

# March 1999 Prayer

by Aaron Greenway

In a few days, I will be singing at First Baptist Church here in Dallas, TX for a “prayer service.” The person who scheduled me to sing is adamant about the need of prayer in our country and in our every day lives. The new Rebecca St. James CD is entitled ‘Pray.’ I flew up to Denver for a Christian coffee house youth rally a few weeks ago and heard about the need for prayer amongst many of the people. Several days earlier, many of the brothers at DTS were discussing this very issue in the dorm. My best friend, Mark Bahr, recently made a profound statement, “The greatest need in our country is not leadership; the greatest need in our country is prayer.” At the beginning of this year, God began moving in me personally to spend at least a half hour every night with Him.

Many times, our prayer lives consist of quick sentences in the middle of traffic “God, get this traffic going! I am going to be late for work!” Or, “Lord what I am going to do about my finances?” I have often carried on conversation with the Lord while going about my everyday life. But I really have come to realize that God longs to drag me away from all of that and get me alone with Him. Moses had to get away from the children of Israel and go be alone with God. And when he came down, it was evident that he had been in the presence of the Lord (Exodus 34:29-35).

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I really believe that this is where God is going to see true change — first in the lives of His children, and second, in the lives of the people around us. The reason why we don’t care for others is because our hearts haven’t been broken enough. The heart of our Lord breaks over lost sinners, and God has called us to reach out to them. But first, He wants our hearts. God is not interested in what service we can give Him, until He has those things that are most precious to us. The Lord isn’t interested in what we can do until He has made us what He wants us to be.

I believe, when these things happen, the hardest heart melts, the lowest are made great, the farthest are made near, the powers of Hell are bound. And most of all, the name of Jesus is lifted up. Isn't that what we live for?

How many of us today can commit to spending a certain amount of time with the Lord even if it is just a half hour. Trust me, after precious moments with Jesus, our half hour will turn into 45 minutes and then an hour, because we will begin to be broken, and our lives will be changed....and then the lives around us will truly be ministered to.

How many will commit? Can we afford not to?

Psalm 16:11 "You will show me the path of life; in your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

# April 1999 Regular Christianity

by Aaron Greenway

In light of the upcoming Easter holiday, I raise the question in my own life, “Aaron, do you really love God, are you really passionate about the things of God, do you pursue God, or is life simply about being a ‘regular Christian?’” Many times, I have put my Bible down because I was so tired that I couldn’t keep my head up to read the page. Many times, I have disregarded my prayer time because I felt there were other things that were more important. At other times in the past, I had seen the wrong movies, engaged in worldly thought with actions following close behind. To my shame, I had sought after things that have broken the heart of God.

A heart that follows after Christ and longs for Him is very difficult to find. I have observed many brothers and sisters in the body of Christ throwing around theological terms and issues, but you would never hear them discuss their need for more of the things of God. Not very often will you catch anyone weeping with a brother over how he needs to give up certain things in his life or how he needs to be broken. The motto these days seems to be ‘grace’ and ‘liberty.’ When I see ‘grace’ and ‘liberty’ with no fire, passion, or conviction, then I tend to wonder just how pure and Biblical our grace and liberty really are.

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Fortunately, God has placed people in my life that do love the things of God, who are wild, nuts, bananas for Jesus. My best friend is one of the Godliest men I have ever known. I am constantly blown away by God’s TRUE grace in the life of someone who years ago hated God. His sister is no exception. She, as well, is a lover of God to the fullest extent. Up in Chicago is a brother in Christ who, for years, has encouraged me and sought God dilligently. And now going overseas is a brother (with his wife) who, years ago, was indirectly responsible for me coming to know Jesus. These people, though they are few, are living examples of God’s grace. They challenge me. They do not seek after riches or fame. Their hearts long for God. Their hearts are broken over lost souls, and will gladly lay down their lives for the sake of the gospel. When I

think of Hebrews 11 Christians, these are the people that I think of. To add to this, I am now meeting more brothers and sisters here in Dallas and in College Station who have the same devotion.

However, many of us are completely satisfied with being ‘regular Christians.’ We just want to be ‘regular Christians.’ We want Jesus just as long as He doesn’t get in the way. We still want our sin. We still want our violent movies, our dirty magazines, our meaningless conversations, our football games, our video games, our television, our egos, etc. God can fit in their some where, as long as one of the others aren’t forfeited. To be honest, many of us still want our ‘pet’ sin. We say we love Jesus but continue to hold onto things that break His heart. Like my friend has sarcastically said, “God-forbid we desire to be too holy.”

Passion for the things of God, and a yearning to be set apart is considered by many in our own camp to be ‘extreme.’ People who want to be these things are considered ‘extremists.’ Yet, the Bible says, “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).

I don’t want to be a ‘regular Christian.’ The Lord is coming back. I don’t have time to be mediocre in any way. I don’t have time to have a worldly mindset because my citizenship is in heaven. I tend to wonder why we become so enamored by the things of this world when we aren’t going to be here much longer.

How many of us today are going to be ‘sold-out?’ How many of us are going to be ‘ape’ over Jesus? How many of us are going to pursue Godly passions and run from worldly ones? How many of us are going to stop making excuses?

# May 1999 Overcoming

by Aaron Greenway

Over the last several months, I have poured my heart out in the monthly e-mailings that have been sent to you. What you have seen is the Holy Spirit's work in my life as I have wrestled with issues of sin, holiness, purity, a heart for the lost, etc. This e-mail is no exception. Several months ago, I was sitting in a class hosted and taught by a dear brother in Christ, Joe Sahl, who was the chaplain of the San Antonio Spurs professional basketball team. Professor/Pastor Sahl is quickly becoming a deep, personal friend and mentor. This is a man whose heart is sensitive to the things of God and has many precious insights into Scripture.

One of the things that he has said is, "We are justified BY FAITH and we are sanctified by how? BY FAITH!" I can just hear his baritone voice giving that emphatic "BY FAITH!" These words didn't hit me until just recently. Of course I knew that we are saved by grace through faith, but I didn't realize the impact of this concept into the Christian walk itself. Let me explain...

For years and years, I had struggled with a certain area in my life that I know has displeased God. I have surrounded myself with accountability on this. I have stumbled so many times and have repented each time only to go back to it. Quite frankly, it has brought me to the point of spiritual exhaustion. I had come to discouragement wondering if I would ever be worthy enough to really be used of God. I understood that my heart needed to be changed, but I felt that God wasn't making the effort to change it. And so I was frustrated with God as well. All of this was going on until Prof. Sahl's words came back to me.

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For the first time, I felt like I had a weapon to fight my sin...FAITH. This means that I am trusting the Lord Jesus Christ to do in me what I cannot do in myself. It is depending on Him instead of trying not to sin. It is living and walking by faith and the pursuit of the heart of God instead of putting myself in a legalistic straight jacket. By trying to live up to the law is a sure failure. The only way now that I am able to please my Father's heart is by faith, not by any

effort or intrinsic goodness of my own.

Most of my contention with the church in America has not just been the sin, it is the attitude behind it. It is the complacency and the contentment of staying right where we are. Our major problem has not just been in our moral failure, it is that we have lost our “First Love.” Our problem has been that we have lost sight of what it is all about, loving and seeking the heart of our glorious Heavenly Father, which we do all by faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Undoubtedly, my biggest struggle has been staying in love with Jesus, but love of God and dependency on the Lord is the key to the carrying through of what He began in us. How do we overcome? How do the just walk? Do we do spiritual warfare? Of course. Do we set boundaries for ourselves? Absolutely. Do we get spiritual accountability? Without a doubt. But the only way we will ever truly overcome is by faith, because the battle has to be won in our hearts condition before it shows itself in the externals. The problem has always been the rebellion of our hearts. The heart needs to be broken first before anything else can be accomplished.

So how does this apply to all of us? How many of us have been struggling to please God and feel like we keep coming up short? How many of us have sin that we can't seem to get rid of? The answer lies with trusting the Lord Jesus to accomplish in us what we have failed to do. For the just shall live by faith....

## June 1999 The Nature of Faith

by Aaron Greenway

As time goes on, it seems the term “Christian” has progressively become more ambiguous. What do I mean by this? Many in the church today seem to fall into two camps: the Radical, and the Carnal. The term “carnal Christian” is not to be found anywhere in Scripture, yet so many use it. This term is nothing more than the biggest oxymoron in the history of the church.

A brother in Christ, down at Texas A&M, when confronting a group of “Christians” about their immoral lifestyle (fornication), was responded to with “Everyone sins!” Much of the church today is marked by infidelity, divorce, pornography, backbiting, foul language, obscenities, stalking, debauchery, and a continual feeding on media (MTV, Rated R movies, Playboy, suggestive music, Soap Operas, etc.) that promote these things. There is no commitment, no surrender, no humility, no brokenness, and no regard for the things of God, much less a conscience. Believe it or not, some of them are in seminary. But because at some point, they said a prayer or made a profession of faith in Christ, no one, therefore asks any questions about the genuineness of their “experience.”

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In II Corinthians chapter thirteen, Paul says to “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves...” Jesus also said in Matthew 7:17-20, “Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and THROWN INTO THE FIRE . Therefore, by their fruits you will know them.” (*all caps added*)

There is absolutely no assurance for people who practice unrighteousness. I John 3:10, “In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.” John made statements like these as the basis for I John 5:13, “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life...”

The cheap faith that I have spoken of has its roots in modern day evangelism. Many evangelical styles are devoid of any kind of Biblical substance. Salvation, in Scripture, was not marked by “walking an isle,” or “asking Jesus to come into our hearts,” or even “to make a decision for Christ.” Biblical faith is marked by the realization (by the conviction of the Holy Spirit) of our sin in the presence of a holy and angry God who doesn’t initially have any “wonderful plan for [our] life” except to send us straight to hell. Upon this revelation of our sin, we then, by the power of the Holy Spirit, come running to Jesus in humility, surrender, and submission. Someone who comes to Christ with their arrogance has not been convicted of their sin and therefore is not ripe for the free gift of salvation.

The gospel does not consist of Jesus as the cosmic genie, or God as a lovey-duvey Teddy Bear in the sky. It is not the latest gimmick. The gospel is not a conformity to the world's system. Jesus Christ demands commitment and a turning from (repentance) our old life to new life in Him.

This does not mean we are saved by works, but we are saved by a reckless abandon to Christ, seeing we are under the judgment of a Holy God. This is the mark of true, genuine faith. No wonder there are so many “Christians” out there with a half hearted faith, who bear no fruit. And why not... when they are given a cheap gospel.

Now, let’s take a trip to Littleton, Colorado. I do not need to review the circumstances of what happened over a month ago, but I want to tell you about a seventeen year old girl named Cassie Bernall. Two years ago, Cassie was involved in witchcraft, living in total rebellion against her parents and against God. When the Lord saved her, her life was radically changed. She became a woman of the Word, a passionate seeker of the Lord. And when she was asked, “Are you a Christian?” her response was “Yes, I love Jesus!” The rest is history. This girl’s faith was not cheap. It was not half hearted. Her faith was real. She was someone who knew God and everyone was aware of it... including the gunman.

Ironically, a youth pastor from a well known church in Chicago recently wrote about the incident, indicating that Cassie should have denied her faith in Jesus because he believed it was

not God's will for her to die. He said to someone in his youth group, "I sat down and told her that God wouldn't require her to sacrifice her life in that way. The Bible says not to deny God, but it's not talking about cases like this with a gunman bearing down on you. God knows what's in a person's heart." (Source: *Dallas Morning News*).

Then what CASE is the Bible referring to, sir??

A brother in Christ, in Colorado, wrote a friend of mine, in response to the article, with these words, "Stupid man-exalting, man-centered reasoning. That is not the advice that Christ gave to the persecuted church in Rev. 2:10, is it? Faithful unto death is the perspective He gives. I think you are right about a warped view of God. I would also attribute it to tickling men's ears, and that will continue to be more of the case as our country marches forward."

This is what American Christianity has come to... "peaches 'n creme" religion, "strawberry shortcake" faith. It seems that if you want money, fame, and a free ticket to carnality with no condemnation, then Jesus is the way. This is not the gospel of the Scripture and it is therefore not the gospel we should believe!

"What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law, but under grace?

Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death or of obedience leading to righteousness. But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin yet you obeyed from the heart... What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"

— Romans 6:15-17, 21-23

It is about time that we are real with God, that we be real for Jesus. He went all the way to the cross, knowing the pain and realizing the shame He would endure. He was brutally beaten. He

was mocked and spit upon! — All so you and I could have eternal life.

Do we then have any business holding anything from Him?

# July 1999 The Sin of Partiality

by Aaron Greenway

**There is a plague that has ravished Christians in America. This particular blight has struck our churches, our college campuses, our seminaries, our youth groups. It has left many spiritually destitute and has robbed the unity of the body of Christ.**

What am I talking about? I am speaking of a divisive tactic of the Enemy called “partiality,” an epidemic of the wildest proportions that affect how brothers and sisters relate to one another, crossing racial, gender, cultural, economic, and social boundaries. Sometimes, it has to do with how someone looks. Mostly, it plays out in how one has status over another. In all cases, it is rooted in stubborn pride. Many churches and Christian groups here in America have been deceived by the Enemy as they have consciously or unconsciously adopted this as part of their political structure and agenda.

To better illustrate my point, let me word paint a couple of scenarios where partiality might rear its ugly head:

1. You are brand new in town! Moving your residence 2000 miles across the country was not an easy task, but by God's grace, you made it. After a stressful week of learning the ropes at your new job, you rest in your easy chair in your living room. Suddenly, something goes THUD on your front doorstep. You open the door to find the evening paper rolled up in a rubber band. With the paper, you sit back down in your chair and begin to read. When you turn the page to the religion section, it has just occurred to you that you need to find some place to go to church, a place where you can worship the Lord, be fed sound doctrine, and where you can encourage and be encouraged by people in the Body. And so, you write down three churches and their addresses from the paper. The next day, before you make your way to the first church on the list, you put on your best clothes, wear some of your strongest deodorant, slick back your hair, shave that two day beard, and 'pop' that mint. But, when you show up, no one greets you at the door. You

find your way to the visitor table, but the greeter is too busy having a conversation with the youth pastor. And so, you grab a "Hello, my name is [insert the name 'Bob']" sticker and put it on yourself. Looking around, you begin to notice people giving you quick glances. Some even seem uncomfortable. On top of this, everyone looks better, smells better, and 'acts' better. Their clothes are lined with the Neimen Marcus logo; yours was bought at Super K. Every member is white; you're not. Their cars consist of Cadillacs, Lexuses, and Lincoln Towncars; your car is a 1981 Chevette. However, the worship was good and the preaching seemed to be Christ-centered with a great Romans 4 exposition of 'Justification by faith' But, when you got up to leave, everyone went back to their huddles, so you couldn't say goodbye to anyone. You walked out, pulled out your list and hoped church #2 would be a better experience.

2. The last several weeks have seemed like a blur. On April 17th, you were in a car accident on your way to a missions board meeting in which you would be considered as a missionary in the South America. However, your dreams seem to be shattered. A month and a half ago, the police and ambulance had to use the 'jaws of life' to pry you out of your mangled car. Well, after weeks of physical therapy and plastic surgery due to the impact of your face hitting the windshield, you are now free to leave the hospital. However, your job at Southwestern Bell was terminated. But this doesn't discourage you as you know the Lord is calling you to the Hispanic culture. You begin, again, approaching the Brothers and Sisters with the need of support. But when they saw your marred face, when they saw you limping through the hallway, and when they heard your slurred speech, the doors, somehow, slammed shut. Your abilities have now seemed limited, and so now the mission board raises questions as to whether or not you are qualified to serve. With this, the finances stopped coming in. In addition, your relationships begins to dissipate. You go home with nothing else to do except cry.

Now, let me ask all of us a question: How does God feel about this?? How does God feel when a group of believers look down on someone because of the clothes they wear, because of how they talk, or because of the color of their skin. Maybe they are a little awkward. Maybe, they do not have very much money. But, we turn away...

These two scenarios are NOT exaggerations. This goes on in the church in America ALL THE TIME. I have seen people associate with others simply because of how fat their wallet is, what gender they are, or how slick they appear to be. Many women will snub a guy (who intends only to be kind) and turn around and 'hob-knob' with a guy who has more physical affluence (i.e. game playing between brothers and sisters).. Many will talk to people with their own race and culture and ignore those outside, of whom they don't understand...perhaps with some racial slur under their breath.

Now, for the HARD facts. What I have described to you is the maimed church of Jesus Christ. How can we say we love Jesus and despise our brothers? How can we say we live for God and take advantage of our sisters? How can we call ourselves 'Christians' and treat others in the body of Christ with contempt. This is not love. It is horrible. And everyone of us, including myself, has been guilty of this somewhere along the line.

So what is the reason for all of this? The problem goes back to our marred view of who we think we are, preferring to hang around those who can stroke our egos and boost our personal self-image. Our problem is that we view ourselves as superior to others, that somehow, we are more worthy or more righteous than Brother Joe or Sister Jane based on how they look or seem to act. We see ourselves as more deserving of God's attention and love.

Also, many times, we see outsiders as a threat to the security of our church, social group. Well, I hate to say it, but the church of Jesus Christ is not a social club. It is not a clique. As a friend of mine put it, "The church is not a homogenous group of people."

Taking a trip back to the New Testament, we find that Jesus generally didn't hang around the physically, economically and socially affluent. He hung out with the 'drag' of society. He spent time with the lowlifes. His attention was toward those who were helpless, weak, and sinful (and real about it).

Our problem is that we are too (self) righteous for our own good. Our righteousness is only

based on how we appear to be rather than the condition of our hearts. Let's review a little of what John had to say about this:

**I John 2:9** "He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now."

**I John 3:10** "In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother."

**I John 3:14** "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."

**I John 4:20-21** "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar, for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also."

**James 2:1-4** "My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, 'You sit here in a good place,' and say to the poor man, 'Sit here at my footstool,' have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges of evil thoughts." (For more, read verses 5-13)

**Romans 12:9-16** "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving

the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Weep with those who weep. Be of the SAME mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion."

Partiality is a sin. Let us examine our own hearts. The next time a new believer comes into our midst, let us welcome him. The next time someone who is different but lives for Jesus walks by our 'group', let us embrace her. Because it is still true that we need each other! If we wound the people who we perceive as weak, it only proves to weaken 'us'.

# August 1999 The Holiness of God

by Aaron Greenway

**Many of us know how the Enemy tries to distract us, get us off on tangents, cause us to be consumed with self-agendas that are not edifying. Many of us understand times of spiritual dryness or discouragement OR sin. As believers, we do not desire these things. We detest them. **We yearn for revival. We long for God to do something among His people. But, when we ask God for a reviving of the soul, do we really understand what we are asking?****

Many churches hold revival services. Some churches here in America measure revival by their emotions, but no true change occurs. Some churches see the work of the Holy Spirit simply operating through spiritual gifts (although this may be true, it is certainly not the first place that the Holy Spirit begins). Many churches see the move of God based on how many people show up. And many believers believe they are being used of God just because they are using their talents or abilities.

As I write this e-mail, God has and continues to answer an urgent request of mine that goes back several months now. I am just beginning to remotely understand what true revival is (and even then, lest I be prideful, I am a long way from totally understanding it).

What I need is to know and understand the holiness of God. When someone in the Scripture encountered the presence of God or was being prepped for ministry, what was the first thing that happened?

Did that person dance? Did that person sing? Did that person start

working on a ministry game-plan? The answer? None of the above. In every case, the holiness of God had to be made manifest. And in light of this, the sin of that person was exposed. The first thing that person did was to fall on their face. See Isaiah 6, Luke 5:1-11.

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God has to purify His people before He can use them. True revival occurs when we understand

our own depravity in light of God's perfect standard. When we see this, we begin to understand why Paul said, "Woe is me. Who can deliver me from this body of death" (Romans 7:24). When we see this, we begin to see the HUGE sacrifice that Jesus paid on the cross. When we see this, we begin to comprehend that Jesus Christ is our only hope. Once we have hope, then come the ministry plans, the rejoicing and the dancing, because we are FREE.

Christ being our hope is certainly the way that a sinner sees his sin and his need for the Savior. But, I also believe that this is a continual revelation that God seeks to do in His people that we may see who we are in light of who God is, and then to go running to Jesus who is able to fill that gap.

My prayer for myself has been that I would truly see how pure and holy God is so that I can truly see how wretched and rotten I am and, in turn, cling to Jesus all the more.

God is HOLY! Infinitely HOLY! God is worthy to receive the glory due Him. He is worthy of our obedience and our praise. He desires to use us and to revive us. But are we willing to be broken? Are we willing to see God for who he is? For how we see God determines our thoughts, our actions, our attitudes, our motives, our service, and our theology. God is the central point in which all other points are derived.

As Dr. Jeff Bingham at Dallas Theological Seminary has said, "The most important thought you will ever think is what you think when you think about God because it will determine every other dimension of your existence."

I am truly humbled by this HOLY God! Where would I be without Jesus?

## September 1999 The Mind of Christ

by Aaron Greenway

**Living in today's world is not easy.** There are distractions on all sides begging for our attention in an attempt to compromise us. You cannot go through a supermarket today without being confronted by purposely-placed magazines with partially-clad women on the front of them. You cannot drive down the street without being cut off by someone in their F150. The temptations do not end here. When others speak ill of us, what is the first reaction on our end? To fight back, right? When we are put in the “hot spot” on something, it is much easier to bend the truth, right?

We are surrounded by temptation and it seems the more we try to fight it, the more it seems to have a hold of us. Well, now we have a dilemma. If we fight evil, we lose; if we give in, we really lose. How do we extricate ourselves from the power of sin?

The problem is and has always been the condition of our hearts. A heart of sin will always sin. What we say, what we think, how we act (especially when we are alone) always displays the attitude and condition of the heart. But when God gives us the mind of Christ, our thoughts, actions and motives are consumed with God. We begin acting out in obedience to what is already inside. A heart that lives and breathes holiness and righteousness will produce actions that are righteous and holy. Now, what used to be a struggle to keep a wicked thought out of our minds is now an action-producing thought that becomes an act of worship to our great God and King.

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“Walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”

— Galatians 5:16

Every time Scripture tells us to cast off sin (Romans 13:12) or to resist the devil (James 4:7), it is

in conjunction with commands to put on the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 13:14) and to draw near to God (James 4:8)...as if when we are doing one, we are doing the other.

In the church today, we desperately need the mind of Christ, to be filled with the Holy Spirit daily. The question then becomes, how do we get the mind of Christ?

1. **Prayer.** We ask God to purge our minds of wrong desires and attitudes. We ask Him to fill us with the Holy Spirit and to give us the mind of Christ, because only He can change us. This is not a one time prayer. This is on-going, deep communion with the Lord.
2. We fill our hearts and minds with **God's Word** with a deep hunger to know God. If we read the Bible simply out of duty or theological study without a hunger to know God and especially without the Holy Spirit, the Bible becomes nothing more than dead words on a page. Is the Word of God truly "sweeter than honey and the honeycomb" (Psalm 19:10)?
3. Keeping ourselves in check with other **mature believers** (No one is, in the words of a friend of mine, a 'Lone-Ranger Christian'). I can't begin to count the times that God moved in my heart as a brother in Christ would share of how God was moving in his.

An even more basic question rises out of all of this: Do we know God the way we say we do? Has knowing God changed our behavior? Has knowing God changed our attitudes? Has knowing God changed our perceptions of life? Has knowing God changed our motives? If not, then we must beg the question.

Do we have the mind of Christ or do we have a foolish, worldly perspective? Are we swept away by the Spirit of God or by our own selfishness and lusts? After all, a heart filled with God cannot help but put out the things that make Him who He is. To practice righteous living, to love others, to be humble and broken, to be pure in heart and mind is a natural 'spill over' of what is already deep down. Even better, we return that love and devotion to God Himself. What better way to worship Him than to be consumed by and swept away by His ways and His Holy Spirit?

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of cross.”

— Philippians 2:5-8

To close this, I want to quote “The Mind of Christ,” a song recorded by Truth (a Christian contemporary group) off their “One” compact disc, released in 1995. The song is sung by Jody MacBrayer who is now first tenor for Avalon. If you ever get a chance, take a listen to this song:

Verse One:

To receive when others reject  
To treat each one with true respect  
To shield when others throw stones  
To be with one who's all alone  
To think and choose, to see the very best  
To live like this  
Is nothing less than to possess

Chorus:

The mind of Christ  
My highest goal  
The Lord's delight  
The desire of my soul  
The Father's heart  
Will always guide my life  
If I will have in me  
The mind of Christ

Verse Two:

To build up when others tear down  
To seek the lost until they're found  
To give grace where it's needed most,  
Rejecting pride when others boast  
To sacrifice my all without regret  
To live like this  
Is nothing less than to possess.

“...but we have the mind of Christ”  
— I Corinthians 2:16b

# October 1999 True Worship

by Aaron Greenway

Last month, I began my second year at Dallas Theological Seminary and continue to be blessed by the solid, Biblical teaching of many of the professors. One of these classes that I am taking is “Sanctification and Ecclesiology,” a course taught by Professor Glenn Kreider. I am already seeing that this man runs very deep and that he cares very much about the things of God.

One point that he brought up was that of John 4:21-22, 23-24, “...the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. ...But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

The Father is searching for such worshipers. He is not looking for simply an emotionally-charged group of people and He is not looking for those who only go through the motions. He wants our every action and every thought to be an act of worship to Him in our every day lives. And when we come together, we are to pour our hearts and the core of who we are out before Him. We do not simply worship Him in Jerusalem, on a mountain, or in our churches (although Scripture is very clear about corporate worship) or even in our daily devotions and prayer time. We worship when we obey Him. We worship Him when we search Him. We worship Him when we love Him. And we worship Him when we lay down our lives for the sake of His name.

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Today, worship has become an event. It has become nothing more than entertainment. It focuses on the musicians instead of on the one who is worthy of it. As a Christian artist this has been a personal obstacle, to keep the focus and attention on Jesus Christ. People who are in music ministry can get sucked into this self-promotion scheme really quick if they aren't careful.

We truly have a problem if the worship leader or Christian musician comes out of concert feeling more self-important.

True worship is the basis for all other kinds of ministry and evangelism. In his book, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, senior pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, John Piper, said, “God is calling us above all else to be the kind of people whose theme and passion is the supremacy of God.... Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn’t.”

Lastly, true worship is an act of surrender. It is to come under the authority and the supremacy of the One we are worshiping. Sometimes, I think we feel far from God because we have robbed Him of the glory due His name. Giving honor to His most holy name with our lives instead of just giving lip-service becomes the wings of the Christian life. The Lord issued a rebuke of this nature to Israel in Isaiah 29:13, “Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me...”

Who is worthy of true worship? Who deserves all the honor, all the glory, and all the praise? To make it more personal: Who has created me and given me life? Who has given me all that I have? Who has saved me from the pit of hell? Who has redeemed me and placed me heavenly places in Christ? Who has forgiven every transgression? If it is Jesus Christ, then I have no excuse to rob Him of any glory coming to Him.

# November 1999 The Church

by Aaron Greenway

There is no greater institution on this earth than the Church. With Thanksgiving coming up, I am truly, indeed, thankful for the Body of Christ, for people who have been called out of their sin, who have been saved into God's Kingdom through His precious and holy Son, Jesus Christ. I am thankful to be apart of such an incredible operation. When we are grieving, we can come to the Church. When we are wounded, we can come to the Church. When we wish to have fellowship, we can come to the Church. There is nothing like it and though Satan tries, he cannot stop this spiritual warship chugging full steam ahead (Matthew 16:18).

Going through different seasons in my own life, I have had times when I have had to go to the Church for nurturing and encouragement. And at other times, I have had to be the one to nurture and encourage someone else. Much of the time, they go together. And to be quite honest, I, as a member of the Body of Christ, like to be stroked. I do not like having to do the stroking always, because it takes up my time and it gets in the way of what I *think* God wants me to do. Then upon conviction, I realize that it is the 'little' things that God uses to build His kingdom.

In the New Testament, the Greek word *Ekklesia* is used to describe the Church. The word literally means an "assembly." However, the New Testament writers use the word regardless of whether the assembly is together or not. The word has taken on a new meaning. It isn't simply about "togetherness," it is about a distinct people bound by the threads of the Holy Spirit.

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So, as the *Ekklesia*, the people of God, bound together the Holy Spirit, we ought to have a unity like none other, right? Being unified doesn't mean we lose our significance as individuals. However, we would have to admit that in many of our churches, that the only significant people are the ones in power, or the ones with money, or the ones with charisma.

This point leads me to an observation that many Christians have made, an incredible lack of unity in the Body of Christ. This lack of unity is characterized by what may be a sincere desire to serve the Lord, but is devoid of the realization that God's long term goals and plans for our lives can never be divorced from the Body of Christ.

Here are some of the reasons for disunity in America's churches today:

- 1. A focus on personal agendas and self interests, rather than on Christ.** I know churches and Christian institutions that are run like businesses and not like the Church. Everyone has their own reason for being there, and many of those reasons sound pretty good when you first hear them, but the hidden motives of the heart could reveal a desire for financial gain and for personal prestige. This is where we need to examine ourselves very closely, because we can fool ourselves very easily. To say the least, these motives can be contrary to the will of God if they are separate from the Body of Christ, thus bringing about disunity.
- 2. A lack of Holy Spirit control in the Body.** Number one and number two seem to go together. It is a vicious circle. Our selfish interests drive the Holy Spirit away and yet we need Him to break our selfishness and propel our ministries. This is where grace comes in and prayer from people who see these issues and wish to do something about them.

Here are some signs of disunity in the Church:

1. A lack of concern for the needs of our brothers and sisters.
2. A lack of expressing love and care for people in the Body.
3. An unwillingness to accept a loss for the gain of another.
4. An unwillingness to pray for people in the Body.
5. An attention and support of our ministry and not the ministries of others.
6. An attitude of partiality and a judgmentalism based on how one looks, how much money they have or what their sphere of influence is.

I am sure there are others, but these seem to sum up the majority of individualistic-type dispositions.

Though the Church is great and God will have His way with the Church, we cannot ignore some of the problems that exist with the Body of Believers. So, you ask, what is the solution? Paul wrote to the Corinthians, a very splintered group, and told them let "there be no divisions among you" (I Corinthians 1:10). In fact, he called them immature and carnal because of their disputes (I Corinthians 3). Here are a few things that we can do.

**1. We can pray that God, in His great mercy, will break us and bring us to our knees.**

Maybe, we need to ask Him to do whatever it takes. This could get scary. What are we willing to sacrifice for Christ and the people of God? It put Paul in prison (I Thessalonians 5:17).

**2. We can begin to pray for the people who have wounded us in the Body.** We can seek

to return a blessing in spite of their curses. We can love them even if they do not love us (Romans 12:14).

**3. We can begin to pray for unity in the Body, that we would begin to love one another.**

How tragic that we have orders to fight "the good fight of faith" and yet are so wounded because we have been fighting one another (John 17:20-21).

**4. Do something every week for another brother or sister that you normally wouldn't**

**do, someone who maybe "gets under your skin."** Do something special for others. Be kind and keep a check on all hidden motives (I Peter 4:9, Matthew 5:41-42).

**5. Be forgiving.** Do not hold resentment toward others in the Body. This is lethal to your

own walk with God. He cannot forgive us if we do not forgive others. Do not harbor bitterness (Matthew 5:23-24).

**6. Know who your Enemy is.** His name is Satan, the deceiver of the nations, the divider and

the accuser of the brethren. Does the devil bother us? Are we ignorant of his devices? If he can get us fighting (or even ignoring) one another, then we are useless for the Kingdom, because God has foreordained that his purposes be accomplished through the Church, his Body and not merely individuals (2 Corinthians 2:11).

In closing, as we approach Thanksgiving, we need to understand that we are laboring together, we are weathering the storms of life together. We are not alone. The harvest that we reap, we reap together. We are a team! And we LOVE one another.

Today, go to someone in the Body and tell them that you love them or that you appreciate them. This week, go to someone that you normally wouldn't go to and do something for them. Will it take time? Yep! Will it cost us something? Uh-huh. Will we get a pay back? Probably not. But what did Jesus say? Why should we receive a blessing if we only do things for others that can give it back?

# December 1999 The Christmas Challenge

by Aaron Greenway

**Growing up can be tough. Many have felt abandoned, misunderstood and rejected throughout life. In their ministries they have been undermined and quickly brushed aside because of their youth or some kind of handicap.**

Many have felt this way growing up. In fact, when going back to your home town, people still don't understand you. They still see you as a child and do not believe for one second (regardless of what they say) that you could do anything significant for Christ. This really hurts. While family and hometown friends are often wonderful, I recommend that anyone who is struggling with the "prophet = no honor" syndrome needs to take some time away.

Jesus knew exactly what it was like to be belittled. After all, he was just the carpenter's son. And had Jesus stayed in Nazareth with his ministry, He would never have done anything of significance. He would have shortchanged His own mission on account of the unbelief of His family and friends.

Although, it is not true in every case, we can become so beat down by the doubts of the people in our hometowns, in our families and in our churches. Many think, "Can anyone possibly believe that you could do anything? I mean, come on, you're only 19 years old" Or, "You're 79 years old. You're too old!" We make these kinds of judgment calls all the time. And people in the Church today relegate our youth or our elderly or the handicapped to the back seat of ministry because they do not believe they can do anything for Jesus.

During this season, we reflect on the whole principle that some of the greatest things can happen in the most insignificant ways. God uses many of the most "low key" circumstances to produce His greatest work; and the lowliest people to produce some of the highest efforts. Why is this? So, man cannot boast! So human beings cannot rob any glory away from God. This is why we

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**People in the Church today relegate our youth or our elderly or the handicapped to the back seat of ministry because they do not believe they can do anything for Jesus.**

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must be careful in our attitudes not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought or to judge someone's effectiveness for Christ based on their visible signs of stamina and ability. Although abilities are important, God will use the least to produce the most, just to prove that it was He that did it.

Our Savior was born in a feeding trough (Luke 2:7) to a poor, young woman named Mary (Matthew 1:18-25). He was a carpenter's step son. But when He was born, there were a few "smart ones" who were spiritually awake enough to see what God was doing in a small corner of the world that would inevitably redeem millions of people all over the world. Shepherds adored Him (Luke 2:8-20). Wise men worshiped Him (Matthew 2:1-2). And Simeon and Anna (the prophetess) waited their whole lives just for the moment when the Messiah would come (Luke 2:25-38). And when He did, they were there to witness it.

With all the "pomp and circumstance" of Christmas that is in our society and that has penetrated our churches, there is no doubt in my mind that we would miss the Christ child today because we are still looking for the show. We are looking for the glamor and glitz. And as long as we continue to do that, we will miss what God wants to do. And He will use the people and the circumstances that fall just below the high vision of the "important people."

Paul says in I Corinthians 1:26-29, 31,

"For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence....He who glories, let him glory in the Lord."

This ought to be a comfort to those of us who have taken it on the chin, who have been scoffed at or shoved aside as unimportant and expendable. It also ought to help us guard against measuring the ministries of others based on their popularity, their influence, or their apparent abilities. God

has a place in His Kingdom and in His army for those who will give up their own self-promotion and their own significance for the sake of His eternal glory. Jesus was the first to sign up! Who will be next?