

GEMS OF TRUTH

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FROM THE EDITOR

For the past 60+ years now I've had an amazing spiritual journey with significant challenges at every step, especially within the first couple of years or so of every decade when I've noticed a major transition transpiring both in my personal life and the larger world at some level. What to do? Should I move forward or hang on to my comfort zone? I've always had clear guidance to go forward but this has not been without a "spiritual earthquake" of

huge proportions taking place. While there was outwardly a great deal of turmoil and fear in these transitions, the peace of God was always there as an undergirding to give me needed strength and wisdom to go forward. An underlying theme of several of the articles in this issue of GEMS is that of going forward rather than holding on to that which may be no longer useful even though it may have served us well for many years. Be of good courage for God is with you at every step of your journey whether you are aware of it or not. TD

If you wish to be on my email list to receive a notice when a new **GEMS OF TRUTH** is available or send some comments contact me as below:

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GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE

Ephesians 3:9-10 English Standard Version (ESV)

9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, 10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.



The word "mystery" as used here refers to a divine truth once hidden, but now revealed in the Gospel. This mystery or "secret plan" as some versions translate it was "hidden for ages in God." It is very precious indeed to reflect on the fact that "through the church the manifold wisdom of God" is to be made known or revealed to the entire universe. Each believer is called to reflect aspects of God's wisdom, each in his/her own special and unique way. God's plan is to reveal His "manifold" or "many colored" wisdom through His people. What amazes me is that as imperfect as we all are God has chosen us to represent Him and show forth His love. This reminds me of the beauty of a rainbow with its varied colors all blending together. We all have the duty and the privilege of making known to others what God is like by our transformed lives. All of this is made possible by God's grace which has called us to serve Him and which gives us fresh empowerment each day to represent Him in the midst of a very needy world.



WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

John 6:28-29 New Living Translation (NLT)

28 They replied, "We want to perform God's works, too. What should we do?"

29 Jesus told them, "This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent."

The Greek word for believe as used here is *pisteuo* (pist-yoo'o) and means to have faith, to trust in, to put entire confidence in, to totally commit to. To believe or to have

faith in something in the biblical sense is far different than simply to believe in something by merely acknowledging it as a piece of information. "Believe in" as used in the verse quoted above is in contrast to intellectual faith or belief *about* something. For instance, the demons believe that God exists and fear Him, but it does not save them (see James 2:19). The scriptures use both the terms to "believe in" and to "believe on" (see John 6:29; Acts 16:31). To "believe on" connotes total trust as in the old gospel songs "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms" and "Learning to Lean on Jesus." To believe something on merely an intellectual basis is indeed not "saving faith." The word salvation (sozo) in Greek means "to be made whole." So as we lean, totally trust, surrender, commit, and have confidence in the Savior we are indeed made whole in every area of our life--body, soul, and spirit. Wholeness (salvation) is what we really need, not just filling our heads with more and more information. This salvation or wholeness is a daily, growing experience--the work of a lifetime. Each day we are faced with new challenges and our level of surrender to God must be ever increasing or we cease to grow.

A NEW THING

Isaiah 43:18-19 New International Version (NIV)

**18 "Forget the former things;
do not dwell on the past.
19 See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not
perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland.**



The Hebrew word translated as "new" here can have connotations of "renew," "repair," "rebuild," "restore" with secondary, adjectival meanings of "new" and "fresh." I think if we said, "See, I am doing a fresh thing" we would be closer to understanding the message. Many are trying to hang on tenaciously to "the former things" that have become obsolete. We need to leave "the wilderness" and "the wasteland" for the "streams" of living water and this can only happen when there is a very clear anointing from the Holy Spirit. Otherwise it is just more human planning and programs that look different from old paradigms but really aren't. Where are those who have a truly "fresh" vision that goes beyond merely doing the same old things with just new labels and modified forms?

In our personal lives we are often tempted to cling to relationships, beliefs, places that we've enjoyed, possessions, and many other things that may actually be dragging us down and it is time to move on to something "fresh" that God is providing. I see the need to earnestly pray for a new and fresh infilling of God's Spirit every day. The spiritual journey is just that--a journey. We are always pilgrims in this present world rather than settlers (see Hebrews 11:13; 1 Peter 2:11).



ON HIS HEART

Exodus 28:30 Common English Bible (CEB)

30 Put into the chest pendant used for making decisions the Urim and the Thummim, so they will be over Aaron's heart when he goes into the LORD's presence. In this way, Aaron will carry the means to make decisions for the Israelites over his heart when in the LORD's presence at all times.

Aaron as High Priest in the earthly tabernacle was a type of Jesus, our great High Priest in the Heavenly Sanctuary. As Aaron carried "the means to make decisions for the Israelites over his heart" so Jesus carries us continually on His heart and helps us in making daily decisions which often would be very difficult without His help and guidance. What does "over

his heart" mean? The word "heart" has many shades of meaning as used in Scripture and no one English word can even begin to cover all of them. I think "heart" in this context would include the compassion and tenderness with which our Savior holds us as His beloved children. Nothing can pluck us out of His hand and He is with us always. We are indeed His chosen ones and He never ceases to watch over us and give us necessary wisdom. We need to learn to trust Him more in every detail of our lives. (see Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 10:19-22).

THE ANOINTING

1 John 2:27 Common English Bible (CEB)

27 As for you, the anointing that you received from him remains on you, and you don't need anyone to teach you the truth. But since his anointing teaches you about all things (it's true and not a lie), remain in relationship to him just as he taught you.



The Greek word for anointing here refers specifically to the teaching aspect of the Holy Spirit, guiding the receptive believer into the fullness of God's preferred-will. To anoint as used in biblical thought includes such things as empowerment, to be set apart in a special way, healing, the bestowal of special wisdom, the overflowing presence of God, and the conferring of a divine or holy office. I often wonder if we earnestly sought God for His anointing in our lives and received His Spirit more deeply than we normally do if the dependence that we have on so many teachers for guidance would not diminish considerably. I seek for a deeper anointing of the Holy Spirit in my life so that I might ascertain God's will more clearly than any man could ever teach me. I don't think such anointing would eliminate the proper role of spiritual teachers but their role would be more along the lines of leading into greater spiritual empowerment based upon their own experience and example rather than mainly imparting more information. *Anyone can give information but one has to be actually anointed by the Holy Spirit to be able to impart life to others.* Unless our lives are anointed by the Holy Spirit we shall not be effective. Think about that!



WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION

Philippians 2:12-13 New King James Version (NKJV)

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God

who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

I think "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" means *to be totally committed* to the spiritual journey with all of our heart, mind, and soul and at the same time be cautious about trying to work out somebody else's salvation. It is always a blessing to encourage and uplift others but we need to be careful that we are not interfering with the way others experience God; this is often done by those who have the very best of intentions. Imposing our beliefs and ways on others can be a *huge* ego trip. Working out our own salvation is not a "salvation by works" path but simply means *to fully surrender to the promptings of the Holy Spirit* so that we may glorify Him and bless others to the fullest extent. We need to remember that God works in us both "to will and to do for His good pleasure." If God were not working in us by His grace we would never desire anything better. We are dependent upon His grace at every step. The desires to give our lives to God initially and to keep growing in Him are both gifts of His grace. *When conviction comes to us it is really important to respond without delay.*

GUARD YOUR HEART

Proverbs 4:23 New Living Translation (NLT)

**23 Guard your heart above all else,
for it determines the course of your
life.**

Proverbs 4:23 Common English Bible (CEB)

23 More than anything you guard, protect your mind, for life flows from it.

The English word "heart" appears 884 times in the King James Version--impressive indeed.

We often associate the heart with emotions such as love and kindness as in "He has a good heart." This is also true with the Hebrews who saw the heart as the seat of emotion. But unlike us they also saw the heart as the seat of thought whereas we see the brain as the seat of thought. To the ancient Hebrews the heart was the mind, including all thoughts and emotions. When we are told to love God with all our heart (Deuteronomy 6:5) it is not speaking of an emotional love but to keep our emotions and all our thoughts working for Him and in harmony with His will.



In the New Testament the Greek word translated as "heart," has the connotations of the inner life, intention, mind, character, inner self, will, center of our being and other nuances of meaning which can't always be explained in any human words. In the Bible as a whole "the heart" is used always as something in the realm of actual *experience*. The world of religion and spirituality has been largely dominated by "information" rather than "experience." No wonder there has been so much confusion, legalism, rivalry and even hostility among people who adhere to certain tenets of either religion or spirituality. Without truly being "born again" or *experiencing* the transforming power of the Holy Spirit we are still dead in our trespasses and sins. Even worse we may think we have attained a higher plane because of certain information that we have adopted. Some people pride themselves on being "spiritual" but not "religious" and about all they've done is to rearrange the furniture in their house of ego specialness. We need to earnestly pray for God's power to be at work in our lives.



SENT OUT OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN

Genesis 3:22-24 Common English Bible (CEB)

22 The Lord God said, “The human being has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. Now so he doesn’t stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever,” 23 the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to farm the fertile land from which he was taken. 24 He drove out the human. To the east of the garden of Eden, he stationed winged creatures wielding flaming swords to guard the way to the tree of life.

Human history, including that of religion and spirituality, shows conclusively that we human beings all too frequently choose to eat of the Tree of "Knowledge" of Good and Evil [information--intellectualism] instead of the Tree of Life. Also it should be a cause of serious concern that our continual partaking of the Tree of "Knowledge" [ever seeking more and more information] may effectively keep us from the Garden of Eden [Union with God and true unity with one another] and thus prevent us from partaking of the Tree of Life [true fellowship with God]. When we are focusing on getting our information correct we often are placed at odds with one another and our love for God wanes as well. It is kind of ironic and at the same time

very sad that this obsessive seeking of more information about religion and spirituality that enmeshes so many seekers may be an obstacle to actually *experiencing* God, the only Source of true life. Jesus came to give us an abundant *LIFE*--not information about life (see John 5:39-40; 6:63; 10:10; 2 Corinthians 3:6). Think about that!

[Please Note: I'm aware of the fact that there are many other interpretations of the partaking of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Genesis story. My approach to Scripture is that the Holy Spirit can at any given time open a precious truth to us in a particular passage that we are pondering and at another time a very different one. This is a very important principle to always remember. TD]

WISDOM WILL BE GIVEN

James 1:5 Common English Bible (CEB)

5 But anyone who needs wisdom should ask God, whose very nature is to give to everyone without a second thought, without keeping score. Wisdom will certainly be given to those who ask.

Everyday we are faced with so many perplexing situations and problems to work through. What shall we do? I have found that asking God for wisdom is the best thing to do as a *first* resort rather than doing it after everything else fails. Is this always easy? No! I don't do it perfectly but am discovering increasingly that God is faithful to His promise that "wisdom will certainly be given to those who ask." Usually the answers don't come immediately but unfold step by step, often in very surprising ways. The old ego-based ways of thinking don't give up easily. I'm also discovering that trusting God for all things in the simplest possible way works the best. Every blessing comes from the grace of God and let's never forget that. I feel that sometimes we get so caught up in complicated and sometimes expensive "programs and techniques" that we forget the value of just simple, childlike trust in God, an absolute faith that with Him all things are possible. Doing this sharply contrasts with much of the hoopla about religion and spirituality that prevails in our electronically driven culture. We desperately need to return to the simple faith journey of communion with God which would include having quality times of Silence and spiritual reflection daily in whatever form is most meaningful to us. In nearly everything I write I keep coming back to this central focus of knowing God personally but that's where my heart [my whole being] is and I can only speak from that perspective.





WE ARE BEING TRANSFORMED

2 Corinthians 3:18 Common English Bible (CEB)

18 All of us are looking with unveiled faces at the glory of the Lord as if we were looking in a mirror. We are being transformed into that same image from one degree of glory to the next degree of glory. This comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Spiritual transformation is "from one degree of glory to the next degree of glory" and this all comes from "the Lord, who is the Spirit." Many folks are seeking "quickie" programs of transformation which will avoid much effort on their part. "One degree. . . to the next degree" indicates a gentle and thorough process of being transformed which requires our cooperation and total focus of attention every step of the way. I wouldn't use the term "long time" to describe this but rather "lifetime." Since God is the only Infinite One and we are finite I believe that this growth process will continue throughout eternity. I wouldn't be prepared to say just what this will look like since this is clearly not revealed (see 1 Corinthians 2:9; 1 John 3:1-3). The main lesson is that must we seek God with all of our hearts and He will guide us each day as we are being transformed more and more into His image and likeness (see Jeremiah 29:11-14). This is totally a personal, experiential thing and no one else, however spiritual he/she might be, can do this for us. God is ever present and equally available at all times to all people who open their hearts and really seek Him. There is a human tendency to rely too much on religious or spiritual professionals to do for us what we need to do for ourselves (see Philippians 2:12-13).

BE STILL AND REST

Psalm 37:7 Amplified Bible (AMP)

7 Be still and rest in the Lord; wait for Him and patiently lean yourself upon Him. . . .

As we learn to "be still and rest in the Lord" we shall find peace and strength in new ways that we never dreamed of before (see Isaiah 40:29-31). Such times of stillness are not just for ourselves but since the created order is one what blesses one blesses all. The peace that we experience individually is more significant in bringing peace to the entire world than we realize. The healing that we receive through communion with God brings healing to many others that we may never know about. The spiritual centers of the world where prayer and meditation are practiced as a regular discipline are like "power houses" that send rays of healing throughout the entire created order. We owe these centers a huge debt of gratitude. They are indeed an important factor in holding back the winds of strife (see Revelation 7:1).

A lot of "stuff" either in material possessions or mental clutter hinders our spiritual growth. Many times just one precious truth that we thoroughly assimilate and apply can be of more benefit than filling our minds with large amounts of information. "Here a little and there a little" is good counsel (see Isaiah 28:10). If we aren't careful we can shoot ourselves in the foot by getting caught up in the information super highway. In times of Silence we receive needed inspiration, wisdom, and empowerment so that we may be more effective in helping others. Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit we are powerless against the tide of iniquity that engulfs so much of the world (see Romans 8:14). We need to *experientially* realize that where sin abounds grace much more abounds (see Romans 5:20).

**"Soon silence will have passed into legend. Man has turned his back on silence. Day after day he invents machines and devices that increase noise and distract humanity from the essence of life, contemplation, meditation. Tooting, howling, screeching, booming, crashing, whistling, grinding, and trilling bolster his ego. His anxiety subsides. His inhuman void spreads on like a gray vegetation."--
Jean Arp**



TONGUES OF FIRE



Acts 2:1-4 Knox Bible (KNOX)

1 When the day of Pentecost came round, while they were all gathered together in unity of purpose, **2** all at once a sound came from heaven like that of a strong wind blowing, and filled the whole house where they were sitting. **3** Then appeared to them what seemed to be tongues of fire, which parted and came to rest on each of

them; 4 and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in strange languages, as the Spirit gave utterance to each.

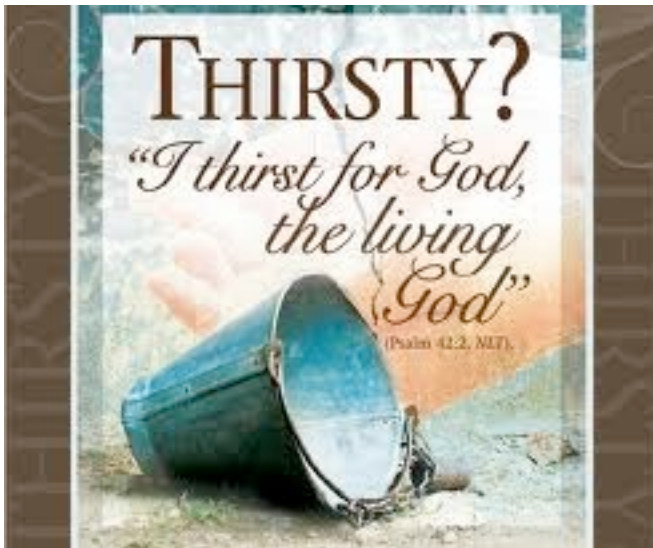
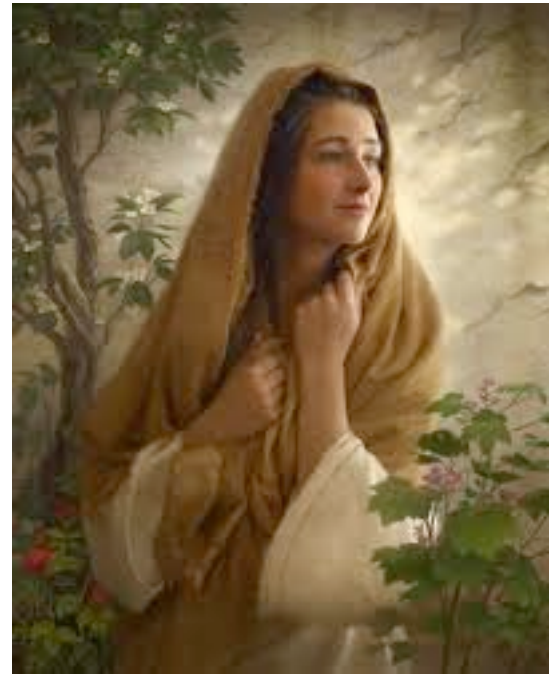
Our friends of Pentecostal/Charismatic persuasion have taken these verses very literally and in some cases have made speaking in unknown, ecstatic tongues a test as to whether one is really filled with the Holy Spirit or not. I have no desire to get into that conversation but I believe there is a deeper message here that applies to all. It is our privilege to receive new in-fillings of the Holy Spirit each day. Many times deep truths will be revealed to us in fresh ways as "tongues of fire." Often these revelations burn out some of the dross or excess baggage that we carry around with us and this sometimes can be disconcerting and painful. Another metaphor used in this narrative is "a strong wind blowing." So the workings of the Holy Spirit may at times blow our egos away (see John 3:8). However, as the unlovely things are burned out or blown away we are enabled to reflect the image of God more fully and thus have "tongues of fire" which may include precious revelations or living much more empowered by the Spirit. These revelations and increasing spiritual power are not to glorify ourselves and display our piety but to strengthen and uplift others. It is not human will power of which we speak here but the awesome Divine Power which is ever and always a gift of God's grace, not of works lest any man should boast (see Ephesians 2:8-9).

MARY PONDERED IN HER HEART

Luke 2:19 New King James Version (NKJV)

19 But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Mary was totally awed by the events surrounding the birth of her son Jesus and what had been revealed to the shepherds. So she "kept" them and "pondered them in her heart" instead of trying to figure it all out. In like manner we may receive precious revelations from our wonderful God, things too deep to ever put into words or understand with our human reasoning powers. At such times it is well to realize that we aren't expected to comprehend everything and so we give thanks that God is touching us with His love and wait upon Him daily for more understanding to come in His own time and way. Light dawns upon us like the rising of the sun--gently and gloriously. "The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings" (Malachi 4:2 NKJV) It is sufficient just to be in a state of receptivity for whatever God has for us.



THIRST FOR THE LIVING GOD

Psalm 42:1-2 Common English Bible (CEB)

- 1 Just like a deer that craves streams of water,
my whole being craves you, God.**
- 2 My whole being thirsts for God, for the living God.
When will I come and see God's face?**

Psalm 63:1 Common English Bible (CEB)

**63 God! My God! It's you—
I search for you!
My whole being thirsts for you!**

**My body desires you
in a dry and tired land,
no water anywhere.**

The universal heart cry of humanity is for fellowship with the Living God. Things like "spirituality" and "religion" can be little more than popular buzz words unless they lead us into personal fellowship with God--*to know Him*, not merely to have a lot of concepts and beliefs--even really good ones. Multitudes are seeking in so many places for fulfillment and satisfaction, always seeking but never finding. *Unless we find the reality of knowing God we shall indeed be empty and unfulfilled.* The way we find God and experience Him is unique to each person. Those who sincerely pray something like *"God, help me to experience Your Presence--spiritual reality"* will be led in whatever ways are best for them. Unless we are diligent in our spiritual search we shall continue to experience a "big hole" that will never be filled by anything other than the presence of the Living God (see Luke 11:9-13, especially in the Amplified Bible). Nothing else will really satisfy. These words summarize it well:

**There's a God-shaped hole in all of us
And the restless soul is searching
There's a God-shaped hole in all of us
And it's a void only He can fill.**

He made us with a soul that is restless, until it rests in Him.

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LETTERS
to the Editor

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