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Church Unity

by Dr. Opal Reddin

The Church is the Body of Christ, the habitation of God through the Spirit. It is the end of God's purpose in human history; Christ "loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:25,27). Every one who is born of the Spirit is a member of the "church of the Firstborn, which are registered in Heaven" (Heb. 12:23). The Church is universal with some from every tribe and nation. It is invisible in the sense that it is impossible to see the Church as a definite group in a definite place. All creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. 8:18).

One of the most popular topics in Christian circles today is "**Church Unity**". Many leaders are saying, "We must get together and bring the answer to Jesus' prayer in **John 17**." Let us consider the kind of unity for which Jesus prayed, the fact that His prayer was answered and that His prayer continues to be answered, according to His will as revealed in the Word.

The KIND of Unity for Which Jesus Prayed

Jesus Prayed for His disciples: "that they may be one just as We are One" (v.22b). He said, "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word" (v. 20). We are awed as we contemplate God the Son praying to God the Father that we might have the same kind of unity as that existing between them! Let us consider what kind of unity this is.

First, this unity is **spiritual**. The Father and the Son are one in essence from eternity to eternity (Jn. 17:5; 10:30). We know God is Spirit (Jn. 4:24) and that God the Son in His incarnation became man with a physical body (Jn. 1:14). Their essential unity was never broken because it is spiritual and immutable (Jn. 10:30).

Second, this unity is in **truth**. Jesus said, "I Am the Truth" (Jn. 14:6), and He prayed, "Sanctify them through Your truth; Your Word is truth" (Jn. 17:17).

Third, we see that this unity is in **love**. He prayed, "that they may be perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. . . that the love with which You loved Me may be in them" (17:23,26).

Jesus' Prayer is Answered

Jesus' prayer for unity was answered initially on the day of Pentecost, and the Spirit-given unity was manifested in the Early Church. Acts records what we often refer to as the birth of the Church. The 120 + 3000 were brought into spiritual unity as all were filled with the Holy Spirit (2:4,38,41). They were in unity in the Truth, "continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (2:42), and in love with fellowship, "having all things in common" (2:43,44). The result was that "many signs and wonders were done" and "the Lord added to the church daily" (vv. 43,47). This is God's pattern for church unity.

All Scriptures that refer to church unity make clear that the true Church, the Body of Christ, is one. The only way to be in the true Church is to be placed in the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit in regeneration; "the Body is one. . . all members are one. . . for by one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body" (1 Cor. 12:12-13). "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him" (1 Cor. 6:17). "You are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

Nowhere are we admonished to implement this unity. Ephesians 4 does tell us we are to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (v. 3), and that Jesus gave the five-fold ministry for the perfecting of the Body "till we all come to the unity of the Faith. . . to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (11-13). "The Faith" is the body of orthodox Christian doctrine, well known to the Early Church and preserved for us in the New Testament.

Unity in Doctrine is Essential

We agree with David Wells when he says, "there is no Christian faith in the absence of 'sound doctrine' (1 Tim. 1:10; Tit. 1:9)." (1) Without it, we have neither the Father nor

the Son (2 Jn. 9). We are told to "contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). We must "guard" this faith (2 Tim. 1:13-14; 4:3). We know that this faith was stated in propositional truths, for Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "I plead with you that you all speak the same thing and that there be no division among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). It is on this basis that churches have statements of fundamental truths. Belief and practice are inextricably linked (1 Jn. 2:3-3:18).

There are two kinds of division, one of God and the other of Satan. When Paul warned against division, he was referring to bad division, caused by false doctrine. Some "depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1). In John's Epistles he warned, "Many antichrists have come . . . they went out from us, but they were not of us" (1 Jn. 2:18-19). Regarding fellowship, he wrote, "If anyone comes with another doctrine, do not receive him. . . for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds" (2 Jn. 10, 11). Paul told the Romans to "mark those who cause division contrary to the doctrine which you have learned" and avoid them (16:17).

There is good, necessary division, the result of being separated from Error by the Truth (Jn. 17:17). Jesus said, "I came to bring division" (Lk 12:51); He separated His Church from the Judaism that rejected Him (Jn. 1:11). Paul maintained this separation by exposing the Judaizing heresy as "another (accursed) Gospel" (Gal. 1:6-9). Without this division, Christianity would have gradually become merely a sect of Judaism.

Problems in Current Ecumenical Movements

Current ecumenical movements attempt to bring all churches of all denominations into a visible unity. The Protestant branch of religious ecumenism is the World Council of Churches; Roman Catholics also have unity as their agenda as described in Vatican II and their New Catechism. A study of these two movements reveals the wisdom of our Assemblies of God General Council Bylaws. Adopted in 1962 and officially re-emphasized in 1995, Article IX Section 11, states in part:

The General Council of the Assemblies of God disapproves of ministers or churches participating in any of the modern ecumenical organizations on a local, national, or international level in such a manner as to promote the Ecumenical Movement, because we believe the basis of doctrinal fellowship of said movement to be so broad that it includes people who reject the inspiration of the Scripture, the Deity of Christ, the universality of sin, the substitutionary atonement, and other cardinal teachings which we understand to be essential to biblical Christianity.

The protection provided by this bylaw is needed now more than ever before. The World Council of Churches has included as participants at conferences, not only all Christian churches, but also adherents of non-Christian religions. For instance, the 1991 conference in Canberra included Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs; a Korean Presbyterian professor near the end of her lecture summoned the spirit of Han and chanted to the departed spirits of ancestors. (2) The Roman Catholic ecumenical movement works in various ways. The New Catechism has not changed the insistence that there is no salvation outside the Church, referring to the Church in Rome. All the objectionable

doctrines are still there, including baptismal regeneration, grace inherent in the Mass through transubstantiation, prayer to Mary, indulgences, and purgatory. Their "salvation" is a "faith plus works," the same Judaizing heresy anathematized by Paul (Gal. 1:6-9). The goal of Catholic dialogue with other faiths is to bring all Christians together in the One Church. In the Decree on Ecumenism, they state their purpose: "The results will be that, little by little. . . all Christians will be gathered. . . into the unity of the one and only church. . . This unity, we believe, subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose." (3) They also make the umbrella of the Church big enough to cover those in non-Christian religions: "The plan of salvation includes those who acknowledge the Creator [Muslims and Jews]; together with us they adore the one, merciful God." (4)

Danger: Loss of Truth

In 1994 a group of Catholic leaders and Evangelical leaders drafted a document known as ECT, short for "Evangelicals and Catholics Together in Mission." (5) Having read the document, I find it to be a plea for visible unity at the expense of Truth. For example, the one absolute essential for being in the true Church, "justification by faith," is barely mentioned, though it is one of the major doctrines that irrevocably divide Protestants and Catholics. ECT forbids "proselytizing." In practice, it would stifle the evangelizing of Catholics. Since we are Evangelical Pentecostals, will we be expected to leave millions of lost souls in the darkness of a false "Gospel" for the sake of man-made "unity"? (For additional information, the Pentecostal Evangel relayed the story of ECT in the May 29, 1994 issue, under the title, "Evangelicals, Roman Catholics pledge to work for unity.")

There are two widespread misunderstandings: (1) "If we love people of all faiths, will we not desire visible unity with them?" To that I reply: we must define "love." Humanistic love will cause us to compromise the Gospel to please people (Gal. 1:10); God's love refuses to compromise "the Truth of the Gospel" (Gal. 2:14). (2) "If people speak in tongues, should we not desire visible unity with them, regardless of their doctrine?" My response; God desires that all people experience being filled with the Spirit, but experience alone is not an adequate basis for unity. The "one-ness" for which Jesus prayed demands Truth; the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth, guiding the Spirit-filled "into all Truth" (Jn. 16:13).

We have seen that Jesus' prayer for the unity of His Church was indeed answered and continues to be manifested. When we think clearly, does it not border on blasphemy to suggest that any prayer of our Lord would go unanswered, or that the answer depends on human works? To "work" for visible unity builds human ego, but it is a work of the flesh. "*Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?*" (Gal. 3:3). Church history shows us that such unions have never produced revival; rather, to the contrary.

During the early years of Pentecostal outpouring in this century, some leaders hoped the baptism in the Holy Spirit would actually bring all denominations together. They were aware such unity would have to be a unity of both experience and doctrine. W. F. Carothers said, "The restoration of Pentecost means ultimately the restoration of Christian unity." In context he is seen to be in full agreement with Charles Parham who expected unity for the Church under the condition "when baptized by the Holy Ghost into one body,

the gloriously redeemed church without spot or wrinkle, having the same mind, judgment, and speaking the same things." William J. Seymour "believed that doctrinal unity was as essential as spiritual unity." (6) Indeed, if all denominations had been completely open to the pattern in Acts, all would have become "Pentecostal" in experience and doctrine, though not necessarily in title.

Fellowship Across Denominational Lines

As Pentecostals, we have good fellowship with all who are in Christ, regardless of denomination; we know that all who are truly "in Christ" are in Spirit-given unity. However, we are responsible to "contend for the faith" as it has been revealed to us in doctrine and in experience. Compromise of Truth is always sinful and leads to backsliding. Joseph Flower, former General Secretary of the Assemblies of God spoke to the necessity for God-ordained separation in order to preserve Truth as it has been given to us. In 1965 he wrote:

God did not permit the Pentecostal movement to be swallowed up by existing denominations, even though the early pioneers had no intention of starting another one. We have a specific task to fulfill in this world. The Lord knew that keeping us separate was probably the only way our distinctive testimony could be preserved. (7)

Ecumenical pressures will continue to mount, and diverse winds of doctrine will blow fiercely against the Church. Should we succumb to a "fortress" mentality, hiding behind our orthodox doctrines and waiting for the Rapture to set us free from conflict? By no means! Jesus is building His Church, and He invites us to march with Him as we storm the gates of hell, setting captives free, and establishing churches where the true Gospel is preached in power and glory.

The ACTS Pattern Assures Success!

Let us hear the clarion call to renew our commitment to the Acts pattern of church unity. The same message preached with the anointing of the Holy Spirit and lived in the same voluntary exactitude of holiness will bring the same kind of results as in the first century. Let the Church again be known as in Acts 2:42-47: "*They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common . . . Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*" This is God's will for "Now" and until Jesus comes!

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Endnotes

(This is adapted from "Church Unity", originally published in Enrichment, Spring '96).

* David Wells, *No Place for Truth or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1993), 103.

- * Walter Hollenweger, *PENTECOSTALISM: Origins and Developments Worldwide*, (Peabody, MA; Hendrickson Pub. Inc. 1997), 382
 - * Austin Flannery O.P. *Vatican Council 11*, New York: Costello Pub. Co., 1975), 457.
 - * Catechism of the Catholic Church. (New York: Religion and Public Life, 1994), 222-223.
 - * Evangelicals and Catholics Together. . . (New York: Religion and Public Life, 1994).
 - * Hollenweger, op cit, 384.
 - * The Pentecostal Evangel (Springfield, MO: Gospel Pub. House, Sept. 19, 1965), 24.
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NEWS From the Editor:

As we turn the corner into the new millenium, we have the unique opportunity to be able to be part of God's eternal plan and purposes here on this earth. Often there are so many so-called "winds of doctrine" swirling around us today, that it is sweet reprieve to calmly sit at the feet of Jesus as Mary, and chose the "better thing". As we sit at His feet, our hearts are filled with thanksgiving for the great things He has done. He went to the utmost when He freely laid down His life. How can we do less? However, it is that laying down of one's life that can cause the greatest of struggles. So often we want our own way, we want to be "right" and will try to work things out to our own advantage.

It has been grievous to see those involved in "discernment type" ministries attacking their fellow men (and women). There are those who find great satisfaction in building cases against others. This is not Biblical Discernment. We are to contend for the faith, not spew forth libelous attacks on individuals. We are truly contending for the faith when we seek to set people free and to save souls from the "fire". So many are being led astray by false shepherds who will "fleece the sheep" instead of "feed the sheep". Our message must be one of hope and encouragement always pointing souls to Calvary.

Unfortunately, there are also those in "discernment type" ministries who are deviating from the simplicity of the gospel. These folk must be ministered to in love - remembering always that we could fall into the same trap. They are still brothers and sisters in Christ who have perhaps gone off on "rabbit trails" in their enthusiasm. That enthusiasm many times is for things of God, yet must always be tempered.

In the past few months many changes have come into my life. I have a renewed interest in the Early Church Fathers and what they stood and died for. So many of the conflicts for truth we find ourselves enmeshed in today were already present in the early church. Church History is a great teacher. An exciting book on this subject is: *THE PILGRIM CHURCH* by E.H. Broadbent (published by Gospel Folio Press, P.O. Box 2041, Grand Rapids, MI 49501-2041).

Also, it has been thrilling to note a renewed interest in our book *STRANGE FIRE, The Rise of Gnosticism in the Church*. We still have some copies from the first printing available.

There is a great book available entitled: *IN THE FACE OF GOD* by Michael Horton (published by Word Publishing) that I would recommend. The following quote from pages

48-50 in that book will succinctly describe the book and make you interested in reading more:

The New Gnosticism

"Heresy" is a big word, one that has plagued the Christian world since the time of the apostles. Heresy continues to be the result of ignorance among God's people. Few people seem to discern truth from error in today's culture. Perhaps this is why Jesus asked, "When the Son of Man comes, will he really find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). St. Paul also warned Timothy, "In the last days men will be lovers of themselves. . . ." (2 Tim. 3:3). These days, a narcissistic preoccupation with self corrupts all areas of life. It is not as if our day is unique in that sense, but the modern Christian world is certainly characterized by a human-centered orientation and a forgetfulness of sound doctrine.

Among the heresies that plagued the struggling Christian community of the first few centuries, nothing was more devastating than Gnosticism. In fact, Gnosticism is as old as Satan's lie: "You shall be as gods." Contemporary American religion, whether liberal or conservative, evangelical or New Age, Mormon or Pentecostal, represents a revival of at least some aspects of that ancient heresy. The early church struggled to hold fast to basic Christian beliefs and practices (including spirituality) at a time when the "seeker-driven" approaches of their day insisted that they become more sensitive to the needs of an audience that found Christian doctrine alien.

Some things never change. In a *Los Angeles Magazine* article titled, "God For Sale," Kathleen Neumeyer wrote, "It is no surprise that when today's affluent young professionals return to church, they want to do it only on their own terms - what's amazing is how far the churches are going to oblige."

Many of today's believers live like the Israelites in the Book of Judges: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25). In fact, one advocate of market-driven approaches to church growth writes, "This is what marketing the church is all about: providing our product [which he describes as 'relationships'] as a solution to people's felt need." "It is critical," he says, "that we keep in mind a fundamental principle of Christian communication: the audience, not the message, is sovereign."

A *Newsweek* article describes today's churches: "They have developed a 'pick and choose' Christianity in which individuals take what they want. . . and pass over what does not fit their spiritual goals. What many have left behind is a pervasive sense of sin." In the place of the sin-and-grace emphasis of Scripture, a variety of self-help cures attempt to make Christianity into a spirituality that will appeal to seekers. But as the quest for "spirituality" supplants Christian truth, one wonders if the salt has lost its savor.

St. Paul called the gnostic prophets "super-apostles" who apparently knew more than even God himself did. They were able to "see" into the heavenly secrets and offer techniques for escaping earthly existence. "Timothy," Paul warned, "guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the profane chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge; by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith" (2 Tim.

6:20). "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God" (2 Cor. 10:5).

In February I traveled to California and Hawaii. It was my first visit to California and I was awestruck with the beauty of that state. Naturally, it was pleasant to get away from a Michigan winter! My friend in California, Betty Karolek, has a beautiful home in Fallbrook (near Camp Pendleton) where she and her husband have chosen to retire. The few days of rest were much needed as a very intense and full conference was soon to transpire in Burbank, California at the International Headquarters of Overcoming Faith Fellowship International. (Tapes are available.) Bill Randles and I were the main speakers. We both enjoyed the meetings tremendously and were impressed with Dr. Jerry Jones' dedication to the simplicity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There were dear pastors present there from Ghana who traveled far just to be at the conference.

Leaving Burbank, I traveled on to Hawaii where I ministered at the Ewa Beach Assembly of God for a week. What a time of refreshing! The people were charming and absolutely delightful to be among. They are led by able ministers of the Gospel, Rev. & Mrs. Robert Stalcup, and were well taught in the Word of God and very receptive. I was so excited because for the first time I had time to really go into depth with my materials and not be hindered by a "clock". (These tapes are also available through Discernment Ministries.) It was exciting to meet two discerning researchers in Hawaii, namely Mike Oppenheimer and Sandy Simpson. Mike has a weekly radio broadcast and a ministry called, "Let us Reason". (www.letusreason.org) I was able to do two radio broadcasts with Mike while in Hawaii.

Sandy Simpson was formerly a missionary in the Pacific Islands, and still ministers among these folk and people from the Islands that live in Hawaii. He also has an excellent website. (<http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/>)

Sandy and Mike are organizing a conference next year in which Dave Hunt, Bill Randles and I will be ministering in Hawaii and then Sandy is also organizing for Palau and Guam.

We praise God that these doors are opening. We all know that it is imperative that the Church be on guard today and be discerning. Sandy Simpson recently had the following on his web site:

Jesus Christ slated to Star with Benny Hinn - In Person

. . . "Benny Hinn has announced that Jesus Christ will appear bodily in Hinn's crusades. This was "prophesied" by Ruth Heflin, now famous for serving up gold teeth and gold dust all over Christendumb (and I am not misspelling that word!).

Since this cannot possibly be the Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the only Son of God, I have to assume it will be an antichrist, if not The Antichrist. Lord Maitreya is a good candidate for this deception, as he has already been appearing and disappearing to groups around the world. Maitreya has long promised to make an appearance on worldwide TV, speaking to those who wish to be deceived telepathically.

Benny Hinn's followers, as well as practically everyone else connected to the Third Wave, have been softened up to the paranormal realm long enough to be receptive to this kind of occult phenomenon."

It seems that this was on TBN on March 29, 2000. You can hear the audio of this on: ["http://www.bhmm.org/television.asp"](http://www.bhmm.org/television.asp)

All of this has frightening connotations. As many will recall on June 11, 1988, Maitreya made an appearance at a healing service in Nairobi, Kenya. This middle eastern man dressed in white disappeared as mysteriously as he appeared. Now Benny Hinn is saying: "I know deep in my soul something supernatural is going to happen in Nairobi, Kenya".

Jan and Paul Crouch are going with Benny to Kenya and Benny says, "Paul, we may very well come back with footage of Jesus on the platform. You know that the Lord appeared in Romania recently and there's a video of it, where the Lord appeared in the back of a church and you see him on video walking down the aisle."

Not long ago on TBN Benny told Paul Crouch that it wouldn't be long and corpses would be placed in front of televisions and when TBN came on the air, these corpses would be raised to life. (See video entitled: Benny Hinn: Possessed by Devils?)

Folks, Benny Hinn is setting people up for a mass deception! Matt. 24:23-27

At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect - if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time. "So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man

March 2, I arrived back in Michigan and full blast into moving into the now finished home in Fostoria. The day after moving in, a couple from Buffalo, New York moved in with me. Jayme and David Hotchkiss were formerly missionaries in Israel and plan to go back, eventually. In the meantime they believe that God has led them to be with us in the ministry here. Jayme will be assisting in the Discernment office, so when you call you will get one of us on the line. We have quite a job ahead of us to reorganize the office which has been mostly in storage since I went to Africa in 1997. We have so many valuable materials and want to make these available as we are able.

Diane Ward has resigned from the ministry for the time being. She has been invaluable over the years in helping keeping everything moving, organizing the conferences and making certain everyone has what they have ordered. Our heartfelt thanks and appreciation goes to her and she gave so willingly of her time and talents to the Kingdom of God.

During March we also held a Board Meeting for Discernment Ministries and are looking forward to the Lord leading and directing the ministry in the time we have left until He

comes. Our Board of Directors consists of: Jewel van der Merwe, Bill Randles, Larry Blackwood, Lynn and Sarah Leslie and David and Jayme Hotchkiss.

We have had several requests to hold conferences in various areas and we are now praying about the direction the Lord would have us go. There are several churches who have started to support Discernment on a monthly basis which commitment is an encouragement to us to carry on. As the needed support comes in we will be enabled to fulfill the tasks that lie ahead.

The South African office is in the midst of change also as the lady who has been working in the office there is moving. Also, our dear friends in Zimbabwe are going through a real crisis in their country and are very much on our hearts these days.

God has brought a very special person into my life and on **April 1**, 2000, I married David Grewe, a biomedical engineer here in Fostoria, Michigan. My new husband is also an ordained minister of the Gospel affiliated with a church of Nigerian immigrants. Pastor Bill Randles performed the ceremony along with Rev. Victor Solanke from Chicago. The day was highlighted when the Nigerians had a time of praise and thanksgiving at the end of the wedding service. I am now Mrs. Jewel Grewe, but will still be using "van der Merwe" for writing and Discernment purposes to avoid confusion. After the wedding, we traveled to Florida for two weeks. My visits to Florida previously had been very brief and ministry related, so it was wonderful to really see the beauty of Florida and enjoy the variety from the Keys, to the Everglades, the vast expanses of agriculture and both of the coasts.

This newsletter is written in order to encourage the saints. We do receive likewise encouraging messages back from time to time and your letters are always read and enjoyed. Our newsletters are also available on our website: www.discernment-ministries.com.

We do use articles that are a blessing to us as exemplified in the one by Dr. Reddin in this newsletter. Unity is a common word today. The ultimate aim is that all religions should vanish and give way to one great ethical world religion, the brotherhood of man.

*The True unity that the world and religions are searching for comes from Christ through the cross. Whether one is red, black, brown, yellow or white, we are one in Christ who saved us by His sacrifice. It is the Cross that will bring us together in true unity because it is wholly based on Gods' work and not mans'. It humbles us and exalts God. Man attempts to know God by his service and deeds. He will never reach heaven this way. God reached man while we were still lost and hopeless. (Taken from **Let Us Reason** Newsletter, Nov. /Dec. 1999).*

Broken Vessels

The Spirit of God can show the spirit of man the hidden things of the heart. They can be so deeply hidden that only the Holy Spirit searching the innermost being can reveal and bring into light the hidden heart. "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts." Prov. 20:27. He imparts to us a new nature at the new birth, and He wants us to walk in newness of life. The prayer of the spirit can bring to the conscious

mind areas that need to be examined. We can go on in darkness or we can accept the searchlight of truth and submit to God for His cleansing and work. This may not be pleasant for it can cut across all of our desires, feelings and will. God lets us choose what we desire. However, to go on with Him and walk in the light we must choose to let Him deal with us to change and conform us to His image. (Rom. 8:29). Oh! The pain of this conformity. Just as Jesus shrank from the cross, so we shrink - yet, He drank that cup for us. It is the valley of the shadow of death. The valley may be long or it may be short, but it is a valley. Up on the other side the glory awaits the honest, sincere, yielding soul. This resurrection of new life is worth the valley experience. Until the alabaster box is broken to pour out the fragrant ointment, our lives do not have the fragrance He desires that they have. (Luke 7:37,38). Only through the broken vessel can the fragrant odor that speaks of His presence and love be given forth. - **Nina Lois Showalter** (see Devotional offer on order form).

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