

GEMS OF TRUTH

NUMBER 5

September 28, 2011



FROM THE EDITOR

Most of the things that I write are based upon my daily experiences and insights that come to me often at unexpected times and in unplanned ways. As these insights come I make some notes and sometimes write an article. I think and carefully observe human behavior as it unfolds in my personal world and in the larger world which I

see portrayed in the media. As I see so much strife and trouble I'm more committed than ever to pursue a life of *simplicity, peace, and quiet*. I invite you to join me in that and I realize that your forms of expressing these spiritual qualities will differ considerably from mine. One thing that I particularly enjoy as I meet people everywhere is engaging them in everyday conversations and listening attentively to their stories and they love this. They seem honored that I want to listen to *their* story instead of boring them by talking about myself. I learn a lot and even though I never meet many of these folks again I've made a friend for that brief period and each encounter has a purpose even though most of the time I don't know what it is. I'm learning just to follow as the Holy Spirit leads and leave results in God's hands.

If you wish to be on my email list to receive **GEMS OF TRUTH** in PDF format or send some comments contact me as below:

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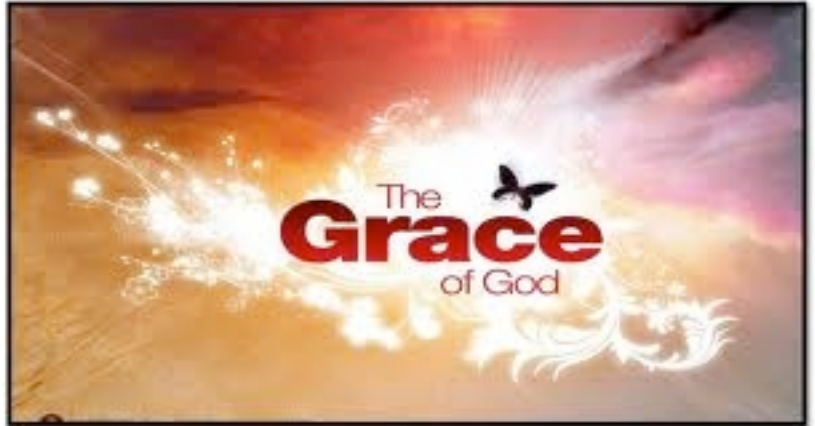
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STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 The Message

7-10 Because of the extravagance of those revelations, and so I wouldn't get a big head, I was given the gift of a handicap to keep me in constant touch with my limitations. Satan's angel did his best to get me down; what he in fact did was push me to my knees. No danger then of walking around high and mighty! At first I didn't think of it as a gift, and begged God to remove it. Three times I did that, and then he told me,



My grace is enough; it's all you need.

My strength comes into its own in your weakness.

Once I heard that, I was glad to let it happen. I quit focusing on the handicap and began appreciating the gift. It was a case of Christ's strength moving in on my weakness. Now I take limitations in stride, and with good cheer, these limitations that cut me down to size—abuse, accidents, opposition, bad breaks. I just let Christ take over! And so the weaker I get, the stronger I become.

The words that I want to point to here especially are **"the weaker I get, the stronger I become."** Paul had gone through unimaginable suffering and persecution in addition to the particular handicap he refers to here. Theologians have speculated about just what Paul's handicap may have been and that isn't important or it would have been plainly stated. The important truth here is that *Paul learned to depend solely upon God in the midst of his suffering when every human dependence had failed.* This is exactly what we all need to learn. Human will power fails us at some point as is the case with everything in the world of the material. Sometimes we need to reach the very point where all else does indeed fail so that we can look to God *alone* as our strength and not even in the slightest degree be leaning on the arm of flesh (see Jeremiah 17:5). The words of encouragement given to Paul are there for every one of us, **"My grace is enough; it's all you need. My strength comes into its own in your weakness."**

Aren't you thankful for the wonderful grace of God which is there to help us in every time of need? I certainly am and I seek to live by such grace every moment of each day. I also desire to share this grace with others who are in need of help.

DWELLERS IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH



Revelation 13:6, 8 New Living Translation

6 And he spoke terrible words of blasphemy against God, slandering his name and his dwelling—that is, those who dwell in heaven.

8 And all the people who belong to this world worshiped the beast. They are the ones whose names were not written in the Book of Life before the world was made—the Book that belongs to the Lamb who was slaughtered. [emphasis supplied]

Here we have two types of human existence. Some live in a consciousness of the Presence of God, the Kingdom of Heaven. The others “belong to this world,” i.e., they live with their attention largely placed on the things of this present plane of existence--the beast [everything in the realm of the material] and his image [the false matter based creations of the human mind which are endless]. Those who live in the Kingdom of God experience peace in the midst of the troubles, wars, and strife that dominate our present world. Those who choose to cling to the material and the world of the five senses experience endless suffering which we might call “the mark of the beast.” Those who dwell in Heaven by faith experience “the seal of God”--the joy that only can be known by partaking of it. The seal of God and the mark of the beast are contrasting marks in Revelation and throughout the Bible with different terms being used to describe the same thing.

TWO HORNS LIKE A LAMB

Revelation 13:11 English Standard Version

11 Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon.



The first beast of Revelation is blatantly blasphemous and evil. The second beast rises out of the earth, i.e., was very materialistically oriented but yet it has “two horns like a lamb.” Outwardly it appears very pious and religious. I believe in historical context the first beast could well have represented the very evil pagan Rome and the Lamblike beast apostate Judaism which at the time still professed to be the chosen people of God and outwardly observed the Law of Moses and did the temple sacrifices. The most religious people that have ever lived were responsible for the crucifixion of the Son of God. The second beast rising out of the earth could well speak to the diligence that the religious leaders had in observing all the outward forms of the Law and yet at the same time totally rejected the real Love of God as manifested in Jesus the Christ. Jesus had to deal with these very religious people all during His ministry for His very appearance was a rebuke to their piety. This conflict is throughout all four gospels.

I believe that the two horns like a Lamb and yet speaking as a dragon speaks to much of the religiosity and profession of godliness that has existed through the ages and is very much alive today. I don't want to point the finger specifically here but I think that a high percentage of the popular religion that gets so much media attention and which dominates TV is very much “of the earth” and is a perversion of the life and teachings of our Master. Many things are taught in the name of piety that appear very righteous on the surface that bring bondage, set people against one another, create anxiety, and bring dishonor to the name of God. I would just caution all to beware of the popular piety in today's religious world. Much of it is very evil in its fruitage and we need spiritual discernment so as not to be deceived. I believe that those who seek to live close to God and hear His voice will be able to discern truth from error. As in every situation to follow the crowd will take us on the downward path of deception of suffering.

TWO PATHS



Psalm 16:4, 11 Good News Translation

4 Those who rush to other gods bring many troubles on themselves.

I will not take part in their sacrifices;

I will not worship their gods.

11 You will show me the path that leads to life;

your presence fills me with joy and brings me pleasure forever.

We have two contrasting paths of life depicted in these two verses. Many "rush to other gods" and thus "bring many troubles on themselves." The list of "gods" that people cling to is endless and I think the main point here is that *anything which is more important to us or that occupies more of our time and attention than does the pursuit of God is essentially idolatrous and if clung to will bring troubles and suffering.* If we neglect spending quality time with God we are simply separating ourselves from the one and only Source of Life. We must choose not to worship the popular gods and offer the sacrifices of our time and energy to them.

In verse 11 we have "the path that leads to life" which is defined as being in God's "presence" which brings joy and pleasure forever in contrast to the troubles mentioned in verse 4. To be in "the path that leads to life" requires total dedication of everything we have. There is really no other way. All you have to do to fall into the troubled life is to do nothing towards cultivating a walk with God and you will find yourself clinging to many idols and experiencing the consequences that accompany this path of death.

Which path will you choose?

DON'T GIVE UP

Psalm 126:6 New King James Version

6 He who continually goes forth weeping,
Bearing seed for sowing,
Shall doubtless come again with
rejoicing,
Bringing his sheaves with him.

Galatians 6:9 New Living Translation

9 So let's not get tired of doing what is good.
At just the right time we will reap a harvest of
blessing if we don't give up.



The most important words in these two verses are “continually” and “don't give up.” “Goes forth weeping” indicate a high degree of concern on our part. We care enough to reach out to others and do as much good as possible. We sow seeds of peace, love, and joy and mostly see little results. We keep “weeping” [caring] and doing good anyway. *“At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.”*



**"The language of God
is Silence. Everything
else is a poor
translation."--Thomas
Keating**



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