jesus said so. He is here for the specific and inclusive purpose of revealing the Lord Jesus. Now there is a peril associated with that word 'revealing'. Many people think that they just have to sit down and let something come to them. Sometimes the Holy Spirit does show us something while we are praying or are meditating quietly, but most of you have not the time to become monks or nuns. We have not the time nor the opportunity to be recluses. This does not mean that we must not have our times of prayer, because while we talk to the Lord in prayer, it ought to be a time when the Lord talks to us, but in these days of so much busyness and activity, it is very difficult to be quiet and meditate. Many of the Lord's people do not hear Him speaking because they do not give Him an opportunity. They are too busy to listen to Him. so we cannot put too much emphasis upon the necessity for being quiet sometimes.

When we have said that, and said it very emphatically, for there is no real substitute for prayer and there is nothing that should be allowed to take the place of the Word of God in our lives, we must recognize that the revealing of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit is a very practical thing.

Many of you will agree with me when I say that we have learned more about the Lord Jesus by experience than in any other way. If we have committed our lives entirely to the Holy Spirit, we must realize that everything that happens to us has a lesson in it. Each of our experiences is intended to teach us something. You see, we come back to our favourite text: "*All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose*" (Romans 8:28).

There is no experience which can come to us as children of God that is not capable of teaching us some lesson. The very sovereignty of the Holy Spirit demands that it should be so. Our going out and our coming in under the Holy Spirit will teach us something. There is a sovereignty over all the ways in the life of a child of God. That does not mean that all our ways are right, but if they are wrong the Holy Spirit can teach us something. However, the point is that the revelation of Jesus Christ comes very largely through experience. We come to understand the mind of the Lord by experience, and that is one of the Holy Spirit's main methods of revealing Christ. We ought never to take a holiday from the Holy Spirit.

The other line of the Holy Spirit is conforming us to the image of Christ. You can see these two sides in the potter's house. The clay on the wheel is going through experiences, and they may be very difficult for it to understand. The potter may give it a hard blow, or he may use the strength of his hands to bring pressure upon it, or he may gently work it with his fingers. The clay goes through many experiences. Well, the experiences are not everything. You may not understand them, or know what the potter means by these various activities. Many of them seem to be difficult, but the potter is not just doing this because he wants to. He is not doing something hard just because he wants to be hard. Be patient and watch, and you will see that something is taking shape: a vessel is being formed. In the end there will be something which has a design in it. *"He wrought his work on the wheels."* He did not just put some clay on the wheels and knock it about - he wrought his work.

To use a New Testament phrase, the Lord is *"working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight"* (Hebrews 13:21), and you all know so well what is the design: *"For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son"* (Romans 8:29) - the revealing of His Son by the Holy Spirit, the working of the Holy Spirit by experience and the perfecting of the vessel which is the image of God's Son.

I want to stay just for a little while with one other aspect of this formation. When the potter puts the clay on the wheel it is composed of a great multitude of particles which could just fall apart at any moment and the clay come to pieces. They are individual particles. But do you notice what is happening on the wheel? By pressure and manipulation these particles are being pushed *together* so that they are losing their independence and becoming parts of one whole. If the particles could speak, they might say: 'Well, I don't think I like this idea. I am being robbed of my independence and am having to accept a life in relation to other particles. I don't think I like that other particle. I would sooner have some other kind of particle next to me, and here is this potter making me live with other things that I don't like! "Oh, for the wings of a dove! Then I would fly away and be at rest!"

The Potter is forming a body, a vessel, and every part of this vessel has to come into vital relationship with all the other parts. He never consults our likes over this matter, never says: 'Now, would you like to be here and have So-and-so put next to you?' You see, this is one of the great factors in divine sovereignty. The Lord never consults our wishes in this matter, because one of the great manifestations of His grace is going to be in our ability to live with people we do not like.

I wonder what you would do if you had the choice of your relationships! But the Lord does not give us that choice, for this vessel is called, says the Apostle Paul, *"to the praise of the glory of his grace"* (Ephesians 1:6). It does not want much grace to live with people whom we like, but it does take a lot of grace to live with some people. This is the formation of the Holy Spirit - the relatedness of the particular particles of the clay in the vessel is through His discipline.

And yet there is another aspect of this. The Lord very rarely puts together two parts which are exactly alike, but He does put parts together so that they can be the complement of each other. This is divine wisdom.

Have you ever asked any questions about your physical body? Have you ever asked why you have two eyes instead of one? Why you have two ears and not only one? Why you have two hands and not only one, or two legs and two feet? Why is there duplication in our bodies? Well, see how you would get on if you only had one leg! You would very soon lose your balance,

for you need the other leg to keep you balanced. You put one foot forward and, unless you are just going to hop along with much difficulty, you must have another leg to come up and help. Of course, there are some people who, not having a second arm or leg, have learned to use the one very well, but that is not natural, and they must often feel the loss of that other limb. There is always some weakness and some lack. Well, if you like to try, you can put this to the test. You can go out from this place (I don't want to see you do it!) and try to get along with one leg. Do you see the point? God has constituted our bodies on this principle of mutual helpfulness, the one member making good what is lacking in the other.

When I was a little boy I used to be taken to church and, not being very interested in the sermon, I had to find some little ways of getting through that awful long time. One of the things I did was to see how much I could see through one eye, and then how much I could see when I closed that one and looked through the other. I found that I had only half a life when I used one eye! You see, my nose was like a line, and when I closed an eye I could not see very much on the other side of my nose. It was the same the other way, but when I used both eyes I could see everything. Well, of course, that is just a boy's silly little game. If I closed one eye I did not see some of the things I did not want to see!

We need the two sides to make a perfect life, so God has given us two eyes, two hands, two legs and two feet, and each side contributes something to the other side.

Here we are back with this vessel that the Lord is forming. All the particles, while retaining their personality, are to become one vessel.

There is one thing that I feel I must say before we conclude. The real formation of this vessel is taking place in heaven. We are always trying to get a perfect expression of the Church on the earth, but we shall never do it. Make no mistake about this! You will have to learn this lesson sooner or later.

At the end of the Bible this vessel is represented as the new Jerusalem and is seen coming down out of heaven. All the ages have been occupied in forming this heavenly vessel. Nevertheless, what is heavenly has to become more and more real in us while we are here.

We shall never know what the Lord has been doing with us until we get to heaven, but when we do see all the meaning of His work with us here we shall be very surprised. There is a larger meaning than we can see in those words of the Lord Jesus: "*What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter*" (John 13:7). Why it is that the Lord puts us together as He does: why has He called us to live in certain relationships which are not what we would choose? The full explanation of that awaits us in heaven, but that does not mean that we have to wait until we get there to express the relationship. It is a mark of something being wrong spiritually when members of the Body of Christ separate themselves from other members. Our great peril is to live an independent spiritual life. There is something of a Thomas in most of us. You will remember that when the others were together enjoying the presence of the Risen Lord, Thomas was not there. Fellowship is a *spirit* before it is anything else. It does not necessitate our always being together in one place. It is a very precious thing to be able to be together as the Lord's people, for many of them live a very lonely spiritual life. Nevertheless, fellowship is a spirit more than it is geographical. When the Apostle said: "*Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit*" (Ephesians 4:3), he was not only localizing that. It is an exhortation to the whole Church, scattered over all the earth - "giving diligence to *keep* the unity of the Spirit". It is the "*unity of the Spirit*" - fellowship is a spiritual thing.

Now the Potter, by the energy of the Holy Spirit, is seeking to form a heavenly vessel, and the formation is a progressive day-by-day expression of the Lord Jesus.

A Chosen Generation, part 2

John Myers

In 2 Timothy chapter 2:1 we find Paul writing to Timothy. Paul is telling Timothy that he has a spiritual heritage behind you. I am praying for you. Your grandmother and mother are praying for you. I am the one who laid my hands on you and dedicated you the work of God. I am totally convinced that there is something inside of you that God wants to use! There is something inside of you that God wants to stir up. God called Timothy. And God has called you young people in the same way.

I think sometimes about Isaac who was the promise. Samuel was called to be a priest. Jeremiah a prophet. David called to be king while he still tended the sheep. John the Baptist leaped for joy in his mother's womb at the voice of Jesus' mother. We find that the heritage came from his mother and grandmother as they prayed for that child. Many of you have raised your hands at camp and said that God has a call on your life. You run to the altar, you cry and shout, no closer to the Lord.

But we are talking about a generation who is seeking God. In other words they know how to get a hold of God. They do not leave the same way they came. They receive the call, they leave with an anointing. They leave there with power. They leave there with a word from the Lord. A generation that is not running around asking do you have a word from God for me. They are not a generation that has to be continually told get with God. They have the word from God and they are doing it. You have received the call; you do not have to be reminded!

I am reminded of Elijah who came by Elisha. Elijah threw his mantle upon Elisha, and Elisha answered the call. Even though he was a young man, he forsook all. He killed his oxen, and went after God! There are going to be times when you are going to have to kill the ox, burn the plow, and follow the Lord. The call of God is far more important than anything anybody else can tell you to do.

He did not begin to minister right away. He followed the Lord day in and day out. Even as they started to cross the Jordan river, Elijah tried to keep Elisha from following him. He tried to dissuade him from following after him. Elisha said, listen you are going, I am going. In other words, I have paid the price to be here. I am going to do this.

Elijah said what is it you want from me? Elisha said, I have seen your miracles. I have seen you heal, I have seen you multiply. What you have, I want a double portion of! I still believe God can give double! So they went on. We know that they came to the river, and walked over on dry ground. The chariot came, and as Elijah left, the mantle came down. Elisha did not wonder how he was going to get across the river. For years and years he had followed the man of God. He learned how to minister.

The call of God is the highest calling that a man can receive. Man did not call you God did. He has placed His approval on you. We have received that call. We should direct our purpose, our education, and our focus on what God has called you to be. We want to make our plans, we want to do some things, then we will do what God has for us to do. God has called you as a teenager, as a young person. You know what he is saying? Put your life toward the ministry. Football is great, but is not your life. Computers are great but they are not your life. In Him we move, in Him we live, in Him we have our being.

Is He everything to you? Are you prepared? I feel like God has called me to the mission field. Are you preparing? I feel like God has called me to be a pastor someday. Are you preparing? Are you looking to something else? If God has called you, and set you, then is that what God wants for your life? Are you going the right direction? If we choose to go any other direction, are we doing what God has for our life?

Even if He has not called you to be a pastor or a evangelist. Even if he has called you just to know Him. To be a wife or mother, husband, father. It is just important that you know the Lord. When

Peter and John raised the man up on his legs, the people took notice. These men had been with Jesus.

I drive by the football field and see a hundred young men strapping on the pads. Running up and down the field. Only eleven get to go on the field. But they are prepared.

Now may the saving grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Love of God the father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, rest remain and abide with us all, now and forevermore. Amen

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