

MOUNTAINS AND VALLEYS

We have been seeing in the preceding chapter that the salvation of the soul is not an event, but a process. It is a lifelong transformation which every child of God needs to be experiencing. All of us need to grow up spiritually into what God intends for us to be. But how is this happening? How can we understand the different things which are taking place in our lives, both within us and around us? Of course, this spiritual growth is a living process. It is a product of the supernatural Life maturing within us. It is Christ "being formed" in our inner being (Gal 4:19). Thus, it is a mystery. Just as we do not really understand "how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child" (Ec 11:5) so too spiritual growth is a mystery. There is just no way to explain in a detailed, systematic way how it takes place. It is not a product of following some pre-projected set of rules or procedures, but the operation of the Spirit of God within us.

Even though all this is true, there are a few factors which we can recognize. Perhaps we could think of them as guideposts to look for, so to speak, which may help us to at least partially identify some of the things which our Lord is accomplishing within us. God, through His word, has set before us some of the things which He wishes to accomplish in our interior.

John the Baptist was sent by God to prepare the people of his day for the coming of the Messiah. He was prophesying about the One who was to come. As part of this ministry, quoting the prophet Isaiah he declared that he was: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low; and the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Lk 3:4-6). This is a wonderful, prophetic word about the salvation of the soul. Here John is touching on some very important things which God wishes to do inside each one of us. In our soul, when it is as yet untouched by God, we have many different strengths and weaknesses. We have "areas" of our life where we feel strong and capable and others in which we do not have a lot of confidence. Also, we have emotional or psychological "regions" which are twisted or maimed by our various experiences in life. In order for Jesus to manifest Himself through us, all of these things must be changed. He must transform our interior being in such a way that He can easily and freely flow out through us and reveal Himself to the world. In our interior, we must become a "highway" for the King—a way for Him to express Himself without hindrance or a confusing mixture of self and His reality.

For example, everyone has their own "mountains." Regardless of how weak or helpless we may feel, every one of us has our own areas of strength. I remember, some

years ago, my wife and I were counseling with a young woman who seemed to have no backbone whatsoever. She was completely passive and did nothing. Apparently, she could do nothing for herself and acted very much like a human vegetable. We came to learn that as a young person, her parents had done everything for her. She had never made a decision for herself. She had been “carried” through life by others. So, when she left home to go to college, she simply fell apart mentally. Without help, she could just not survive. But through trying to help her, we discovered something very interesting. In spite of this apparent weakness, she did have one great strength. She was very, very stubborn. When she did not want to do something, nothing could move her. Whenever we tried to encourage her in some direction, her tremendous stubbornness became evident. This was a great mountain in her life.

All human beings have these “mountains” or high places. Everyone has some areas of strength. They may be very capable, very intelligent, very apt at dealing with and controlling other people. They may be very good at organizing things, they may have talent at music or oratory. They simply may be very strong willed and be able to meet almost any requirement. Some people are especially talented and have quite a lot of such abilities. Others are perhaps less “endowed.” But every soul which God created has at least some such mountains or strong points in their life.

As we have been seeing, this Jesus who lives within us wants to also live through us. He desires to express Himself through our being. However, these areas in which we are so strong and capable present a problem. In these “parts” of our personality, He has a very difficult time expressing Himself because there is already another life actively using these faculties. Since we are already so capable in these areas, why would we need to submit ourselves to His direction and control? Without much effort at all, we are able to speak and act in these areas of life. I am not saying that we are purposely rebelling or trying to do something against God’s will. In fact, quite often, when we are acting in our areas of strength, we believe ourselves to be doing the will of God. We are trying to “live for Him.”

In Philippians chapter 3, Paul makes quite a list of who and what he was before he met Jesus Christ. Evidently, he was a very capable, well-bred, educated Jewish male. Yet, after describing all these strengths and advantages he says that: “what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ” (Philip 3:7). In the kingdom of God, these things were not of value to him. On the contrary, they were a hindrance—a loss—because they were parts of his character through which God could not move and express Himself freely.

It is these “mountains,” these strong parts of our soul which need to be broken down. These high places need to be brought low and leveled out. As long as we are capable of living and doing ourselves, we have no need to depend completely on Jesus. It may be that we intend to let Him express Himself. It may be that we want to be obedient. It is just that our own life is so strong in these areas that we do not even realize when it is us and not Him that is being expressed. Therefore, God must do a breaking work in every one of His children. He must work to break down our confidence in ourselves, our ambition to work for Him, our trusting in our own abilities and our relying on our own strength, so we can no longer do and be for God, but can only act or speak when He is motivating us. Only in this way can we become a “highway” for the King.

Those who are very proud, God must humble. He will work continuously in their lives to expose their true weaknesses in various ways. He may allow them to fall (Dan 11:35). He may cause their cherished works for Him to disintegrate. He may even

have to expose their sins to others to abase them. He will deal blow after blow to their pride, until it is ground down to dust. Only afterward will they become useful vessels for His service. Truly, "God resists the proud" (Jas 4:6).

Those who are very capable, God may allow to fail. Time and time again, He will arrange circumstances so that they cannot accomplish their objectives. Time after time He will frustrate them. This is especially true in their work for Him. They try one thing, but it does not work. They turn to labor at another, only to have it fall apart in their hands. Often, such believers become discouraged and bitter. They think that God has abandoned them. After all, they think, they have been trying to serve God with all their hearts. Where is the blessing? Where is God's love? Where is the mighty hand of God? The mighty hand of God is indeed being manifested right before their eyes, but they cannot see it. It is working to break down their own strength and capabilities. It is working to destroy their own confidence in themselves. Actually, this is the most loving thing that God could do for them.

God's word says: "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time" (I Pet 5:6). And when will this "due time" be? When can God finally use us in any kind of larger way? It will be when we no longer "trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead" (II Cor 1:9). It will be when our own strength, our own abilities and capabilities and our own confidence is no longer. It will be when the mountains of our strong personality have become plains. It will be when we have died to ourselves, our ambitions and our plans. It will be when Jesus alone is being manifested through us.

One time while ministering to the multitudes, Jesus asked His disciples to give them something to eat. Obviously, He already knew that they had very little, only five loaves and two fishes. But He was trying to illustrate a truth for them. He knew too that as natural men, they had little to offer the people. So He took what they had in His hands. There He blessed it and then broke it into pieces. Afterwards, it was enough to feed many. So too it is in our own lives. What we have as natural human beings may look good from our own point of view. But until we are broken by His hands, we can be of little use.

In the beginning of our Christian walk, we may appear to succeed, only to later encounter many frustrations. When Paul was first converted, he immediately was in the synagogues debating with the Jewish leaders and causing quite a stir. He "confounded the Jews . . . proving that Jesus is the Christ" (Acts 9:22). Later, he "disputed against the Hellenists" until they attempted to kill him (Acts 9:29). Yet, soon after, he sort of disappears from the "Christian scene." But where was he? He was in Tarsus, Damascus and Arabia (Gal 1:17). We do not know exactly why he went to these places or how long he was there, but one thing is clear. When he appears again in the biblical record, he is no longer debating and disputing, but ministering Christ. Instead of working for God, He has learned to let God work through him. Shortly after, his name changes from "Saul" the natural, zealous, religious man, to Paul, the apostle, the one being used by God.

How many of His children have developed large followings and grand ministries, only to fall into some kind of sin later on and do damage to the reputation of Christ. How many have done "mighty works for God" only to disgrace Him later. This is because they were never broken. The "mountains" of their personal strength were never levelled. And so they continued on, using their own ambition, energy and efforts to work for Jesus until their human strength failed. Thus, they became easy prey for the devil. Truly, it is the loving hand of our heavenly Father not to let us succeed on our

own. It is a demonstration of His great love for us that He keeps us from what we want and disciplines us severely. Only in this way can we eventually become a vessel of honor to His holy name.

THE VALLEYS

Not only do we all have areas of natural strength and capability, but we also have areas of weakness and depression. These are the valleys of our lives. These are the situations where we have no self-confidence. We have no great abilities and assurance. Perhaps we are full of fear and so we avoid at all costs situations which will put us in a position to have to do or say anything that makes us uncomfortable. Perhaps we are afraid of being rejected, so we do not speak to others about Christ. Possibly, we feel inadequate, so we do nothing to reach out and help others. Our shyness leads us not to rebuke or exhort others who need this ministry. Our lack of confidence leads us to stay at home and “let others do the work.” There are even some who glorify their timidity in their own minds, classifying it as “humility” instead of what it really is—fear.

Dear friends, this kind of activity also does not glorify Jesus. When we are full of fear, and therefore resistance to doing, saying or being any number things, this severely limits our Lord being expressed through us. He cannot move freely through the “highway” of our being because He is encountering the resistance of our human weaknesses. When He wishes to speak through us, we balk. When He desires to act, we resist. The valleys of our insecurities and timidity create obstacles in His way. The many-faceted fulness of His personality cannot be expressed. Therefore, in order to be transformed, we must have these valleys filled in. We must experience the salvation of God in these areas of our life.

A large part of our transformation in these areas requires faith. To act and speak when we feel inadequate necessitates faith in God. We must trust that when He is leading us to do or say something, He will sustain us through whatever the results may be. We must learn to hear His voice and then obey Him through faith, facing into whatever fears and weakness we may have within us. No doubt, our Lord will lead us into these areas again and again. We will have to “walk on the water” over and over. We will be required to face our fears many, many times. We must step out in faith repeatedly until, strangely, these things are no longer so difficult. Over time we will find that what was once unthinkable is now a normal part of our life. When we obey Jesus to say or do His will in areas which make us uncomfortable, little by little these valleys are filled in. Where once there was nothing but weakness, now there is strength. The valley has become a plain. However, it is not “we” who are being expressed. It is as John the Baptist said: “One mightier than I” (Lk 3:16).

In practice, it is these very areas of fear and weakness that the Lord can use to glorify Himself in the most powerful ways. Since in these parts of our lives we have very little expression of self, God can very easily fill and use them. When we are willing to face into our fears in obedience to the Spirit, Jesus can manifest His nature powerfully. Jesus says that His “strength is made perfect in weakness” (II Cor 12:9). It is when we do not know what to do or what to say, that He can fill us with His thoughts and desires. It is when we are completely incapable that His glorious virtue can be displayed. God does not require strong, confident, talented people. Instead, He is looking for those who will, through faith, allow Him to be all He wants to be through them. Truly Paul said: “When I am weak, then I am strong” (II Cor 12:10). God used Paul’s inabilities to manifest His power.

Another factor in this transformation experience is that we must deny ourselves. Denying ourselves involves not only not doing what we want when we know Jesus is displeased, but also doing what we don't want when we see it is His will. How many times the flesh resists entering into areas of weakness, timidity or depression. How often we want to be carried along by good feelings and confidence instead of simple obedience in faith. Frequently, we are waiting for God to change "the way we feel" before acting or speaking while He is waiting for us to obey so that He can change the way we are. "Without faith, it is impossible to please Him" (Heb 11:6).

I will never forget meeting a middle-aged Christian sister in England. She had undergone a divorce or some other traumatic experience. As a result, she had become depressed. She spent her days moping around. She was always attending meetings looking for some stimulation and encouragement. She was forever a burden on others with her discouraged, sad demeanor. Her hope was that something would happen to her that was so good, so completely wonderful, that it would counterbalance all her negative feelings and cause her to start feeling good again. Of course, this never happened and never will happen. The real solution for her was to deny herself. She needed to deny herself the luxury of self-pity. In fact, she needed to stop thinking about herself altogether. She needed to open up to God and start thinking about serving others. Her need was to make the happiness and well-being of others her goal. In this way she would find from the Lord a supernatural satisfaction and happiness which would fill her depression.

THE CROOKED PLACES

There are people who are naturally strong. Others suffer from timidity and weakness. But there are also those whose lives have been twisted by the enemy. Some time in their lives, most likely in childhood, they experienced something devastating which left an emotional scar upon their character. For some, this may have been sexual abuse or rape. For others it could have been physical mistreatment. Still others were psychologically traumatized by continuous verbal abuse and/or neglect. The divorce of their parents often wreaks this kind of havoc in the personality of children. These things and many others, leave the persons who have experienced them with a kind of "crooked" viewpoint on life. They have deep emotional scars. When the normal course of life brings them into contact with these inner damaged areas of feelings, they run away or exhibit other peculiar reactions. They avoid any situations which might remind them of their experiences or "put them through it" again. Often, their husbands, wives, or others around them cannot understand why they react to life in the way they do. These are damaged twisted areas though which God cannot move.

Such individuals usually do not want God or anyone else messing around with these interior parts. Often there is great pain associated with whatever caused this psychological distortion. Therefore, they avoid any personal transactions which might touch upon these areas of pain. Their lives manifest a kind of twisted, strange behavior. Instead of reacting normally to everyday situations, often they see in them hidden danger. So, at least inwardly, they shut themselves off, turning inward to hide behind some flimsy emotional barrier they have erected in their minds which they think will protect them from further pain. However, this does not work. Seeing these peculiar reactions, those around them are often stimulated to do or say the very things which serve to irritate the wound. In trying to pry them loose from these strange mannerisms being exhibited, they further injure them.

God's solution to these deep hurts is to bring them into the light. We must open up our lives to Jesus and "let Him see" what has happened to us. We must let Him touch and heal our innermost wounds. Once again faith is required. We must know and trust that God loves us completely and without reserve. We must believe that He will treat us with the most tender kindness. We must have faith that He who made us knows how to heal our wounds and will do so with the minimum of suffering. Unless we are able to open these areas of our lives completely to Him, we can never experience His healing. It is absolutely imperative for us to open up every inward "door" to Him and allow Him to see everything. Everything which happened, everything which was said to us, all our pain and tears, must be laid at His feet. In this way, the Great Physician will come, lay His hand upon you and heal you.

In some cases, emotionally wounded individuals have buried their hurt so deeply that even their own mind has "forgotten" what has happened. They repress their feelings so severely—becoming an emotional cripple in the process—that they blot out completely what has taken place. This can be especially true in cases of rape or sexual abuse of young children. But as we grow spiritually—as we are more and more intimate with Jesus—He can and will bring these things to mind. He will shine His light upon them. I do not mean that we should try to think up things or imagine something happened when it really did not. I only know that in His time and in His way, He can reveal "forgotten," buried memories which are hindering our spiritual progress. Then, in His light, He can heal this area so that His life can flow through us in new ways.

One secret to emotional healing is forgiveness. Jesus can give us genuine, deep forgiveness for those who damaged us. This is an extremely important factor in His healing process. When we are able to forgive others, we will experience a marvelous liberation. In His light we can see how these people were just pawns of God's enemy. We can understand how perhaps they too suffered similar things and that they, living and acting in darkness, simply were tools of the devil. The forgiveness of Christ can flood our soul and liberate both us and those who mistreated us from the bondage of our own feelings. This supernatural forgiveness opens the way for divine healing in our souls.

After bringing everything into God's light and then forgiving others, there is still another step. These wounded, twisted individuals must open up these areas of their lives for Jesus to fill. They, like those with valleys of weakness and fear, must in faith be willing to step out into these territories which once were only pain. They must, trusting in the protection of Jesus, step out in obedience to experience Him in what perhaps was once only emotional "hamburger." They must discard their flimsy psychological protective barriers they have erected, stop running from intimate, emotional interactions and begin to let His life fill these areas. They must be willing to let Him act and react, love and be loved through them. Only by risking all and stepping out in faith into these wounded emotional areas can anyone be freed and healed completely. Avoiding such opening of the soul will only serve to cause further pain to yourself and others.

Through forgiveness and the healing touch of Jesus, these damaged areas of our lives then become open for the Life of God to live and move through us. Perhaps this will take some time, even years, of opening more and more to our Healer. There is no rule here. Every life is different and Jesus knows what is best. But without a doubt, with time and through faith, we can experience the new life filling even these damaged areas. They too can be used by our God to manifest Himself. The crooked ways can be made straight so that He can move through us. Further, it is often through these very

areas that were attacked and injured by the devil using other people, that we can have the most powerful impact. These parts of our lives, after they are healed and filled with God, become powerful weapons against the evil one who had tried to destroy us. Surely, "the lame shall take the prey" (Is 33:23).

THE ROUGH WAYS

When people come to Christ, they come, in the words of a famous hymn, "just as they are." Sometimes, however, "as they are" is a little peculiar. Now I know that we are "a peculiar people" (I Pet 2:9) but some Christians are just a little more peculiar than necessary. They have personality traits and quirks which can be amusing or even abrasive and downright irritating. They have habits which can get on others' nerves or behaviors which only serve to alienate both unbeliever and believer alike. They are a little "rough around the edges." Obviously, such behavior hinders the full and free expression of Christ in their lives. Our strange behavior or unusual habits do not serve to glorify God. They too need changing.

Part of the work of the Holy Spirit is to enlighten us. When we are open to Him, He will show us if we have some of these peculiar traits which do not bring honor to Him. As part of this illumination, He may even use others who know and love us best to bring some correction. Then we have the wonderful opportunity to deny ourselves. We can experience the cross of Christ putting to death what we are, and having it replaced with what He is. Naturally, if we love ourselves and appreciate our special little characteristics, we will never experience the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Only when we see ourselves in His light, revealing the foolishness of what we are, can we be changed. Then as we repent for exhibiting our own fleshly nature and open to Him for His new life, we can be freed from what we are. As we let Him do all of His work in us, we can become a highway for the King.

While we commonly think that our behaviors are "innocent" and our problems are only normal, in truth there is more to it than meets the eye. Any untransformed area of our lives can be and is used by evil spirits and demons to influence us, control us and cause us to do their will. This is especially true of those mental and emotional territories where they have succeeded in causing some damage and thus establish a kind of beachhead within us. These evil spirits use others over whom they have control to impact our lives. Then, having caused damage, they use this wounded area to exert influence over us. Using these other people, they instill in their victims certain patterns of thought. They cause them to view others and the world around them in a certain light.

For example: Let us suppose that these demons influence some family member to sexually abuse a young girl. Before this event or these series of events, she perhaps was a carefree, open, normal girl. But afterwards, her view of life changes. Now she is no longer innocent. She no longer feels free to act "girlish" for fear that she might attract the attention of some male who would hurt her again. Perhaps she blames herself for acting in a way that would attract male attention. She withdraws emotionally, building emotional and mental walls to try to protect herself from such a thing happening again. Thus the evil spirits have succeeded in establishing in her a beachhead, an emotional "ground" where they can control her. Whenever she is approached by men, she will always have a strange reaction to them. Her reaction will not be a normal response to what they are saying or doing, but the reaction of a wounded soul.

This woman then will have a lot of trouble in her future relationships with men, principally her husband. She will have great difficulty being a normal woman. Any advance her husband may make will probably be interpreted in the light her past. The evil spirits have succeeded in establishing within her a mind set—a series of thoughts. These thoughts, when triggered by something her husband does, then produce a reaction of withdrawal and emotional closing up. Perhaps her husband, not understanding this peculiar reaction, might become angry. His anger will further serve to wound her and worsen their relationship. Some men, not fearing God or understanding the true problem, become frustrated and, stimulated by demons, go on to try and satisfy their frustration by abusing their own daughters. Thus the ground the enemy has is passed on from generation to generation.

Let us then take the case of a young man who was often beaten severely by his father. This abuse continued for many years. So then, in this young man's mind, he has formed an opinion of men. They cannot be trusted. He becomes full of fear, even paranoia. In the future, he will have a lot of difficulty relating to other men. He cannot confide in them. He cannot make friends or open his heart. His mind has been programmed to think in certain ways and his reactions are predictable. The evil spirits have gained a certain amount of territory in him and they then use this territory to control him. Perhaps when this man receives Christ, he wants to serve Him. But he has great problems relating to other men in the body of Christ. He is always suspicious, wounded and closed. No doubt, the devil will arrange circumstances to continually try to reinforce these ideas. The result is isolation and division.

THE RENEWING OF THE MIND

So we see that the evil spirits work to establish thought patterns within our souls. Using many and various techniques they implant certain ideas or a series of ideas in our minds which we accept as true. These thought chains relate to life and relationships with others. They become "truths" for us and so we act and react to our environment according to these thought patterns. Normally, associated with these thoughts are certain "buttons" which the evil spirits use to activate these thoughts. They have established in our minds certain triggers which get our minds going along these pre-programmed lines. These buttons are usually something which others say or do which is similar to the things which the enemy used in our lives to establish these thought patterns. Therefore, we react, not to the truth of the situation, but to the devil's version of the truth which he has succeeded in implanting in us. Often the people around us who are used to trigger these thoughts are surprised by our reactions. This is because we are not responding to what is actually being said or done but to an already programmed series of thoughts which has been triggered.

Obviously such people are not open channels for the service of God. It is very common to see believers who, although they are used by the Lord, also have areas of their lives which are under the control of evil spirits. The result is that the Lord's expression through them is limited and often polluted by their actions and reactions which are under the influence of the enemy. I am not saying that these people are "possessed" by demons. It is just that their thought patterns, established by the enemy through their experiences, open them to being used by him. They are suspicious, fearful, sometimes aggressive, shut up, wounded souls. When other people try to get close to them and begin to touch on these wounded areas, two things may happen. Some react by closing up and emotionally running away. Others lash out like a

cornered animal to wound the one who is trying to be close so that they will back off. This is the classic “flight or fight” instinct. These are natural, human protective mechanisms, but they do not manifest the divine nature. In order to become a “highway” for the King, these things must be changed.

In Romans 12:2 we read that we are not to be conformed to this world but “transformed by the renewing of the mind.” Here is God’s solution of the “programming” of the evil spirits. It is to shine His light into us and expose these lies of the enemy. As we walk with Him, He will use various methods, including circumstances and the counsel of others, to reveal these areas of the evil spirit’s control. He will unveil their lies, showing them for what they are. He will help us understand how these lies became implanted in us. Then He will show us His truth which will set us free from the bondage under which we have been living. This “renewing” of our thought processes will bring our mind more and more under the control of the Holy Spirit. The more our thoughts are under His control, the more we can be an exhibition of Himself. Truly, this is what every Christian needs to experience.

GIANTS IN THE LAND

Jesus came to save our souls completely. His will is for us to become a living expression of Himself without hindrance or barrier. There is no bondage, wound, mountain or valley which is too difficult for Him to change or cure. His power is more than great enough. His love is unbounded. His grace sufficient for even the most difficult cases. Truly, He is “able to save to the uttermost, those who come to God through Him” (Heb 7:25). We must never, never believe that our case is too difficult or that we must always remain as we are. Jesus’ work on the cross was sufficient to change anyone into His glorious image. No one is too weak. No situation is too hard. Genesis 18:14 asks: “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” Our answer must be “No!” We must put our faith firmly on this fact if we are to be free. Jesus has conquered even death and sin. All things are now under His feet. His power is freely available to liberate anyone who trusts in Him.

However, none of this will happen without our willing cooperation. God will do nothing within us, unless and until we are completely ready and willing for Him to do it. In order to enter into this good land and possess it, we must day by day follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. When He leads us into areas of weakness or fear, there we must go—day by day, further and further until we have overcome. When He chooses to allow us to fail and be frustrated, we must submit ourselves under His hand. We can always be confident that what God is doing in our lives is the best for us.

Our view cannot be limited to only tomorrow, but we must be able also to see as God does into the future. Today's challenges and sufferings are producing tomorrow’s glory.

Naturally, our journey into the good land will involve many battles. Just as the children of Israel had to battle many enemies to enter in and take possession of what God had already given them, so we too will be faced with many spiritual enemies. Chief among these foes were the giants. So also, in their souls, new believers often have some very strong forces arrayed against them. The damaged areas of our souls, the weakness which we find within ourselves, these can be very difficult to conquer. Not only do we have our flesh to contend with, but we also have the entrenched power of the evil spirits. Not surprisingly, they will rise up to oppose any effort to take away their territory.

For some, the challenge seems overwhelming. They are simply too afraid. They have little faith in God. So they refuse to enter in and confront the giants in their lives. They refuse to step out in faith in areas of emotional damage or weakness. They will not open their lives completely and allow God to touch them. They are then in the same situation as the ten spies who came back from Canaan with a bad report. "There are giants in the land" they cried. "We are too weak to overcome them." So they did not enter in and instead wandered in the wilderness for 40 years until they died. How many children of God today are in this same situation. They are refusing to obey Jesus because of fear. They are unwilling to step out in faith and trust and confront the giants in their lives. So they are wandering in the spiritual wilderness. Perhaps they go from church to church, from ministry to Christian ministry, hoping for some kind of deliverance which does not involve any act of faith on their part. They want to be free, but they do not want to have to risk anything or obey. They are wandering in the wilderness of sin.

There is no lack today of "deliverance ministers" who are going around trying to cast out these evil spirits which have influence in believers' lives. They invest a lot of time shouting and rebuking these spirit beings. The problem is that often these spirits are not really "in." Many individuals who have a pronounced influence of these demons in their lives are not really "possessed" by them but only under their control or influence as we have been seeing. Therefore, "casting them out" has only a temporary effect, if any. The ground which they have established in the minds of the affected persons remains and therefore the influence of these spirits returns. Certainly there are real cases of demon possession and these should be treated accordingly. But most often, what believers experience is this "programming" of the mind. This can only be overcome by the "reprogramming" of the Holy Spirit.

Our entrance into all that Jesus has purchased for us requires our faith and obedience. He has done His part. He has paid the price which was necessary. Now the way has been opened for any and all to come and be saved—not just born again but completely changed from glory to glory into the image of Jesus Christ. Are you ready and willing to submit and obey? If so, you will gain eternal rewards which will never fade away.