

Designed to Express His Life

by Orville Swindoll

Orville Swindoll shows how God has purposed for man to be
more than a container of Divine Life.

Man has been uniquely...
Designed to Express HIS Life

Chapter 1 How Can I Exchange Emptiness for Fullness

Chapter 2 How Can I Learn to Hear His Voice Continually

Chapter 3 How Can a Little Clay Pot Express His Glory

Chapter 4 How Can a Stone Become Valuable to God?

4th PRINTING, 1975

NOW AFTER TEN YEARS we are pleased that this book continues to reach around the world and bless hungry hearts. We rejoice in the testimonies of encouragement and enlargement that come from readers who immediately order the book in large quantities so as to share these messages with their friends.

It was in 1964 that we first heard Orville Swindoll at a Bible conference. We were impressed with the deep flowing of life from his own spirit. The reality of this life he exhibited flowed forth to touch many in their inner man. Immediately we just knew that God's children everywhere should be allowed to enjoy this fresh unveiling of vital truths; thus we determined to put these four messages into print. Now, we offer this cheaper edition to both help and encourage our partners as together we give sacrificially to meet the desperate need of the masses in this crucial hour before the Lord returns.

As we have indicated in the title of this book, there is one dominant theme throughout these four messages. If the reader has not previously considered how uniquely God has designed his spirit, soul and body, it will perhaps come as a glorious discovery that God has so uniquely designed and fashioned each of us to allow the fullest expression and increase of Himself.

In order to retain the free flowing style of the speaker we have allowed certain liberties in expression which would not ordinarily be found in a written manuscript. We are grateful to Brother Swindoll for allowing us to put these messages in print, and also grateful to others who have so sacrificially given a labor of love in the various phases of producing this book.

- Sure Foundation

2008 EDITION

Several years ago I was blessed and challenged by DeVern Fromke's book, *Ultimate Intention*. This volume profoundly reveals a cosmology that is biblical and God-centered. The truths of abundant life in Christ, sanctification, grace, and the believer's new identity are related to their proper eternal context.

After reading these messages by Orville Swindoll, I contacted Mr. Fromke to thank him for his writings and inquire about the availability of *Designed to Express His Life*. Since this book had been out of print for some time, Sure Foundation graciously gave permission for us to republish it. Although several decades have passed since these messages were presented at a conference, their wisdom and insight is still relevant, and more even more urgently needed in this new millennium. May God bless this new edition and illumine hearts as we discover glorious potential as ones designed to express God's Life.

John Woodward
Grace Fellowship International

CHAPTER 1

How Can I Exchange Emptiness for Fullness?

Who can fathom God's deepest desire to have a vast family of children conformed to His own image? Was it fellowship that He sought? No doubt that was involved, but there is something else we should consider. It would seem the unique design of our spirit, soul, and body is to allow Him to fill us with Himself. Once we have really caught the significance of His indwelling we shall no longer live in barrenness and emptiness. Instead we shall enjoy the overflowing fullness of God Himself.

This account of the woman at the well is a most instructive passage of Scripture. It has always been amazing to me the way the Lord deals with souls. You read of His dealings with this woman, with the rich young ruler, and with other individuals that He encountered here on this earth, and it's the most difficult thing in the world to try to deduce a pattern as to how to talk to people.

In the past, I have felt I saw something of a pattern here. I have, like most people, endeavored to follow some kind of a pattern. But I have drilled a dry hole. I have come to the realization that the way that I felt was the proper approach was not the anointed way, and it has troubled me for a long time.

On other occasions, I found that the natural process of things seem to make occasions. But with our young people in Argentina we have hit upon a principle that has become more or less a guiding principle. I've instructed the young people this way: When you go knocking on doors, touching lives here and there, don't have anything pat to say. You know that's just exactly the opposite of what we're normally taught. And I've only come to this realization by running into so many difficulties along the other line.

We tell these young people, when you deal with a person, you just engage them in conversation that will allow them to express what's in their minds or hearts. Don't push anything. Don't try to direct the conversation. Don't look for opportunities to really preach to them. Just let things move along naturally until you sense that they are bringing out some areas of conscious need. You can't get in a hurry if you're going to deal with people this way. Then, when they get around to unveiling their area of conscious need, apply the living Word of God to this area of conscious need. You don't go to preach a sermon, or to give them the ABC's of salvation. You have gone to present reality to them in their area of conscious need.

It's quite interesting to notice how Jesus opens conversation with this woman. He asks her a favor. Most of us are unwilling to get really involved with people. We 'd rather just preach to them, just give them a witness, than to get ourselves under any obligation to them. I think right here is one of the keys to why our witness in our neighborhood, for instance, is not effective. We don't want to get involved! You know very well when you start showing love and grace to the neighbor next to you, the first thing you know she's going to come knocking on your door and want to borrow a cup of flour. Then she'll be coming over and unloading all her burdens on you, and you don't want them! Because you don't want them, you just invite her to Sunday school. You invite her to come to hear the pastor preach. You invite her to a special meeting. You're not really wanting to get involved. You're wanting to be sort of a disinterested party so that you can direct her around, instead of letting God reveal His grace through you. This is so true, and it touches home so much that it really hurts when we come to be honest with ourselves.

The Lord Jesus puts Himself under obligation to this woman at the well when He asked her a favor. He was willing to be obligated, but we aren't. I didn't want to be as a young missionary. We would have our meetings, and I would preach to those present, but I would always endeavor to keep myself out of the way. I thought I was following a principle to direct them straight to God. I tell you frankly, the Lord has blown that principle all to pieces. Now I see that the only way that God can come to them is through me, or through some individual.

In Catholic countries we're so conscious that there is no mediator between God and man, except Christ Jesus, that we don't want to be a mediator. Yet, looking at it from another side, the Lord is constantly mediating Himself to other people. He's working through living channels; this is His choice. So the Lord asked this woman a favor. He said, "Give me to drink." Jesus knows, of course, the problem between the races. Now He is the despised one. He's a foreigner away from His own country, yet He asks her to give Him to drink. You see, He knows that if this woman can find out where the real thirst is that needs to be quenched, He can get to the area of her need easily. Where is she thirsty? Where is there a conscious need?

Right away the woman raises the question of race.

"You're a Jew. I'm a Samaritan. Why are You asking of me a drink? The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans."

I can imagine as she speaks this out she begins to think, Now what has drinking got to do with the races? As she speaks out, she's speaking out the traditional approach. Yet she knows there's more to it than this.

Jesus said, "If you knew the gift of God, and Who it is that is saying to you, give me to drink, you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water."

You see, Jesus is saying, "You're the one that needs the water. Do you know it?" He's just moving right in, getting right close to home, see?

She responds by saying, "You don't have a bucket. You don't have a water pot. How are You going to get water? I've got the water pot." And she begins to get into a little bit of confusion. "What's going on here? Why, the well is deep, and how are You going to draw from this well?" She gets a little sarcastic. "Have You got some water that doesn't come from this well? Are You greater than our father Jacob?"

I can imagine the contention between two races is rising up in her face and in her speech. She's a little provoked with this Jew that is speaking to her. Then He tells her a principle that He knows all too well. He said, "You've been drinking this water all your life, and you have to keep coming back every day. You know what a wearisome thing it is to walk back and forth with this water

pot on your head. If you drink of the water that I give you, you'll never thirst. When you drink, it will become in you as a well."

Now you know. Jesus was expressing more truth to her than the majority of Christians have ever grasped. Most of us still come to the well.

"Lord! Lord! Lord!" We're still trying to pray something down out of heaven. We're still trying to get God to do something, still trying to get God to answer this situation over here, and take care of this problem, this difficulty. And we're still thirsty. We're still conscious of our need, so we keep coming back to the well. Now Jesus stated to her that if you once drink this water, you can throw your buckets away; you can throw your water pot away, because the well is within you.

You know it's interesting that the simple everyday things of life are all types and shadows of spiritual realities. There is nothing that is anymore true of this than the well and the water. So He's bringing her to the place where she can realize that as long as the well is outside her, she's going to have to go to the well to get the water to satisfy her thirst. And He said, "What would you think if you had the well inside? No more strain, no more water pots, no more buckets, no more walking back and forth." I'd like to ask you a simple question, "What would you think if you had the well inside?" And I want to ask you something else, "What is Christianity but the well inside?"

Now most folk have lived so far from the well for years and years that they have completely put it out of their minds that it is possible to have a well inside. Oh sure, they've known the fullness of the Spirit. Yes, they've spoken tongues. Yes, they've moved in the gifts of the Spirit. But the trouble is, the well is always out there. Once in a while they get a touch from God. Once in a while! But they don't know much about the well inside. God is always over there.

I've got to go over there to the meeting. So, I get to the meeting. I pray, "Lord be with us tonight in the meeting." As long as I'm conscious that He's up there and I'm down here, you see the well is over there, and I'm over here. So I've got to go to the well.

You see Christians coming to the meetings all the time with their 'buckets.' Preacher, fill her up. I've got to have a good load. I've got some problems coming up this next week. I've got to have enough to carry me

through till Sunday. Fill her up! I've got to have a touch from God! I'm so hungry, I'm so thirsty, I need something.

Oh my! This point has hardly phased us. We can read it, and it is so familiar that most of us know it by memory. But it never has phased us. We quote it to our children, teach it to our children, and show them how to go to the well.

You know the Christianity that we're familiar with has become so far from the normal Christianity, so far from what the Bible suggests to us, that we don't even realize the great difference there is. Show me some Christians that have the well inside, that know it; and I'll tell you you'll never hear them talking about how they need a touch from God. They are conscious of fullness.

I don't mean they're not weak, nor that they have no problems. Surely they have problems, but they know the well is inside. They never try to go to a meeting so that they can touch God. They never try to go over there and meet this brother so he can help them out of difficulty. I don't mean that is wrong. I simply mean that if we get into what God has for us, the well will be on the inside, and we'll know it. Then we'll see that what God is after is the expression of this well, not my crying out to God in travail.

Most of our meetings are conducted with a basic consciousness that we need God. Hardly any of our meetings are conducted with the consciousness that we are filled with God. Now then, when this is true, obviously, there can be no expression. There can be only taking in. So I'm taking it all the time.

The preacher stands in the pulpit and says, "I hope you folks came to get a blessing tonight." That is the highest expression of Christianity that we can be conscious of, but it's not an expression at all. It's a cry. It's a travail. It's a reaching out. It's trying to find the well.

You know something? It's just so far from reality. Yet we're so accustomed to it that all of our habits of prayer rotate around this center—my need, our need, his need, her need. We've come to the place where we feel that the person who is the most spiritual is the person who is conscious of his great need. Now this is not an expression of spirituality. This is an expression of Adam's poverty. An expression of spirituality is an expression of the well within. Do you follow my reasoning?

If we follow on with what happens here, it will help us to find out what really happens here; it will help us to find out what really is supposed to happen. It's time we quit going to the well. It's time we drank and got the well inside. This same principle is brought out in John chapter 7, when Jesus stood on that great day of the feast and said, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. The water that I shall give him will become in him a well of water, a river of living water." Ah, that's wonderful! He didn't say he'd get a good bucket full. He didn't even say that you'll find out where to get under the spout where the glory comes out. He said, "You'll have the rivers inside." Those artesian wells will be springing up inside. The only way you can keep an artesian well from flowing is to put a cap on it. You don't have to pump it; it never has to be primed; it just flows.

The only way you can keep the Spirit of God from functioning in your life is to put the cap on it. The best way to put the cap on it is to keep crying out, "Oh, the need I have. Oh, I need God."

Well now, who can say, I need God? Only two men! There's Adam and Christ. Adam says, "I need God." Christ says, "I'm expressing God."

I don't mean to bowl you over, but I would like to startle you enough to cause you to come to grips with the facts. I tell you frankly, my attitude on these things has been utterly transformed in recent months. As I have come to see in reality that the well is inside, the rivers of living water flow from within, not from without. I don't have to go over there to get the rivers of living water. I just have to open up, to expose myself to God. Thus my whole ministry of praying, witnessing, and sharing is all to be an expression of the fullness of God within. I can't share anything with anybody if I'm in such need, you see. If all I'm conscious of is my great need, what have I got to share? Just an empty hole. I can only say, "Fill her up." And out of my empty hole I do my best to try to fill somebody else's dry well. You see, this is not the expression of the church. This is an expression of Adamic creation. My, what's the matter with us? How we have missed God's desire!

Well, let us go back to the woman at the well. We see how He provokes her to recognize that she needs this water, this well. So when He speaks about this water, she decides to throw away all of her difficulties about His being of a different race, and she says, "Well now, tell me something, would You give me

this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw? I'm tired of coming to this well. I really want this water you're talking about. I don't want to thirst anymore."

Now notice what He does. He says, "Go call your husband and come hither." I didn't see this for years, but you know something? It's quite interesting that the marriage relationship is to be something of a mutual flow, a mutual sharing. The husband is to drink from his wife's well, and the wife from the husband's well. There is something in my life that I can give to my wife, and I'm to be always giving. You see, that is the expression of my relationship to my wife. When my relationship to my wife becomes one of getting—my pleasure, my satisfaction—then my marriage relationship has practically no meaning any longer.

Now He says, "Let's find out how this well is working here in your home." See what He's getting at? He knows what is going on, but He wants her to come out with it. "Go call your husband," He says. Jesus is saying, "What I'm talking to you about is not a physical well. You've got to know something about a flow in the Spirit. You've got to know something about this relationship between people, because that's what the well is, a relationship between you and God. Now, I'm going to get to the place where your relationship with people is most intimate. Call your husband. If this is going to touch you, it's got to touch him. If there is something in your life, it's going to be in his life."

You know something that's just uncanny? When problems get straightened out at home, the whole spiritual outlook is different. People say, "When you get your spiritual outlook straightened out, your home life will straighten out." But the two are really so close together, so dependent on each other, that you can't go too far along one line until the other one comes along. So Jesus said, "Go call your husband, and come hither."

She says, "I have no husband."

He answers, "You said well; you have no husband. For you have had five husbands. You don't know what it is to drink from any well. You've been drinking to get satisfaction. You don't know anything about this well. You don't know what it is to be so related with an individual that the well flows."

She said, "I perceive You are a prophet." In other words, You're on an inside track. Where did You get all this information? I've been looking for the inside track for years.

You know you run up against somebody, and all you can think about is all your terrible problems, your burdens, your difficulties. Oh, they are just mountains before you. You come up against someone else who's really walking with the Lord, and enjoying the Lord, and you ask, "What secret have you got? What's all the mystery to this? Aren't you human? Don't you know what problems are?"

The other night I was talking to a woman. She was concerned about a terrible problem with her family, children, and so on. She said something about four children. I said, "I've got four children." Oh, she could hardly take that in. How was it that I had such victory, and she was so conscious of such terrible need? So she came back at me with something like this. You'll see when your children get older.

The idea always is, well, you know it's just not possible to move out of fullness; it just is not possible to have the well inside. We become so accustomed to confessing our need that we don't even think it is possible to have the fullness of the Lord. And we have reasoned ourselves into a position where we are saying, "When all the circumstances are right, then I can enjoy God. When all the circumstances are right, then I'll be at the well."

It's not that. All the circumstances can be wrong, and you still can have the well inside. Everything outwardly can be against you—your body racked with pain, and every kind of problem, domestic, material and social staring you in the face—still you can know such an inner composure, a peace and a walk with God that you know the well is inside. You're not looking for it; it's there. This is what Jesus is getting at.

Then the woman said, "I perceive You are a prophet. I want to find out if You've got a little further inside track. This is a religious problem. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and You say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

Jesus said, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming and now is.

Jesus uses this phrase in a number of places, and whenever He says this, He's dealing with something that is a spiritual principle, and therefore completely above the limits of time and space. That is why He says, "The hour is coming and now is." You haven't historically grasped it yet; but it's an eternal principle, and you can lay hold of it now. Something greater I'm coming to realize: that every principle in the Spirit is eternally available to us. Every heavenly principle is always available to us. It has no historical roots. It's applied to history; it's applied to our lives, but it's always beyond us in its foundation.

Whenever the Lord sets in motion a principle or spiritual law, You can walk in it; you can live in it, if you'll live and walk in the Spirit, always. But the fullness of its historical meaning may be yet future. Lets take, for instance, the coming of the Lord. The coming of the King of Glory, when He'll be crowned Lord of Lords and King of Kings, is...a prophetic reality, yet future. It hasn't yet come to pass historically. It will come to pass, but it's future. You can't lay hold of that historical thing yet, but the spiritual principles that are to be manifested then, you can lay hold of right now. You can have the consciousness of His sovereignty over every situation right now. You can know that He is present right now.

Thus Jesus is saying, the truth of the matter is, God is not worshiped either in relation to history or to geography. Your fathers say that this place is the place to worship, and our fathers say that over there is. But *worship is timeless, worship relates to eternity. Worship makes the eternal God utterly accessible and makes us completely accessible to God.* It's not a matter of time or place.

Some people say, "Oh, if I could just get in a meeting, I could enjoy the presence of the Lord. If I could just be in such and such a place! Oh, I understand they're going to have a meeting over there. If I could just get to the camp meeting, I know the Lord would meet my need." It's always "over there." It's always out there, always future. Or, "If I had just been there when that happened. But you know I wasn't."

Now Jesus said, "The hour is coming and now is." On another occasion He said, "The hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear His voice, and they that hear shall live."

"Oh," you say, "the resurrection hasn't come yet."

Well, no, not as a historical thing. But the spiritual principle is there. Everytime God speaks, the dead come to life. And He's saying here, "The hour is coming when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship you know not what; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

God is available to us. God is Spirit. All of this is completely related to the matter of a well inside.

"Woman, you've been waiting for such and such a thing to happen. You've been waiting till you can get to the mountain so you can draw water. You've been waiting till you can get to the well to draw water. I'm telling you something that can be related to everything that you are, and know, every limitation, every difficulty you face right now. If you will learn what worship is, if you will learn how a man is related to God. You can have the well inside."

If we can understand how a man is related to God, we won't have to walk any more with a consciousness of our own need, or a consciousness of the Lord's presence over there, and not here. You won't be going to the well any more. You know, I can share with you a testimony. I have lost consciousness of the well out there. The well is inside. It's the most amazing thing. I don't know where I was for so many years. I feel like I wandered in the dark for years, because I've come to realize that the well is inside.

So it's not a question of, "Oh Lord, I've got such a need, God. You must meet me." When I sense a need, or when I sense a frailty, or an inability for something, I just know, "Lord, You're able for this, and You're here. Lord, I just expose myself to You."

You know, worry is wrong. You can't possibly worry about something when you realize the well is in here to meet every situation. You see, if I have to face a situation —poor me! I can't handle it. But if God is actually in me, why

He's equal to every circumstance, every contention; and He's not going to meet it apart from me. He's going to meet it in me.

He said, "Woman, you need to get the well inside."

You know something happened. Spiritual entrance into that woman's life was so tremendous that though she was despised, though she was ashamed, something radiated in her countenance. The well inside began to show. The well began to flow, and she went back. There was something shining. The well was flowing, and the whole city turned out to see where she'd found the well.

When our lives are radiating, are expressing that fullness of God within, there's an overflow. I told the people up in Topeka over and over, "Don't share your problems with people; share the overflow. Don't go and unburden all your difficulties. Share the overflow; share the spring. Share the well; share the rivers of living waters. That will do something. That will teach people. They'll think you're superhuman for awhile; but they'll find out that you're weak, and that you have your difficulties too. But they'll see the well is flowing, that the rivers of living waters are there."

I am reminded of the children of Israel when the Lord brought them out of Egypt, and was bringing them toward the Promised Land. All the time they were in the wilderness. God was always distant from them. They went to the rock for water. He sent the manna down from above. The cloud of glory was up there. He provided for them supernaturally, wonderfully, but it was just a bare existence. As long as they were in Egypt, you see, everything was provided for them, but they were laboring to make their captors rich. When God brought them out across the Red Sea into the wilderness, He had to teach them a very important lesson—that without the Egyptians, without any security. He could be everything to them. God had to show them that He could spread a table in the wilderness.

Now the first thing that the Lord teaches a person, or the first thing the Lord moves to teach him, is that He can take care of him. He can take care of this situation, this contingency, this problem. He is able for it all. Even when the horizon is terribly bleak, and there is no known possibility to get out of this situation, the Lord is able for it. That's what the Lord was teaching the children of Israel there in the wilderness. The marvelous thing is that they walked

around in the most amazing air-conditioned cubicle, if you want to call it that, for forty years. The sun couldn't reach them because the cloud of glory was above them. When the desert got cold, the fire was burning to keep them warm. They never had to have a stove. They never had to have a fan. They never carried anything with them to take care of themselves. They had no pantry. They never had a cookstove. They never had a refrigerator. They never had any of the things that we have to have to keep up-to-date. You know why? Because *God was their present help!* Every-Moment-Provision!

Manna came down every day, except on the sixth day; and then there was a double amount to take them over the next day. They griped; they complained, They murmured, but every morning the manna was there. And it was just enough to take them through the day. They couldn't hoard it up for a week. If they did, on the second day it was rotten. For forty years their clothes didn't wear out. They never had anything threadbare. They never got a hole in their shoes. For forty years! Everything was maintained moment by moment. You know the same principle is taught in the widow's barrel of meal. It never wasted, and the oil never ran out. God can provide moment by moment. But this is not yet His perfect plan. Yet this is where almost every Christian we know lives-a moment by moment provision.

Well, God is able. God is able! But they just about go frantic in the process. And they're just barely getting by. You know the Lord never intended for Israel to live for forty years on manna. At best two years, and then He was going to lead them into the place where there was no lack of bread. In Canaan there was wheat, oats, barley, milk, and honey. God said, "The hills run with dew. There're rivers. You'll find brass, iron, everything. But their hearts remained back in Egypt. You know what their problem was? God brought them out of Egypt to deliver them from their slavery unto His full purpose. But the big problem was themselves; they wanted merely to use God for their own ends, not live unto His glorious end.

You know, I've come to see more and more that underlying purpose of Christ's death for us is not merely to deal with our sins, but to deal with *ourselves*. I used to think that was secondary. Now I've come to realize His death was twofold.

So here's Israel in the wilderness, just barely getting by. Provision was made for them every day. An unfailing supply, but it was always up there; it always came down from heaven. Most of us live on this ground. We often pray, "Lord, send down a blessing." The Lord's always over there. Poor me, I'm way down here. I'm in this mess, and He's over there. That's the way you pray when you're in the wilderness.

When they crossed over Jordan, the manna ceased, the cloud of glory wasn't up there any more. Their clothes started wearing out. They didn't eat manna anymore; they ate of the old corn of the land.

We've presented manna as though it were the epitome of the Christian life. But God told them that when they got in the land, they'd have corn, barley, oats, wheat, everything! "Why," He said, "You need water? Don't look for the rock, just dig a hole. You can punch a well anywhere; there's water all over the place. You want barley? Plant a barley seed; you'll get a crop. You need oats? Plant an oat seed; you'll get oats." Could they do that in the desert? No! They could have labored all day, could have brought all the seed you could mound up on the ground, and never have a crop. Why? The land was barren! The reason God provided everything from above was because the land was barren. But when the land is fruitful, it doesn't come down from above.

The thing to do is to get into the land. That land is the abundance of Christ, right now. It's Christ right now, not heaven. All of His abundance, all of His manifold glory, all of His grace is revealed in the land. Fullness, it's all in the land. All you have to do is farm the land.

You know, once Israel got in the land, you never saw an Israelite pray, "Oh God, please send the manna." He knew what he had to do was get out there and farm the land. Three times a year the Israelites gathered from all the four corners of this abundant land and brought the produce. They all came and said, "Look what the land produced. Look at the produce, the abundance. Did you ever see anything in the wilderness like this? It was never like this. Neither was Egypt. In Egypt we made our captors rich. While we were in the wilderness we just barely eked out an existence; here we've got everything. And it's all because God is here in the land. God's here, not up there."

You tell some of these things to people, and they think you're a heretic. But the fact is the God is right here in me and you, and you. Where is fullness revealed? Where is God expressed? Here, not over there. But I can't experience God up there. That's why God made me a spiritual being, and because God is Spirit I can experience Him here. See, you can't experience God over there. You can only experience God subjectively right here. So while you're reaching out, you're not getting very far.

Most of us are saying, "If I can just get home to heaven." God says, "If I can just get home to you." Actually that's what it amounts to.

We say, "Oh, if I could just get out of this mess."

The Lord is saying, "If I could just get into that mess."

We continue, "If I could just get free of this problem."

The Lord's saying, "If I could just control you in that problem."

Now it's all going to come about by the Lord's restraining and bringing us in, not by escaping, not by running. See? You move into the fullness of Christ. You get the well inside, and you just let it flow. You open up, and God works. God expressing Himself, and God is moving. Oh, it's wonderful! If you start farming the land, it won't bother you when the manna quits. No more manna. No more rock. "Oh, the rock is Christ." That's true, but the Land is a fuller expression of Christ. And the Church is to be the expression of the fullness of Christ. Praise God!

Father, we thank You for the truth, Your Word. We expose ourselves to You, Lord, that You would work out in us Your purpose. We've been trying to get things done ourselves, Lord—doing despite to the Spirit of grace, as it were, not coming under Your hand, or turning to You, or trusting in You. We open up to You, oh Lord, that we might be Your instruments, Your channels, Lord, the means whereby You can accomplish Your will on the earth. Here we are, Lord—open to You. We want to move into that place of expressing You, not our great lack, but Your great fullness. In Jesus' Name. Amen!

CHAPTER 2

How Can I Learn to Hear His Voice Continually?

GOD'S DESIRE to express Himself through human vessels of clay has most often caused us to think of power and glory being released through us. While that may have its place, there is another side we have usually overlooked. Tonight I think we should discover the secret of God's restraining hand.

Recently it has been a startling thing for me to realize that the emphasis regarding the Holy Spirit has been almost wholly on the release, or liberty side of His work. We have said such things as, "When the Holy Spirit works, we'll know His release; we'll know His liberty"—all of which is true. The problem is we've stressed only one side. Now I've begun to realize that the Holy Spirit is often working much more to restrain than to release, to hold us in rather than to let us go, to confine rather than to open up. Are you grasping what I'm talking about? Do you know what it is to be held in tow by the Holy Spirit? Until you do, you're not likely to really discern what a release in the spirit is.

I am not saying that there is no place for release. I'd be completely wrong if I did. But in view of the fact that the emphasis has been so much on the side of release and liberty. I'd like to consider the other side tonight. If we can grasp something of the constraining ministry of the Spirit, it will be much easier to understand how at times He restrains us; yet again He seems to push us out.

Yes, the Lord must draw us in before He will let us out. I pray for release; He gives me restraint. I pray for an open door; I find a closed door. I pray for a friend; I find an enemy. I pray for a gift; I find I can hardly speak. I pray for a ministry; I find I am shut in with God. All this, of course, is the Spirit's working. We like to blame this on our circumstances, or on our friends. And sometimes when we can't find anyone else to blame it on, we ask. What's wrong with me? I

must have sinned. I must be backslidden. I must have lost out with God somewhere." In it all we're really misunderstanding what the Holy Spirit is doing.

I'd like for you to open your Bible to Hebrews, chapter 5 verse 8. Our text reads, "Though He were a son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered."

This verse is speaking about the Lord Jesus, of course. For many years this verse was an enigma to me. Only in recent months has the truth of it gripped my heart, and I've come to see the tremendously valuable spiritual principle set forth here.

Speaking of the Lord Jesus, this verse says that it was necessary for Him to learn obedience. Now this is not because Jesus was ever disobedient. It was right at this point the problem arose in my mind. Why should anyone who never was disobedient have to learn obedience?

When you and I consider obedience, it is always from the wound of disobedience. We learn obedience usually because we've done something wrong. We've banged our nose against the wall; we've stubbed our toes. We've suffered the consequence of our disobedience, and thereby learned it is best to obey.

This was never true of the Lord Jesus. He never disobeyed. He never had a rebellious thought in His mind. So from what ground, then, did He have to learn obedience? The One by Whose word the worlds came into being, the One by Whose word is all maintained in its proper order, the One Whose might is infinite, the One to Whom all angels give honor and praise and worship, the One we are exhorted to worship and adore—He had to learn obedience! "Though He were a Son. He learned obedience."

This brings us to the matter of the atonement. Jesus could only atone for our sins when He actually had taken the place of Adam. He learned obedience because He was taking the place of Adam. While He was the sovereign Lord in the glory. He had no need to be obedient. He commanded all things. Everything had to obey Him. But when He came down to earth and became a human being, He learned obedience. Let us consider a few things this involved.

First of all, when the decree was made that Jesus should come and die for our sins, that He should take the place of Adam, Jesus, the Son, laid aside His divine attributes (i.e. ceased to act in the power of His divine attributes). He

chose, while here on earth, not to avail Himself of His sovereign rights. He came to live as a human vessel—a Vessel knowing all the limitations and temptations of humanity, yet never at any point taking recourse to His own attributes as the Son of God.

We need to grasp this fact. For many years I pointed out how the miracles of the Lord Jesus demonstrated His divine attributes. I read the tremendous words He spoke and considered He was showing the omniscience of the Son of God. Now I realize that is not what He really was doing.

God's thought for Adam had been that Adam should be a man filled with God. His life was to be full because he was filled with God. He was to live as he drew upon the strength, mercy, grace and life of God. Adam was to be *a vessel to contain God*. Adam was to *express God's life*, but to express it as a human being. We won't go into why all this was so, but I want you to grasp that that is what God purposed for Adam. Whenever Adam exercised dominion, or increased his dominion, he was actually increasing God's dominion—God's reign. He was extending the realm of God's authority, but he was doing it all as a man.

Adam named the animals; he did it out of the authority of God, out of the wisdom God gave him. Adam had no strength. Humanity has no strength in itself. Humanity is utterly weak and must rely upon God.

Now God made us this way so that we will rely upon Him.

Adam's choice when he stood before the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was the tree of knowledge; thus he would have something by which he could extend his own strength, his own personality, his own mind. God's intent was for Adam to rely utterly upon Him. Well, Adam defected from the divine plan. He turned away, and in so doing, all humanity was plunged into the same abyss of independence.

ADAM'S REAL SIN — INDEPENDENCE

You see, Adam's real sin was not that he ate forbidden fruit; his real sin was independence. In turning away, he chose the way of his own development, to

live his own life by himself. In doing so he brought man into the position where man couldn't even approach God.

Jesus said, "No man can come to the Father except the Spirit draw him." That wasn't always so. Before the Fall, man could come to God; man could draw upon God. When Jesus came. He came to take the place of Adam, and His first emphasis or principle was, "I will be a man and I will fulfill the divine plan. I will be a man living wholly unto God."

His first consideration was not evangelistic—that is, toward man. His first consideration was towards God. "I will live unto God; I will live by God the Father; I will draw upon His life; I simply will be a vessel filled with God. I will not do anything on my own; I will not initiate anything. I will not show how much I can do, how much I know, how much power I have. I will not display my own attributes. I simply will be *humanity*, a human vessel, a simple human personality; but God the Father will be in me, living out His will." That is obedience.

How did He learn this obedience? "By the things which He suffered." The real meaning of this is, the discipline that caused Him to suffer. Suffering is something nobody chooses; it is imposed upon you. Those impositions! That circumstance that arose which you didn't expect. Those surprises that caught you. You know, sometimes we think if we could just get everything ordered so that we would know just what to expect, everything would be all right. Our problems arise because we don't know what to expect. Something unexpected happens, and we're thrown off our course.

Grace would be relatively easy to appropriate if you could just anticipate. That's what we think! But God's grace is always for the unanticipated thing. You can't anticipate life. It is always spontaneous. You never have any idea what's going to happen next. Therefore, you're cast wholly upon the Lord. And you can prove Him adequate for any situation. Do you see?

Nobody is any stronger than the weakest man utterly dependent upon God. This is the way Christ was to live out His life on this earth. You will realize this is true when you consider His words and His attitudes toward the problems at hand. It becomes meaningful why He spoke: "The words that I speak are not my own. My Father that is in me, He does the works." He as much as said, "You

see, I'm simply a vessel to contain God. If you see any divine attributes, they are the attributes of my father. If you see anything you like, it's my Father. If you see some good works, it's my Father in me doing these things. I'm just a human vessel opened up to God. My life is exposed to God, and He has His access; His control in everything. I'm submissive."

When Jesus came into the World He said two things. In Hebrews 10:5 we read, "A body You have prepared me." He was saying, "I have a means of expressing God among humanity."

Now a body is for expression. If I never moved my hands, or my mouth, or my eyes, you never would know what I was thinking. But having a body, I have these unique physical capacities; and I'm able to express what I am. Well, Jesus Christ said, "I will not express what I am; I'll express what HE is." That was essentially what was going on.

Jesus said on another occasion, "I do nothing of myself." Oh my! That is just contrary to what we've thought. We've thought: Why, Jesus could do anything. Yet He said, "I do nothing of my self. As I hear, I judge." He as much as said, "My judgments are just, because my Father never makes a mistake. He knows what's going on. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just."

You could ask the Lord Jesus, "Where are You going?" He would answer, "I'll go where my Father goes. My Father works hitherto, and I work. I don't stop and consider before I take a journey. Now I'm going to Capernaum, then to Galilee, and then across the river. I never anticipate anything. I just walk as my Father walks. He guides me this way; He guides me that way. I just walk as my Father walks." This is the way He was living His life, moment by moment. When it looked as if the people wanted to set Him up as king. He said, "My hour is not yet come. I can't anticipate anything. I can't jump ahead of the schedule." How often He insisted, "My hour has not yet come."

When our Lord performed His first miracle, Mary was anticipating something. But He said, "My hour is not yet come. I can't move ahead of God's plan." When they questioned Him at twelve years of age, "What are You doing here in the temple?" He answered, "I'm about my Father's business. I'm just following Him." You see, He didn't stop and think: "Now when I get down there I'll really slay those doctors and lawyers. I'm going to show them what I know."

No, He said, "I am just doing what my Father guides me to do." When Mary and Joseph commanded His submission, He was submissive. But Mary never forgot it. The Word says, "she laid these things up in her heart."

In countless ways Jesus was constantly saying, "I'm just a vessel filled with the Lord! I'm just a man filled with God!" In doing so. He was fulfilling the type of that first sacrifice of the Burnt Offering (Leviticus 1). This offering was offered up unto God. It had nothing to do with atonement. It had to do with a vessel, a vehicle, an innocent One, wholly offered up to God. This offering was to be burnt on the altar—all of it. In some of the other offerings, the priests were to cut the head off; they were to take the insides out; they were to cut off the feet; but in this offering EVERYTHING was to go on the altar. Christ was fulfilling the Whole Burnt-Offering.

Remember the time Jesus was ministering in Capernaum and there was a marvelous display of the power and grace of God? That afternoon as the Lord went to Peter's house. He rebuked the fever in Peter's mother-in-law and raised her up. Word spread through all the community. By night the place was just jammed. People had come from everywhere. The Scripture says He laid His hands on them and healed them and cast out the devils. Oh, can't you imagine the stir? (I've seen a stir like this in Argentina for weeks on end—people just coming day and night.) But here they were. They couldn't even get into the place. They were around the windows and doors. Ah, it was tremendous. And Jesus healed them. No doubt He was up late into the night.

The next morning when Peter woke up, the people were already gathering, wanting to get to this wonderful Healer, Jesus of Nazareth. They wanted Him to lay His hands on their sick folk.

Peter looked around, but he couldn't find Jesus. He had a good idea where Jesus was. He found Him. His Lord had risen up a great while before day and had gone into a solitary place to pray. Communion with His Father, you see, was His life. Then you know what Peter said when he got there? "Master, all men seek for You?"

Oh my, if an evangelist could hear a word like that he'd say, "The band wagon is rolling. Let's get everything moving. Now's the time. Let's hurry back there and start something. We've never had this opportunity before. Master, all

men seek You. ALL!" Paraphrase it in your own way, but Peter as much as said "Let's go back and build a church. Let's go back and have campaign. Why, we can turn this city upside down in nothing flat!"

You know what Jesus said? In effect He answered, it is not mine to choose which way I should go. Let's go to the next town. Why? Because that's what my Father in me is directing! I don't because the multitudes are here, or the multitudes are there. I only go where my Father is moving me to go. Jesus couldn't turn back—even to a populace that was crying for Him—if His Father wouldn't turn back.

Now let's see the other side. When Jesus said, "We're going to go down to Jerusalem," the conflict was already getting intense. It was a dangerous thing to follow on with the Lord. One of the disciples said, "If He is determined to go, let's just go along and die with Him. They'll surely kill Him." But Jesus never stopped to consider whether they were going to kill Him. He just knew that He was walking with His Father. Whatever His Father willed moment by moment, that was all He could will. "I come to do Your will, Oh God."

Now, here is the second thing Jesus said when He came into the world. "I delight to do Your will. Oh God." If it meant going to Jerusalem, He'd be going to Jerusalem. But He knew, too, that as long as He walked in the will of His Father, nobody could take His life from Him, prematurely, because it was the Father's life. Do you see? In Luke 12:50 we read that Jesus said, "But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

Now that little word "straitened" means narrowed, or pressed in. We think that the Christian life should get fuller, broader and richer all the time. Yet, seemingly, the Lord's thought is that it should get narrower, and narrower, and narrower. Why? Some of you have wondered, Why is the Lord pressing me in on this? Why doesn't He allow me to move this way? Ah, it's because you must learn that God has one end in view. Jesus Christ was conscious that God the Father, His Father, had just one end in view; and He couldn't afford to have any other end in view. So Jesus was narrowed, and it was a painful thing.

Thus, He announced that He knew what He was headed for—that baptism of death. He said, in effect, "The Spirit of God is straitening me, restraining me,

holding me in. I must walk in a narrower and narrower pathway all the time, because of this one thing in view."

When we're first saved we look around and say, "My, every thing is possible now. I can go over here and do that, over there and do this!" Yes, so much of the ministry from the pulpit today emphasizes: "Now you can do anything." How we love that verse, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens." I counsel you, friends, that there is another aspect which we will have to grasp if our lives are ever to be really effective before God: though all things are possible, only *one thing is needful*—and that is that I come under God's hand in everything.

Surely, Jesus knew that all things were possible to Him. It's quite worthy to notice what He did. In John 13:15 we read, "Knowing that all things were committed into His hand . . ." Jesus rose up and took off His robe, put on a towel, and washed the disciples' feet. How wonderful! The lowly One ministering when He could be demonstrating some great feat.

You know, until we learn the restraint of the Spirit, our lives never will be channeled. They will always be like a free ball rolling here and there. We will ponder. Where is God: Why can't I get into His channel? The Spirit of God will press you into that channel if you'll just be maneuverable. So the way to walk with God is not in trying to get Him to do something on your terms, but is just in responding to what He is doing.

One of the principle committees in most all the churches in the land today is the Ways and Means Committee. They plan then they try to persuade God to approve and bless this thing they feel ought to be done.

We organize a campaign and plead. Now God, bless our efforts. But God can't bless OUR efforts. God can't honor OUR terms. If He can just get our ear, then He'll explain what He wants done. And we'll be conscious of weakness all the time. We'll be conscious of incapacibilities all the time. We'll wonder, How did the Lord ever get that done? In other words, I didn't display any power or wisdom in it all. But you see, this is how the LORD accomplishes His purpose. We are to be only a channel yielded to Him. That's Who Jesus was! -- the yielded Son through Whom the Father would express Himself.

They tried to kill Jesus, but they couldn't. He offered His life up to the Father. When He offered His life up to the Father, a wonderful thing happened: He became a *Life-giving spirit*. In becoming the Life-giving Spirit, He now lives in you and me, and all of His Body. As a result of His life being offered unto God, His life can now become our experience. Do we need this? Then just come under God's hand, under God's restraint.

I'd like to close with a personal testimony of how God chose to teach me this. It was a simple thing. How often the Lord uses the simplest of things to bring one into line! He'll choose something that you never heard of His using with anybody else. But it will be the Lord's choosing for you.

Just after we got back to the States from Argentina we needed a car. I considered the logical thing to do was to look over the newspapers, find a good deal, and make arrangements to pay for it "on time." I'd find a good deal, but then sense the Lord was holding me back. I looked here and looked there, and I thought: "Well now, I'll try over here a little bit." But each time feeling checked, I considered the Lord must be going to provide in some other way. Finally I quit studying the newspapers so much, and tried to find out what it was the Lord was saying to me. I'd think, "Well, maybe we'll have a meeting over there, and the Lord will speak to a brother or sister to give me a car. Or, maybe over here I'll find a good buy" and so on. But whatever would seem to develop. I just seemed to go up a blind alley. This went on for two months.

I remember going 125 miles to talk to a Christian car dealer. I found just the car. It seemed to be the very thing I was looking for. He had been driving it around that afternoon, and it was working just fine. So we got in to drive it off. I tried to turn the starter over, but it wouldn't budge. We actually ran the battery down trying to start that car. He finally brought out another battery and put jumper cables on it. Still we couldn't start that car. We tried for half an hour. Still it wouldn't start. Then I realized; here is more straitening.

This was becoming a common phrase by then—more straitening! More straitening! You see, the Lord was using this simple matter of my trying to get a car to bring me into line along a lot of other ways. If the Lord can get to you in one matter, you will realize, when it's all over, that He also got to you in a lot of other ways. Yes, this is the way we learn; this is the way we grow spiritually.

Time and again I've taken up certain issues with God saying: "Now Lord, this thing and that thing!" You know! But the Lord is speaking about another thing over here. Well, that's not so pleasant, so I'll put that out of my mind. So I return, "Now about this thing. Lord!"

Suppose I'm raising these issues with God: What about my unsaved son? What about his difficult situation in our church, Lord? What about this matter on the job? What about this home situation? What about these bills? Lord, please come through! But if the Lord can come through with me on the one issue He's dealing with me about, then I'll progress; I'll grow. Until then I might just as well "holler" at the ceiling as try to bring up these other things. I'll not get anywhere. How often have I thought, If the Lord can just display His strength here, then I will really know what it is to walk with God. But I couldn't get God to move on my terms. God reminds me. *This* is the issue, not the one you're bringing in.

Finally I brought up the issue, what's the Lord doing about this car? You see, the problem wasn't whether the Lord could provide a car. He could provide a dozen cars. My frustration was that I was being restrained on every point. I'd argue, but it's more expensive to ride a bus or train than a car. I'm losing money. Then the Lord would remind me that He provides the money, so what was the difference?

Finally, I arranged for a deal with a brother. But he needed to have the car for three or four weeks before he could get his own. I said, "Well, fine." We agreed on a price. In the meantime I had to travel quite some distance away. But I went back 750 miles to close the deal on the set date. When I got there, I found that he had put quite a bit of repairs on the car and now wanted \$100.00 more than we had agreed upon! Normally, this would have been all right. But once more the Lord checked me. If ever I knew anything, I knew that I was being straitened. I kept pondering in my own mind. Well, now I can jump the traces; yet if I can explain this voice away, what assurance have I that the next time I hear this same voice I'm going to know it's the Lord. I had no alternative, and I could only say, "Well, Lord, I'm cast on You."

The brother wanted to split the repair bill with me, and that was logical, but it didn't matter whether it was logical or not. I knew that I couldn't.

Shortly afterwards, I went to Houston, Texas, to visit a medical doctor friend. I had heard she was getting ready to buy another car.

"Would you sell me your car?" I asked.

"Brother Swindoll," she said, "I'll give it to you. I'd just delighted to give it to you."

This is the car I'm driving now. But even that wasn't the end! When I got back to Houston, in the first meeting in a little Chinese mission, a brother walked up to me at the end of the meeting and said, "I understand you're having car trouble." I said, "Well frankly, I was, but not any more. The Lord worked it all out."

He said, "Well the Lord spoke to me to give you my car, a 1957 Buick." He no sooner got the words out of his mouth than another brother announced. "Man, you stole my thunder. I was getting ready to give him mine."

You see, the real lesson was not, Can the Lord provide a car? The real lesson was, *can the Lord get my ear?* Thus, the Lord restrained me. I want to share something else, now that I've told that side. From the day when the Lord began to straiten me until this, I have been walking with the Lord in an entirely new sense. There's only one reason for it! I learned to hear the voice of the Lord! I tell you frankly; God alone knows what a tremendous difference there is in my life. And even while I was going through it, I had the sweetest sense of the Lord's presence. All this time I was learning to be sensitive to the Lord's voice about a car, I was also becoming sensitive to Him about this, that, and the other thing. Now I never stand up to speak but He fills my mouth with words. He continues giving me instructions on this line. I can't describe it all to you, but I have learned this: If you can hear the Lord's voice along one line, you can hear it along another line. If you will come under God's hand along this thing that He makes for you an issue, you'll find that while He's straitening you here, He's enlarging you over there.

You many love your prestige, you may lose your friends, you may lose your possessions, you may lose your influence, but you'll find you're being drawn more and more into this thing we've been talking about: *Before we can ever really come to that place where we are adequately expressing what the Lord*

is doing, expressing His works, expressing His words, we will have to fully come under His hand.

If there's anything that we need to learn, it is to recognize the voice of the Lord. After I spoke along the line of hearing the Lord's voice, a number of months ago, a sister came to me at the end of the meeting and said, "Brother Swindoll, you talk as if it were easy. How can I hear the Lord's voice? How can I be sure?"

I asked her a simple question. I asked, "Sister, do you know your husband's voice when you hear it? Do you know your son's voice when you hear it?"

"Oh yes," she said.

"Know your father's voice when you hear it?"

"Oh yes."

"Why?" I asked. There was a silence; so I answered: "Because you're accustomed to listening to it. If you'll start accustoming yourself to listening to the Lord's voice, it will be no problem at all to recognize it."

You listen to the Lord's voice when you want an answer. You say, "God, I've got a problem here. You'll have to give me an answer." But when you're going through your work-a-day activities and the Lord is speaking to you about something, you turn a deaf ear. Now, just to put it in a child's words, that's not fair.

You're driving along the highway, and you're speeding. The Lord says, "Slow down." You turn a deaf ear. But when you want healing for this disease, you say, "Oh God, I've got to get through on this thing."

If you're going to hear the Lord's voice and know it clearly all the time, you're going to have to listen to it at all times, not just when you want an answer. Whenever God speaks, learn to respond. Learn to answer the Lord with this one answer: *yes, Lord.*

Shall we pray. Father, in the lovely name of Jesus, we acknowledge Your hand upon us. We rejoice in Your truth, in Your words of love and grace and power. We would come under Your hand. We would come again to realize tonight that Your plan is the one thing that is important—Your purpose, Your dealing, Your

Word, Your Truth, Your Way, Your Work. We submit to You, Lord, and we pray honestly, Lord, Your will be done! In Jesus' Name!

CHAPTER 3

How Can a Little Clay Pot Express His Glory?

“Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Corinthians 3:17,18, NKJV.

Reading this Scripture portion, I want to catch your attention by asking this question about verse 18. Is it we who are looking into the mirror, or is it that God is looking into us—for we are the mirror? As we shall see, this is important. It is unfortunate that the translation in the Authorized version is not really clear. Almost any other version gives you a clearer picture of verse 18. I'd like to read this verse as J.B. Phillips renders it: "All of us who are Christians have no veils on our faces, but reflect like mirrors the glory of the Lord."

"With this hope in our hearts, we are quite frank and open in our ministry. We are not like Moses who veiled his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing his fading glory. But it was their minds which were blinded, for even today when the old agreement is read to them, there is still a veil over their minds, though the veil has actually been lifted by Christ. Yes, alas even to this day there is still a veil over their face, when the writings of Moses are read. Yet if they turn to the Lord, the veil would disappear. For the Lord, to whom they could turn, is the Spirit of the new agreement. But wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, men's souls are set free. But all of us, who are Christians, have no veils on our faces, but reflect like mirrors the glory of the Lord. We are transfigured in ever-increasing splendor into His own image. And the transformation comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." 2 Cor. 3:12-18 Phillips

I really appreciate this translation of verse 18. You'll notice again, please, that it's not we who are looking into the mirror; it is God who is looking into us—for we are the mirror. We are transfigured in ever-increasing splendor to His own image. When you look in a mirror, you're not looking for the mirror. You're looking for the reflection of your own face.

When God made man, and in all of God's turning to look at man, do you know now what kind of response He's expecting? A reflection of Himself! When He made man, He said, "Let us make man in our own image" [Gen. 1:26]. In other words, God made man with a faculty which the Bible calls spirit, human spirit, whereby man, the human being, is capable of reflecting God. But then, this verse takes us a step further than the reflecting and shows us that God is after something really much deeper than that, something much fuller than that. As we reflect His image we are being transformed into that image.

Now as long as I look at a mirror, I can see my image; but I can't transform the mirror. But we are uniquely designed in the plan of God. As He looks at us, two things happen: firstly, God sees Himself; secondly, we are transformed.

I've come to feel that in the Lord's dealings with man, He always has this in view—that He might see Himself. If this is true, the thing that should concern us is that we might adequately and properly reflect His image, reflect what He is.

Now if you have a mirror at home that doesn't reflect too well, you're not going to paint the picture of your face on that mirror so you can see yourself better. Something must happen to the mirror! You've got to change the mirror so that it gives a precise reflection of yourself.

Often, something clouds the mirror. There was a veil over Moses' face.;God put it there. Do you know why? It was because Moses was so beautifully reflecting the glory of God that the Israelites couldn't stand it! They were too far from the character of God.

The Scriptures tell us that a veil is over the minds of those who don't know the gospel. What does this mean? It means that they are unable to reflect the character of God. They are unable to reflect His image. The Scriptures also

tell us that when a man's heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away; and you behold the Lord.

But there's something even more wonderful than our beholding the Lord! It is that, as the Lord looks at us. He beholds Himself. Is this—I repeat—is this our consuming concern?

You know most of us find we are motivated in our Christian life by what we can *get* from the Lord. We are motivated by the thought of. "Well, what is there in it for me?" And we even minister the gospel to people on this basis. We insist, "If you'll come to the Lord, you will feel good. Come to the Lord, and you'll be happy. Come to the Lord, and He'll heal you. Come to the Lord, and He'll do this or that." The whole emphasis is what you can *get* out of it.

It's quite surprising to find that in the Lord's dealings with man, His emphasis is very different. Man can know satisfaction and fullness only as the Lord is satisfied. God deals with man so that there is a precise reflection of Himself, not so the "mirror" can say, "Oh, isn't this wonderful! It makes me feel so good," but rather that the purpose of God is fulfilled in man!

Now if you don't have a mirror, you can't see your face. Isn't that right? And this brings us to one of the things that the Lord is ultimately after—the increase of Himself. He purposes the embodying of Himself in a vessel here, there, there, there; and thus the Lord is increasing. He's not simply increasing people; He's increasing Himself.

When God told Adam to be fruitful, to multiply and replenish the earth; the thought in view was not simply a lot of people. Rather the primary intention God had was that Adam was filled with God, his wife filled with God, his children filled with God, his grandchildren filled with God—all would be reflecting the image of God. Thus, God would find the increase of Himself in the earth.

Now we'll digress just a minute to consider an important side issue—what the Lord is after in this! We know the Lord has had an arch-enemy on this earth. Did you ever wonder, Why doesn't the Lord just make a clean sweep of the whole thing and wipe him out? This is one of the problems that many Christians face. They are puzzled as to why God doesn't enable them to avoid

their difficulties. They ask, "Why does the devil come against me. Why doesn't the Lord take care of the devil?"

In one aspect we can say, well, through all of this the Lord is sharpening us. But there's something even deeper than that and much more important. Did you ever stop to think that the Lord will possibly never deal directly with Satan? I'm not throwing this out as dogmatic doctrine, but I want to challenge you a bit! There is a reason why God hasn't just finished him off. The Lord has purposed to so fill the universe with Himself that the enemy has no more ground. He's just crowded out, as all his ground is taken from him. God has never had to deal with him directly.

When I think of this, I wonder if this isn't the picture set forth when Joshua led the children of Israel into the conquest of the Land. God stated specifically, "I will not drive your enemies out! I will be in you, moving them out one by one. If you leave any there, I'm not going to take care of them. They're going to be thorns in your sides. You move them out! You take their ground from them."

As you know Israel went so far, and then quit! I'm reminded that many, many years after the conquest of the land, there was still a tribe of Jebusites that held a stronghold in a mountain right in the middle of Canaan's land. There they were—a threat! A constant challenge. A reproach to the name of Jehovah, God of Israel. For years the Israelites never did a thing about it. They just left them there. Then David came along, and said in his heart, "I can't stand this reproach. I'm going to take this mountain. I'm going to take the ground of those Jebusites. I'm going to wipe them out." And he did. And when he did, he built his house right up there in that mountain, which later came to be known as Mt. Zion.

This Hill of Praise is where the ground was taken from the enemy. Now ,God doesn't do it for you; rather He works in you, and moves through you into that ground. It is quite interesting that as you move in to occupy the ground, you go just so far, then you discover a weakness in yourself, something that is keeping you from taking ground from the enemy. The trouble is that there is ground in you that hasn't been surrendered to God. The devil, your enemy, is quick to remind you, You can't have this ground because I have it.

And until this ground in you is given over to the Lord, you can't take that ground! So as you move in, the Lord is accomplishing a two-fold purpose. First of all. He's getting ground in you, and second, as He gets ground in you, He moves the enemy out!

This principle is all through the Scriptures. Jesus said to the disciples, "Occupy! Take this ground." Paul wrote to the Roman Christians, "Satan shall be put under your feet, shortly." Now when God is increasing Himself, He certainly has as one of the ends in view, not only to increase Himself, but to move His enemy off the scene. Here is a thought worth considering: will the Lord ever move directly in this situation, or will He perhaps move exclusively within the Church? Whatever the answer, it is only as we give the ground up to God that the enemy is moved off the ground.

Essentially, this is what happened in the life of the Lord Jesus. Satan kept trying to get ground in Him. He kept moving in to possess something, but he couldn't touch Him at any point. At the close of Jesus' earthly ministry, just before the Passion, Jesus said, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me!" Terrific words of victory! And just about the same time He said, "Now is the judgment of this world." "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out!" Do they not go together? Satan couldn't get any ground in Jesus. Because God had all the ground in the Lord Jesus, Satan could have none. Jesus said, "Now is the judgment of this world." Don't restrict this to the future. He said, "Right now, at Calvary, is the judgment of this world." So stand on that ground. Yield all your ground over to God, and the result will be an increase of the Lord in your life. You will find yourself reflecting the glory of God.

Now let us consider how the Lord is daily transforming us! This implies a process. Our walking with the Lord always results in this transforming which means He sees Himself reflected in us more perfectly. We could express this intention in many ways. And if this is the end in view, then all ministry must be directed to this end: a precise reflecting of the glory of God, and a transforming of the vessel of the individual personality so there is more and more of His increase in us.

If this is ministry, then 2 Corinthians 4 explodes with new meaning. Let me again use J.B. Phillips' translation here: "This is the ministry... which God in

His mercy has given us, and nothing can daunt us. We use no hocus-pocus, no clever tricks, no dishonest manipulations of the word of God. We speak the plain truth and so commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. If our gospel is 'veiled', the veil must be in the minds of those who are spiritually dying. The spirit of this world has blinded the minds of those who do not believe, and prevents the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, the image of God, from shining on them. For it is Christ Jesus as Lord whom we preach, not ourselves. We are your servants for His sake. God, who first ordered light to shine in darkness has flooded our hearts with His light. We now can enlighten men only because we can give them knowledge of the glory of, as we see it in the face of Jesus Christ"(vv. 1-6).

In this chapter there are three principles that are essential in all spiritual ministry: The first is *honesty*, or *openness*. The mirror's finest quality is perfect reflection. Clear! With no flaws! What God is after in our lives, first of all, is a basic honesty, a frankness, an openness. If ministry does not spring out of, and result in, openness, honesty, and frankness, it never can really lead us to the full purpose of God in our reflecting adequately the image of God. Consequently, every ministry must be an expression of honesty and openness, so that when God turns the mirror in any direction, the only reflection is God in the man. The Lord moves me to Argentina, or moves me to Africa; but the primary thing He is interested in is that wherever He puts me, the reflection is Himself in me.

Now any veneer—any front that I put up will hinder that reflection of the image of God. Professionalism will hinder it. Anything that I add to the reflection of God will hinder that reflection of God. Ministry must involve no clever tricks. As Paul says, "no hocus-pocus." There must be no dishonest manipulation of the Word of God. Paul could say, "I am what I am by the grace of God." He never would say, "I am what I am by the training of Gamaliel." Or, "I am what I am because I have prestige." Paul summed up all that which he was by natural heritage and said. "I count the whole thing a heap of garbage. I'm just plain Paul, by the grace of God" [Phil 3:8].

You couldn't see anything in Paul's life that wasn't either the recipient of, or the expression of, the grace of God. We've painted him up, added robes,

made him wonderful and well-trained; but you never can bring Paul to the confession of anything other than the grace of God. He's just frank and open.

I'm convinced more and more that one of the surest signs that God is working in us is that He is pressing us to be completely honest! All the professionalism has to go. Sometimes when we pray we're not quite honest. We pray with the intent that another will be impressed and recognize that we really know how to pray. We display our activities that So and So will receive some impression which we inwardly know is not quite true. We want him to get the best picture—to see the good side of us. So we've got a good side and a bad side. The only one who sees the bad side is our wife or husband, and sometimes the children! We surely wouldn't want anybody else in the church to see that dark side.

You know what happens when God breaks us down to complete honesty? First of all, it is a terribly embarrassing thing when others begin to find out that we are not really what we have pretended to be.

When the Lord begins to do this deep unveiling in one, and then another, and finally several together, it often seems to be the breakdown of everything. But, eventually, you come to realize that it is the beginning of everything. You can't go forward with God until there is this frankness, this openness, transparency and honesty. So God must break you down until you are willing to be utterly exposed.

The Lord wants to get me exposed until I am willing that you know exactly how I act on the job, how I act behind the closed walls of my home, how I act under pressure with my children—because, it is the same way I act in the church. Finally I realize I am to get off "my little stage" and quit acting. Every hour of every day in every place there must be a transparent seeing of "me."

You know, if this should really happen in the churches in this land today, most of them would fall to pieces. What a shock we would get—and what a shock we would be to others around us. For example, here is someone whom the church considers to be the most agreeable person around. Outsiders do not know what goes on at home, but his children do and his wife does. Many seem to question why his wife and children do not draw closer to the Lord. Why do they seem so cool and unresponsive to spiritual things? The reason is quite

obvious when you get beyond the outer veneer. They have seen through the sham—the unreality. Wife and children are unmoved because father has not been inwardly moved—to live in real honesty. So God must devote His time to stripping away all our pious superficiality. He must get us down where we're just plain Joe —without any glossy varnish; just plain Mary—without any bright, artificial makeup.

Perhaps you have been impressed by your winsome preacher—his effectiveness in the meeting, but wonder at his complete failure as a husband or father. You see him as seemingly responsible in the pulpit, but everybody knows he doesn't handle responsibility well at home or on the job. Or—maybe nobody knows about these failures, yet inwardly he does; and he secretly despises this sham and hypocrisy. For all of this God has just one answer: complete exposure!

This complete honesty—so imperative in spiritual ministry—is not something you have on Sunday. It's not something you have just in the prayer closet. It is not something outward, for God requires "truth in the inward parts." Once you begin to walk in complete honesty, you find out what a necessary and beautiful thing it really is. And what a relief not to have robes to wear around all day! The farce is gone; you are living an open life—transparent before others all the day long. No longer are you afraid to be unveiled—for now you have nothing to hide or cover.

Again and again in the meetings in Santa Fe, Argentina we've prayed: "Lord, take away all pretension; just let us be unpretentious." Often it takes a pretty long while to work all that pattern of deception, strategy, maneuvering and artificiality out of us. But the Lord is working Why? So He can see Himself!

And now let us consider the second essential in spiritual ministry. Verse seven speaks of this priceless Treasure we hold, so to speak, in a common earthen jar. What a shock to our ego. We are just a common clay pot, not even a pretty earthenware jar. Surely not an antique! But look at what we have in this clay pot—a priceless Treasure: *the Lord Jesus, Himself*.

Oh, this is something! Think! We have Him—this priceless Treasure in a common earthenware jar. And the reason becomes so clear: we are to show that the splendid power within (the jar) belongs to God; it is not of us.

Paul explains: "We are handicapped on all sides, but we are never frustrated" [v.8]. Yes, if there is anything that frustrates people, it is handicaps. Listen—as the talk often goes something like this: Well, you know Sister So and So. She's just wonderful; but me, I've got three children. What can I do? I'm so handicapped. They just drag me—wear me to a frazzle! It's more than I can handle. And so the handicaps seem to eclipse all else—and the little clay pot forgets about the Treasure within.

Again, it is so natural for another to reason: Sure, after all Brother So and So hasn't anything to do but preach, sleep and eat. But poor me! I've got to work ten hours a day. I have reason to be downcast and frustrated. If I could just move into some different circumstances—like his—I'd be spiritual too.

But now listen to Paul's words: "We are troubled on all sides..." He was encompassed in pressure, difficulty, persecution and misunderstanding. But don't stop! Paul also adds, "We're never frustrated." What was his secret? Simply this! Paul had come to realize that you can't expect anything more from a clay pot than handicaps—so quit stewing—quit worrying!

"But if I just had a pretty pot to put that Treasure in," another has confided. "If I could just put it out in a nice vase like her—or him. Now that sister over there...she has charm, a magnetic personality that draws. That brother over there has polish, training, influence, contacts. But me, plain Joe—what can I do? How can I ever serve God? You see, my very commonness haunts me. This is why I'm frustrated and about to faint."

Now, Paul surely knew he was nothing more than a clay pot, so he testifies for all generations to come: "I don't expect anything more than handicaps, so this doesn't overwhelm me. I'm not frustrated. I can never expect to be any different than a clay pot, but I've discovered that the only thing of any value is not the clay pot; it is the Treasure within. That Treasure is lovely—beautiful—worthwhile."

You see, if you are only occupied with the clay pot, you're always going to be under a cloud. If you only gaze at your handicaps you will always live in the shadows of gloom and despair. This doesn't mean that you deny you have any. You admit you have them, but manifest to others that you are not overwhelmed because your preoccupation is with the Treasure within.

Paul continues: "We're puzzled, but never in despair"[v.8] Have you ever been utterly puzzled? You groaned. Oh, if there weren't so many things impossible to understand. I could surely walk with God.

And others around you are filled with the same bewilderment. One testifies: "I was walking along all right with the Lord, and bang! It happened! I could only cry out, "Where is God? What's going on?"

One of the interesting things about the Christian life is this constant pathway of paradoxes and seeming contradictions. First there is clear revelation of the Lord, and then there follows shadows and darkness. The Lord is so clear on one point, and (seemingly) so vague on another.

A few years back I thought that the epitome of the Christian life, the highest peak that you could reach, was to have all your puzzles solved. I assumed that the flooding in of His light would mean answer for every situation. I would never need to say again. "I don't know." But I have never in all my life been forced to admit, I don't know, so often as in the last few months since the Lord has been so very real and precious. Things may change down the road, and I'll see much more clearly. But I'm at rest. In this pathway I don't get all my puzzles solved, but that no longer throws me into despair.

Perhaps you have, at times, sighed, "How-dear Lord- can You ever do anything in me? My clay is so set, so unmoldable, so brittle and unresponsive." Well, remember that is the Lord's choice and His business. When the Lord began to deal with me, He knew what He was getting—just a clay pot.

My problem was that I thought He was getting something much better. I thought He was getting a polished fellow—you know, one who knew music, knew people, could speak well and influence others; well, that's what I thought. Yet, all these years the Lord has been concentrating on one thing: breaking me down to help me realize He didn't get *anything but a clay pot*. He's never been deceived; *I've* been deceived. Now the truth comes out; things are crystal clear, and there's no anxiety connected with my future.

But let us go on as Paul continues: "We're persecuted, but we never have to stand alone." It is the loneliness that makes a person feel dark when his friends and family turn against him. You feel that people just don't understand how much you're trying to walk with God. If they did they wouldn't persecute

or seek to destroy you. Yet, once again, this only helps you realize that you're not standing alone—He is standing in you.

When I first went to Argentina, I suffered several knock-downs. I argued, "Well, what's the use! Might as well throw in the towel; just as well quit." But something in me whispered, "You can quit." I read Paul's words: "We may be knocked down, but we are never knocked out." But so far as you're concerned—you have been knocked out —knocked way out of the ring. You have completely exhausted all strength; there is no fight left. Yes, in spite of all that has been written—and all you've known and stood for, this is the hour. You're down—down for good. Brother, Sister, until you get to this place in your ministry, you can't really serve God. You'll never see anything last because it has always been your own energy, your own strength and promotion—but really nothing of Him.

And then something so very strange seems to happen. You can't explain it, but somehow you seem to be rising up. The Lord is raising you up out of death. Suddenly, all things become new; a whole new world dawns around you! Once you wanted God to come over and walk *with* you. Now you've discovered you are walking, but He is walking *in* you.

So every day the little clay pot is experiencing something of death working through its being, but that is simply to allow the power of His life to be released. Paul insists: "We who are living are always—(daily)—being exposed to death for Jesus' sake!" [2 Cor. 4:11]. Oh, that is so hard to take. We want a once-for-all blow of death, but not a thousand deaths—every day along the way. We are always wanting to get around where there is some joy, some peace and blessing.

How often we have announced: "Oh, if I could just get over there! If I could just go to that Bible conference; if I could just get into that Bible school. Surely, I'd have victory over there! Then I'd be able to experience the joy, the glory and the victory of walking with God unhindered."

God insists. You must stay put in that kitchen. You just keep changing those diapers. You keep on driving that old car. You stay right there in that shop.

"But Lord! I just die a thousand deaths" And He answers that it is all a necessary part of your training. There are no shortcuts; it is a continuous

exposure to death. It is only out of such circumstances that you really discover what HIS LIFE really is. This is His way—the way He has chosen to work in you. If everything were sweet and wonderful all the time, you'd never know what overcoming is. Even as the Lord Jesus overcame—so you must overcome. It is the only means by which you can know more and more of His life flowing through you.

Beloved, I want to alert you to something: whenever you see a channel that God is using to bring life to others, you mark it down, that channel is experiencing death after death! Death works in you—but life in others [2 Cor. 4:11].

Now apply this to yourself! You've been wanting your sons, your daughters, your friends, your relatives and your contacts to know *this life*. Yet, continually you've been dodging this way of helping them into Life. You've been dodging these difficult things everytime they confronted you. The pattern is almost set—your dodging, escaping, running. And you wonder why they aren't touched. The Lord is not getting to you. If the Lord ever really gets to you. He'll get to them—through you.

We have thus far considered how the first essential was a frankness, an openness, an honesty. Secondly, we have seen how the working of death means humiliation and breaking. Thirdly, we come to see how to experience the supply of grace.

You know, this thought came to me the other day. Where does God give the grace? I suddenly realized that grace is not for the Treasure within. The supply of grace is for the clay pot. The Treasure doesn't need the grace. It's you—the little clay pot—you need that supply of grace. And the more grace God can give, the more thanksgiving rebounds to Him.

This is why Paul tells the Corinthians: "I want you to see what a benefit this is bringing to you, while I'm getting more grace too. But also more thanksgiving is rising to the Lord as I'm drawing more upon His life. Oh, it is so wonderful! These trials don't seem to bother me. Sure! I'm having a terrible time, but I'm getting to experience more grace all the time."

You know the Lord has said, "As thy day demands, so shall thy strength ever be." The interesting thing is that beforehand, He doesn't tell you, "Now,

watch out because tomorrow at this time you're going to get some terrible news. But that's all right—don't be alarmed; I'm going to give you sufficient grace." He never tells you that; The news comes as a surprise. It shocks you down to your feet. And as you are about to collapse you sense the Lord's presence and undergirding. A full flow of His grace begins to move in.

You see, you'd never have known, never have experienced His grace if everything were smooth. Learn to stand still; don't run or turn aside out of His way. The Lord is simply dealing with you, training you, repairing you, bringing out the reflection of Himself through your little clay pot.

Have you said it to yourself? Oh, if I could just can up enough grace to last me through this whole week. If I had just enough to make sure I could make it to the end of this trying week! Well, you see, you couldn't handle that any more than you could handle the food for seven days at one meal. I've often thought of of a fellow coming in and telling his wife. "Honey, fix me enough food for seven days. I haven't got time to eat the rest of this week." Oh—you say—that's ridiculous, but it's just as ridiculous to come to the meeting of the saints on Sunday and say, "I've sure got to get a touch from God; I've got to get enough to last me a whole week. I just haven't enough time to seek God each day. I haven't time to draw upon His supply through the hours ahead—I must store it up." Foolishness! How ridiculous! His supply of grace flows just moment by moment. The supply is always at the *reservoir*—not in you. This grace—which is His presence—can only be experienced moment by moment as each situation arises. That keeps you wholly dependent upon Him.

If you could can it up for a week. pretty soon you'd want to can it up for a month. If you could can it for a month, then you'd want a reserve supply for a year ahead; and pretty soon you'd be wholly on your own. What need would you have of God?

Well, the Lord isn't going to give enough for a year ahead. You'll never get God in one big experience. You'll never get God in ten easy lessons. He'll come to be your resource day by day and moment by moment. As He works into your life through trials, He dispenses Himself as grace. It is no wonder these lovely verses by Annie Johnson Flint have become a favorite melody of so many:

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase.
To added affliction He addeth His mercy,
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.
When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed 'ere the day is half done:
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,
Our Father's full giving, Is only begun.

The testimony of every servant of God echos the same message. With every divine charge God gives sufficient grace for carrying out what He has committed. You remember in the wilderness journey how God gave Moses a great responsibility, but He also gave a commensurate measure of grace for it. In due time when that responsibility was divided among seventy men, Moses didn't need all that measure of grace, so the Scriptures explain that God took of the Spirit that was upon Moses and distributed that measure on the seventy who were to rule. How clearly you see God's transferring that grace to wherever the responsibility is. Let this be your inner confidence: when God sets a task for you to accomplish, He so works that, though you may go through insurmountable obstacles and trials. He will always be there to measure out sufficient grace. But we had better be sure we have accepted the task from Him, not given birth to some fanciful project of our own.

There is a reason Paul reminds us, "we are never to collapse." Many a better man than Paul has collapsed under lesser trials. Many have come home from the mission field to go to the mental institution. The other day I read where a Christian psychiatrist said, "One out of eight North Americans spend some time of their life in a mental institution." One out of eight; evidently plenty of these are Christians. Why are they collapsing? The Treasure can't collapse. That old clay pot has collapsed. Why? They have not drawn from the resources of His grace.

The outward man does indeed suffer wear and tear. But every day the inner man receives fresh strength. If you'll quit hoping for anything better for

the outward man, you'll be a lot more settled. As the inner man gets stronger and stronger he supports this outer man. This is where a "divine seeing" is so imperative. If we have "seen" this available reservoir of His Life within our little clay pot, we have a hope which springs eternal.

Shall we pray. We thank You for allowing us to see ourselves as we should see. Father, we do come to a new measure of rest in recognizing this little clay pot is merely to allow Your glorious Treasure to be expressed. Help us never again to be so occupied with the little pot when the Treasure alone is worthy of our attention. In Jesus' Name. Amen!

CHAPTER 4

How Can a Stone Become Valuable to God?

“Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.' And he was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!'”
Genesis 28:16,17

IT HAS DAWNED upon me after these years of longing and striving to plant and establish the local church, that it is something only God can do. I am no more a church-planter or builder than you are. The Lord is the only One who can really establish anything. It is true that each one of us is given a particular and distinctive calling, but in the final analysis the only worthwhile energy that can be expended with any spiritual effectiveness is that which the Holy Spirit works in us. Unless my work is *wrought in the Lord*, it has no spiritual value.

Paul would have us know, first of all, that anything that is a spiritual work must be done *in the Lord*. He uses this phrase on other occasions, but Ephesians 2:22 gives us some important information concerning the house of God, and how He will accomplish His purpose. It is along this line that I want to speak to you. Paul writes: "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." First we must catch the significance of the phrase, "in whom." Paul is insisting that we are being built together "in the Lord." He is not adding us *to the Lord*; He is building *us in the Lord* —together. When we were saved, we were in a sense added to the Lord. However he is here dealing with those who have already come to know the Lord. What has been God's objective? What has He been doing since they were saved? Just this: He has been building them together *in the Lord*.

This building together is a very important thing; in fact, the most important thing in God's mind. All of us rejoice in the consciousness of God's personal dealings in our lives, individually; but sometimes our rejoicing is not quite so enthusiastic when the Lord is working to build us together. Recently someone wrote in a quarterly magazine: "Some people think that hell is other people!" It is true that many imagine if we just didn't have to have other people around, we'd get along all right. If it were just me and the Lord, we wouldn't have any trouble; but it is always me and the Lord and that other fellow. When shall we realize that the Lord's purpose not only includes us, but others as well? He is always working on us through others, and on others through us, and in it all His purpose is building us together in Himself.

Paul is very conscious of this—in fact he is so conscious of it that he realizes no matter how much he goes through, how much he experiences, it is not always for his own personal blessing. It may be because the Lord is accomplishing something in the rest of His people. Alas, there are some people who are so blessing-centered that they always interpret God's working in terms of themselves, in terms of personal increase and personal blessing. They question: What does it mean to me? What do I get out of it? If I don't get anything out of it, I'm not interested. Unfortunately, the Christian church has been too long motivated by such a selfish motive: "What's in it for me?" Yet the Lord would have us to know that all this while He is seeking to build us together in Himself.

The glorious purpose which overshadows all else is that the Lord is after *a place where He can live*. Those of us who have purchased homes and then have seen them go up, or who have bought homes while they were being built, can better appreciate this. I remember when, not too long after we were married, my wife and I were looking for a home to buy. We found one we liked. It only had the framework up at the time, but we went ahead and closed the deal. I remember how we would go out there day after day and anxiously watch the structure as it went up—waiting for that hour when we could move into it, a brand new place, all our own (well, ours and the finance company's). But the point was that it was a place where we were going to live. It was a place that we were going to move into, and all of our joy and our anticipation was projected

to that hour when we could move in and say: "Now, this is our home—where we live!" I recall the delight that we had in being able to write down our address—this is our home.

The Lord is after something along this line, a home where He can live, a place where He can say, "This is mine; I live here." Maybe this terminology seems a little bit irreverent, but I think we will do well to couch things in terms that we all understand. Then we can really appreciate what the Lord is after. We can realize what will greatly delight His heart. We can see how the Lord is after something that will fill Him with joyful as anticipation. Surely the Lord is after something that He has determined to accomplish—a place of which He can say, "This is mine. This belongs to me. I live here." I know this almost seems to oversimplify God's great purpose, yet it is just that simple! He is after a habitation, a place in which to live and express Himself. This temple is not primarily for you and me. No, we are being built *together* so that God may have a corporate temple in which to live. To appreciate this is to appreciate how uniquely we are designed so this may be gloriously possible.

I think we are sure to misunderstand the full import of that which the Lord is doing, as long as we consider *the house of God* in selfish terms—such as, "What is there in it for me?" I am sure that a great many people, including myself, have made a real mistake in trying to find the right kind of a church where they will be happy, where they can settle down, where they can enjoy fellowship. That may be all right in a certain sense, but it never touches the heart of the issue. Such an attitude never really allows one to live for what the Lord has purposed. Just as surely as we are interested in something that He can delight in, not merely what we can delight in, we begin to live in a whole new perspective. Suddenly it will not really matter how much pain we go through, how much trying adjustment we must experience, just so long as the Lord is delighted and His glorious end is accomplished.

Now we must move one step further. This habitation for God is in our spirit. This means that all God's dwelling in us is spiritual—through the Spirit. It has nothing to do with bricks and stones; it has nothing to do with wood, clay and mortar. God's dwelling is through the Spirit, and we will do well to keep this very much in mind. We are so prone to consider material things, to con-

sider things that we can see with the natural eye. We consider statistics or whatever we can see, and calculate such as growth—yet they may not have any real spiritual content. How important for us to evaluate things spiritually.

There are those times when work on the surface of things appears most unsuccessful, yet the Lord is doing a deep, eternal work through the Spirit and eternity alone will reveal its true worth. Now going to the other side, we see there are those endeavors or projects which seem most promising, those things which our natural eye would evaluate as "something really great for God." We could even participate in such with great anticipation if we did not know it is a thing with the least spiritual content in God's evaluation.

How necessary it is to be cognizant of the simple principles of God's way of working. Let's read the verse again: "In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." We are beginning to see what the Lord is really after, that is, what kind of a house He is building. Some time ago when I was meditating about this, it came to my mind that there is a good hermeneutical rule in Bible study: If you want to understand the Scriptures, go back to the place of first reference—that place in the Bible where the subject or thing is mentioned the first time. So I did that. I went back to Genesis 28 to find the first mention of the house of God, and I think it would be very instructive for us to consider how this law of first mention unveils a vital truth.

Here is an incident with which most of you are quite familiar. In Genesis 28:10-19 Jacob is running from home, fearful of the revenge of his brother Esau. Just prior to these verses Jacob has been involved in some of his mother's conniving to deceive his father concerning his identity, thereby hoping to beat Esau out of the birthright blessing. You recall that the Hebrew custom was to give the major part of the father's inheritance to the older of the sons. In this case, Jacob and Esau were twins, but Esau was born a little while before Jacob, so actually Esau was the older,

Just before the birth of these two children, Rebecca, the mother, was experiencing considerable difficulty with these sons in her womb. Out of desperation she sought the Lord and He told her that the elder would serve the younger; Esau would serve Jacob. We must recognize something of divine providence here. The really important thing to note is that as the years went by

Rebecca recalled God's word quite well. She remembered that the Lord has determined to bless Jacob and not Esau. So when her husband, Isaac, was old and blind she felt it was necessary to help the Lord before her husband died! She knew Isaac's favorite was Esau and that he would bless the elder according to the Hebrew custom. One day Isaac commanded Esau to go out and kill a wild animal, to bring in the prepared meat; then he would bless him. Rebecca overheard the conversation and determined that she must quickly take matters into her own hands. Accordingly, she called Jacob in and persuaded him that he should go before his father, pretending to be Esau. Jacob was fearful, but she insisted, I'll take the responsibility for anything that may backfire. She prepared some meat and put the wool of a beast upon Jacob's arms because Esau was a hairy man and Jacob was not.

Now you recall that Isaac detected a difference in the voice when Jacob went in to his father, but Jacob swore that he was really Esau. So his father laid his hands upon him and blessed him. Jacob went out, and in a very short time Esau returned to his father with savory meat. What a blow it was when Isaac told him that he had already eaten and had already blessed one who came in before him! Esau knew immediately that his brother had stolen the blessing, but he also sought for a blessing. Then Isaac said, "Thy brother came with subtlety, and hath taken away thy blessing." Esau wept, saying, "Is he not rightly named Jacob for he hath supplanted me these two times?" Esau determined right then that he was going to get his brother's blood. What followed was a situation which was anything but delightful in the home; Jacob had to run for his life.

Now, I want you to analyze the character of these four people involved. The father should have known better than to try to bless one whom God had not blessed, but he is determined that his blessing shall be upon his favorite. Isaac is moving outside of God's will. He pictures one whose mind is not in harmony with God's larger purpose. Rebecca is determined to take things into her own hands because they are going forward at too rapid a pace contrary to her hopes. So she resorts to conniving and deception to get things done as she thinks they ought to be done. Her chief interest is not the promise of God; rather it is her selfish interest in promoting her favorite son, Jacob. Esau is a

man who is concerned little about the things of the Lord; he is alive only to things as they relate to him: you know, live and let live—do things as you like; eat, drink and be merry. Such is basically Esau's philosophy of life. Now Jacob is not much better off. Contrary to popular opinion, Jacob was not really after the things of the Lord. Jacob was quite guilty of deception and lying; really, he wasn't after any *spiritual* inheritance. As the story develops it becomes quite evident that all he was after was his father's cattle, lands and material property.

We are sure that Jacob assumed if he could just get his father's blessing, then all would be well. But we see the result of such a human manipulation. We further see the tragedy when a father and mother are not agreed in God's purpose but each is pursuing his private and selfish interests.

As we get to the main lesson, we find Jacob running from home, running as far and as fast as his legs will carry him. When finally night overtakes him, can you not see him out in the desert wilderness far away from all that he has known? He has left all that is familiar.

In those days it was customary for each people to have their own tribal god. With Abraham and Isaac, however, their God, Jehovah, was something quite different. Yet the question is this—how different was Jehovah in Jacob's mind? Was He merely like the other tribal gods? Had Jehovah stayed with his father Isaac? It is quite likely this is what overshadowed Jacob's thinking as he was running from his home and brother.

Now at last we come to the first mention of the *house of God*. When Jacob lay down that night in the wilderness it was a stone he found to put his head upon. I can imagine he had a very fitful night's sleep. Sometime during the night he had a dream. In this dream Jacob saw a most unusual thing. He saw a ladder that stretched all the way from heaven down to that stone where his head was lying. As he beheld it, he saw the Lord at the upper end and Jacob at the lower end. There wasn't just a ladder; there were angels going up and down that ladder continually. Here was an activity that Jacob could not understand, neither could he do anything about it. He didn't initiate it, and he couldn't stop it. It was God's activity, and it frightened him.

When the Lord spoke to him from the top of the ladder He said, in effect, "Jacob, you're running like a mad man; you're scared. You're doing all kinds of

things to get your own way—to get ahead. I want to tell you that what you are conniving to get, I'm going to give to you. I have a determined purpose for your life. You can't enter into it yet because you're still doing things in your own way; but Jacob, I have determined to bless and use you. I have determined to bless you with lands and houses and people as far as you can move—to the north, south, east and west. I am with you and I am going to do this thing. I am always with you." We are sure this was the first time Jacob had any knowledge of his personal place in God's purpose. Up to this time it had always seemed to him that Jehovah was the God of Isaac, and the God of Abraham—but surely not the God of Jacob. What a crisis! Now He is also the God of Jacob!

When he awoke out of his sleep, Jacob announced: "Why, this is a dreadful place. The Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." Now he could say: "This is the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Then he went back to sleep and early in the morning he took that stone where the bottom of that ladder had stood, and poured oil on it. Then he called that stone something very significant. He said, "This is Bethel. This is the house of God." What is? *The stone with the oil on it!*

This is something quite important, something we should keep in mind. Jacob didn't point to the top of the ladder where God was and say, "There is the house of God." He pointed to that stone, announcing: "This is the house of God." What a significant lesson this is for us. From that time on, Jehovah God, the God of Abraham and Isaac—Who, so it seemed to him, had always been in the heavens—was now the God of Jacob—a God Who was right here within him. I want to emphasize that this is basically the problem of many Christians. To them, it seems. God is up there! God is out there! Or, God is over there! Beloved, until you sense that God is here (within you), you will not have any kind of effective walk with the Lord. You can't! As long as God is way off in the heavens, He is not present in His sufficiency.

Now, let's see what Jacob did. I am not even sure in my own mind that Jacob was then aware of all the implications. It is true that he spoke prophetically. I think it was just beginning to dawn upon him—the thing which God had in mind. But regardless of whether he knew or not, the Scriptures are true;

and that which he spoke was under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. Jacob was suddenly realizing: "This is the house of God"—this stone with oil on it.

What Jacob is saying in effect is—and we'll show you in the Scriptures how it is borne out—I am that stone. God is the oil, and God has become one with the stone. As the oil has become one with the stone so God has become one with Jacob. God is no longer distant. The oil is no longer over there, and the stone over here; God is now here on this stone; I am the stone.

It would seem Jacob was beginning to grasp, even if prophetically, for the first time that God is not distant from him. All that God had purposed for him must intimately and ultimately involve God *with* Jacob. Jacob can no longer consider himself separately. Nor can he ever again speak objectively about the God of Abraham; it henceforth must also be the God of Jacob. This is far more than a mere confirming to him of the covenant made with the Fathers. That was involved, but it remains too objective—too outward. Now, God is involving Himself with Jacob. The oil on the stone is something very subjective. This explains all anew what this house of God really means. Thus Jacob is saying: "God is here; I didn't know that. What a strange yet wonderful thing!"

Alas, when the fact of this truth begins to dawn upon our hearts and become operative in our lives, it will mean a tremendous transformation. As living stones we begin to see this because God has wholly involved Himself with us. When He has come to make this living stone all that it was intended to be, the oil is on the stone. Then we are as *Bethel*—the house of God!

The chemists tell us that the elements in our body are worth about one dollar. So our material worth is pretty insignificant. Apart from God, fallen man is a psychological wreck. Socially his problems mount as time goes on. So you see, as mere stones, we are worthless. We are like a can without contents, like a glove without a hand, like a car without a driver. And it is no wonder! For we were made and uniquely designed for Someone to possess and use as His vehicle for expression. We were made to be filled with God.

The marvel in God's designing of us is that we are more than a glove, though that might describe our physical being. We are also constituted with mind, emotions and will which we call the functions of the soul. Thus, by our glad-hearted cooperation God can express Himself through these parts of the

soul. Then there is that inner-most room called the human spirit, which is designed as the dwelling place for God's SPIRIT. You can see why we repeat so emphatically that it was God's original intention to live in man and become his very life. Our spirit, soul and body are designed to allow His full expression. How wrong to assume that Christ's coming to indwell is only because man fell into sin. No, this indwelling has always been in God's eternal purpose and has never been changed by sin or the Fall.

Thus, that first great choice which confronted Adam in the garden takes on new significance. Adam stood at a crossroads, so to speak. He must choose either to live by one tree or another. As a uniquely designed vessel he could choose either to live by the life of God, or live by independent knowledge. We understand now that God had just one intention for Adam and his posterity. God wanted to be the source of Adam's life, and I do want you to grasp all that means. With God as the very Center and Source of life, Adam could announce with the Psalmist: "All my springs are in Thee." and further, "All my works are in Thee."

We know all too well that when Adam chose to live by the "tree of knowledge" instead of the "tree of life" that he was choosing an independent way. Henceforth, man would determine what was right and wrong according to his own knowledge. Yes, by partaking of this tree of knowledge he becomes a god in his own right. But there was a real problem with this pseudo-freedom which he thought he wanted. Though fallen man endeavors to choose the right, he finds he is a slave to the wrong. More and more his pathway leads down, down, down; it is because he is merely a stone without God.

Perhaps it will help us to use this simple diagram in explaining how God intends to live within our being and express Himself through our personality. In the outer circle we have man's physical body. It is by certain senses built into the body that man contacts the world around him. He can see, hear, smell, feel and taste. Now the body is motivated by certain biological drives such as hunger, breathing, etc. When man becomes overmastered by these biological drives he is not a spiritual individual, nor is he able to serve God as he ought. Fallen man has become so dominated in his physical being that the physical world controls and rules him.

Next, in the second circle we have man's soul: the mind, emotions and will, which make up his personality. It is in this realm that we usually meet another man, for we contact him in his mind, in his feelings or in the strength of his will. As we have said, it is in the area of the human soul that God designs to express His own thoughts, love and will through man.

Then in the innermost circle we have the human spirit. Man's spirit which was designed as the dwelling place for the Holy Spirit is really quite empty until God, by His Spirit, comes in. It is from this innermost room, the spirit, that God intends to direct our whole being—thus expressing Himself from within to without.

Having said this, we can begin to appreciate just how God, from the beginning, has been working toward the increase of Himself in the universe. God, by His Spirit, stands ready to enter every "little stone" and make it the house of God. Surely this is what was open to Adam in the Garden—if he had taken of the "tree of life." Even now, Christ as that tree becomes the obvious means of entering into spiritual reality—man takes God into His own spirit and the two become "one Spirit."

So the issue with Adam is the same today with us: will we act independently as Adam did, or take the way of dependence upon God? We can imagine Adam pondering the choice: I've got to have knowledge so I will be able to decide. After all, I just can't live in the world and never know what's going on. This business of always being dependent on God and having to keep momentarily in touch with Him before I ever move or get anything, is just too much. What I need is knowledge so I can act on my own.

Since that first hour in the Garden, there have always been two ways open to man: the way of soul-development and the way of spirit-development. Is man going to become something on his own that will enable him to operate apart from God? Or, will he become subject in all things to God—thus sharing moment by moment from Him as the Source of his life. Well, of course we know the choice which Adam made. He determined to partake of the tree of knowledge, for by the fruit of that tree he could decide what was right and what was wrong.

If man is going to live independently of God such a choice is an absolute essential. How clearly we see this way of soul-development has wrought an over development of the soul powers but a shriveling and virtual disregard of the spirit. As pictured, the human soul becomes the source of all independent action; and the spirit is virtually inert. We look throughout the world today and see this in evidence everywhere. Men are intellectual giants, i.e. over developed in their independent use of the mind. Men have become playthings of their over developed emotions. Men have become strong-willed and dominant in their own way, therefore they cannot fit into the plans and ways of others. This is what we mean by the over developed soul.

However, in the second illustration we see that proper spirit-development which God intended. When the Holy Spirit comes into the human spirit and takes up the center of life there is to be a working out through the mind, emotions and will. Only then does the soul become the vessel which the spirit uses. Instead of the soul functioning independently it becomes the tool of the spirit.

At this point we must be very clear. There is so much confusion, even in our evangelical circles! The way that God purposed for man's spirit-development was by partaking of His Spirit, but also in denying himself the right to choose anything for himself—either good or evil. It is strange that we have so long considered the tree of knowledge as something bad, evil or wretched. On the contrary, this tree usually appears as something good, necessary and important to our natural development. Through the centuries blinded religious men have been partaking of the good—even the religious things so that they might be able to live better, yet independent of God. So we see the crux of the matter: Was Adam going to take something good that he might be independent, or would he refuse even the good that he might be wholly dependent upon God for all things?

What a tragic hour it was when Adam yielded to the glitter of this tree of knowledge. It looked so good, so necessary—(and it was) to his own soul-development. But in partaking of this tree a he was actually cutting himself off from the tree of life. Thus the account says that "he died." That is, as the word *died* implies, he was separated or alienated from that life of God which he

should have received into his spirit. The stone which should have become a lighthouse became darkened; the stone which could have enjoyed the oil as its continuous supply is no longer capable of having any contact with God.

So another Stone becomes absolutely necessary. This is the Stone which the builders rejected, yet It has now become the Headstone of the corner of God's new creation. It is the same Stone which Zechariah saw coming out of the mountain and cried, "Grace, Grace." The one thing which you cannot miss is that every time this Stone is pictured through all the Scriptures It maintains a most unique relationship with God.

It is true He was much like all the other stones around Him, and He never tried to display any unusual ability. He never earned any letters or sought any distinction. Yet when they heard Him, there was something about Him that was different from all the rest. They questioned: "Where is it that this man learned such things? How is it that He has all this wisdom?" Surely it is more than mere words when He insisted: "The words that I speak are not my own. I can do nothing of myself, for I am just a stone. I reckon everything as from my Father. At all times all my springs are in Him. He is the source of my life." Indeed, men had caught the difference. God was completely possessing this *stone* and expressing Himself unrestrictedly through it.

Finally, we need only look at the twelve living stones which were closest to our Lord Jesus. What can He possibly do with these twelve disciples—each expressing such individualism, such self-assertiveness and such unresponsiveness to God? How can our Lord possibly make these irregular, odd-shaped and unmoldable stones to fit into a corporate temple for God's abode? Can you not hear the Lord saying, "Give me time and I will work myself into them and they will become expressive of God. You may see all their wrangling and fussing, their griping and complaining now; but there is a secret by which I can make them fit and work together: each must learn the shattering of his own independent soul-powers and must allow the Spirit working from within to control and govern the soul much as the hand would use the glove."

Whether or not Peter or any of the others then understood what our Lord was working toward we cannot know. But we can let Peter speak for himself at a later date. In his first epistle, Peter declares that we, "as living stones come

unto Christ...and are thus built up a spiritual house." As we have said in the beginning, God is building us as living stones "in the Lord." But until there has been a very personal apprehension of His fashioning and building work, we will hardly appreciate why it is so important for the oil to completely penetrate the stone. Nor will we grasp His intention: "On this principle, the principle of divine life in human personality, I'll build."

Thus we have seen the amazing intention of God is to design man in such a way that He can fully work Himself into and fully express Himself through man.

Shall we pray. "Our Father, we are more and more held in awe as we behold the glorious end You have in view. To think that You have sought a dwelling place in earthen vessels—a place where You can rest and be satisfied. We are overjoyed with expectancy in all this means. But we are also beginning to realize what is involved in allowing You to shape us as lively stones that we might function in a corporate way. Too long we have been much like the twelve disciples: our individualism has rubbed like jagged points against other stones and we just couldn't seem to fit anywhere. Our ambitions, plans and desires have so largely overshadowed our service. Yet our confidence is not in ourselves, but in You. We know You have heard our prayer and will help us to fit and function as proper stones in that glorious corporate temple You are building for Your own eternal habitation. In Jesus' name. Amen!

About the Author

Orville Swindoll and his wife Erma Jean, following a brief term in Mexico as missionaries in 1957, went to Argentina in 1959 with two pre-school daughters. A third daughter was born to them in Argentina in 1961, and then a son was born in the USA during a visit in 1964. They continued to serve the Lord in Argentina until April, 1991, when they moved to Miami, Florida as a strategic base to serve Latin American Christian groups in various countries in both Central and South America.

Following a year and a half of ministry with a church in Resistencia, Chaco, they began a Christian church and a book store in the city of Santa Fe, Argentina in 1961, leaving them with other workers in 1967 upon the occasion of their move to Buenos Aires in response to an invitation from pastors who requested that they accompany them in a burgeoning spiritual awakening that had just begun among the churches. In 1968 Orville began a new congregation in the northern suburbs of Buenos Aires with four or five families who had begun experiencing spiritual renewal. That congregation has since grown to some 2000 people, meeting in four different areas in the northern suburbs on Sundays and in scores of smaller home groups. Some ten pastors are presently serving the community full-time.

Orville is the author of eight books in Spanish and three in English, plus a number of articles published in magazines. Over the years he has edited two different Spanish-language magazines for Christians with a circulation in most of the Spanish-speaking countries: *Vision Celestial* (Heavenly Vision) between 1964 and 1967, and *Encuentro en Cristo* (Encounter with Christ) between 1986 and 1989. He and several colleagues began the publishing firm Editorial Logos in 1968 and produced Christian books, pamphlets, Bible studies, cassettes, CD's and music.

The Swindolls' four children were all raised and married in Argentina, though all are currently living in the U.S. They have nineteen grandchildren, four of which are married and have given them seven great grandchildren.

Since 1970 Orville has been involved in a team of ministers based in Argentina (and now in several Latin American countries) that oversee many churches and Christian workers in several nations. This group is also responsible for the organization of a national Christian workers' retreat held in Argentina each year since 1980, usually in the month of October. The number attending this annual event has steadily grown from about 150 to several thousand.

Both Orville and Erma Jean view their ministry primarily as teaching and counseling Christian workers and organizing training programs and spiritual retreats for the Lord's servants throughout Latin America. They have also been involved intensively in pastoral ministry for many years.

Having pastored a Hispanic congregation in Miami for several years Orville also leads a school of ministries in the offices of Vida Publishers. He continues to travel widely in ministry and is also engaged in writing, editing and book layout for several Hispanic publishers. [\[His younger brother, Chuck Swindoll is a popular author and radio preacher on *Insight for Living* radio.\]](#)