



THE REFINING PROCESS

The pressures on all of us, on our nation, communities, families, and on us individually, are as great as any during my lifetime - and remember that I was born when Abraham Lincoln was president. What in the world is going on? Where is God? Why doesn't He hear our prayers? We are seeking His face. We have turned from our wicked ways. Why doesn't He heal our sicknesses, heal our families, heal our land? Has He given up on us and abandoned us?

No, He has not abandoned us. He is with us, right in the middle of all that is going on. He is doing what He has always done, and the Bible describes it over and over.

He is separating the wheat from the weeds

Jesus tells the parable of the wheat and the weeds starting at Matthew 13:24. It is common for wheat and weeds to grow together in a field, and they must be separated before the wheat is milled into flour. Jesus said that there are also weeds, false Christians, growing in the church, and the false must be separated from the true. That process is surely going on right now. It has also been reported that many churches have been so impacted by the pandemic that they may be forced to close. Friends, there are many so-called churches that should close. They are not preaching salvation through faith in Christ but some other gospel; they are preaching that there is no judgment, no hell, and that everyone goes to heaven; they are giving people a false confidence that they are OK with God; they are presenting another Jesus than the one in the Bible; and Paul says in the book of Galatians that they will be eternally condemned.

He is separating the wheat from the chaff

The wheat must not only be separated from the weeds, but the wheat itself must be crushed, broken, to separate the edible part from the hull.

When you buy a sack of pecans or walnuts, you know you have to break and discard the shell in order to get to the tasty "meat" inside. Wheat goes through the same process. It must be broken, sifted, cleansed, and then ground into flour.

Many times God's people mistakenly believe He is angry with them when they go through painful seasons. Acts 14:22 tells us, *Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.* And Peter tells us not to be surprised when we experience troubles, pains, tribulations, but that it is a necessary part of the process through which God takes His beloved children.

The wheat must die

There is yet one more metaphor that describes the process we are going through, and it is an extreme one. Starting at John 12:23, Jesus explained to His disciples the reasons for His coming death on the cross. He said: *Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it drops into the ground and dies, then it sprouts and produces a great harvest of wheat - all because one grain died.* (TPT)

Jesus is taking His disciples through a very painful process that leads to the "death" of the self that has always been ruling our life. (It is a certainty that He is doing this because He has always been doing it according to the Bible.) He is not doing this to hurt us but to cleanse and purify us. It is essential that we cling to Him in this time, because we know that: *All things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to His purpose.* (Romans 8:28)

Following are a few encouraging words taken from the devotional book, Jesus Calling, by Sarah Young, which can strengthen and comfort all of us.

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JESUS CALLING

(There are two devotionals that I read every morning, in addition to any Scriptural readings. The first is Jesus Calling, by Sarah Young. This is a blessed book and seems always to say just the right words for the day. The second is Daily Light, which was started by Samuel Bagster in London in the 1800's and updated by Anne Graham Lotz, Billy Graham's daughter. I heartily recommend these devotionals to you.

I hope the following words from Jesus Calling will be an encouragement to you.)

"There is a mighty battle going on for control of your mind. Heaven and earth intersect in your mind. I created you with the capacity to experience foretastes of heaven. This is an incredible privilege reserved for precious ones who belong to Me and seek My Face. As you concentrate on Me, My Spirit fills your mind with life and peace.

"Media bombard you with greed, lust, and cynicism. These are arrows from below. Focus on Me and refuse to worry because worry will weigh you down and block awareness of My presence. Stay alert, recognizing the battle being waged against your mind."

Eph. 2:6; Romans 8:6; 1 John 2:15-18

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 "Expect to encounter adversity in your life, remembering that you live in a deeply fallen world. Stop trying to find a way that circumvents difficulties. The main problem with an easy life is that it masks your need for Me. Anticipate coming face-to-face with impossibilities: situations totally beyond your ability to handle. This awareness of your inadequacy is not something you should try to evade. It is precisely where I want you - the best place to encounter Me. When you see armies of problems marching toward you, cry out to Me! Allow Me to fight for you. Watch Me working on your behalf as you rest in the shadow of My almighty presence."

Job 5:7; Rev. 19:1; Psalm 91:1

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"Walk with Me along paths of trust. The farther you roam along patches of unbelief, the harder it is to remember that I am with you. Anxious thoughts branch off in all directions, taking you farther and farther from awareness of My presence. You need to voice your trust in Me frequently. Many times you will not be able to figure out what I am doing in your life. Trust (faith) and understanding are opposed. Choose to trust in Me especially when you don't understand."

Isa. 26:4; Psalm 9:10; Psalm 25:4-5; Pro. 3:5

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"I am always available to you. Once you have trusted Me as your Savior, I never distance Myself from you. Sometimes you may feel distant from Me. Recognize that as feeling; do not confuse it with reality. The Bible is full of my promises to be with you always.

After My resurrection, I made this promise to My followers: *Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.* Let these assurances of My continual presence fill you with joy and peace. No matter what you may lose in this life, you can never lose your relationship with Me."

Isa. 54:10; Gen. 28:15; Matt. 28:19-20

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"Open your mind and heart - your entire being - to receive My love in full measure. So many of My children limp through their lives starved for love because they have not learned the art of receiving., This is essentially an act of faith: believing that I love you, with boundless, everlasting love. The art of receiving is also a discipline: training your mind to trust Me, coming close to Me with confidence.

"Remember that the evil one is the father of lies. Learn to recognize his deceptive intrusions into your thoughts. One of his favorite deceptions is to undermine your confidence in My unconditional love. *Fight back against those lies! Don't let them go unchallenged. Resist the devil in My name, and he will slink away from*

you. Draw near to Me, and My presence will envelop you in love."

Eph. 3:16-19; Hebrews 4:16; John 8:44; James 4:7-8
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IS WITNESSING TO OTHERS A NICE THING TO DO?

Last month I shared how I witness to strangers, that I usually say something like, "Excuse me, I would like to speak to you for a moment: I used to be a pastor, and I like to ask people, 'Are you sure you are going to heaven when you die?' Are you?" And then I smile at them.

Most people are not threatened by me or my question and we have a brief conversation where I usually share John 3:16 or share how Jesus rescued me from the destructive path I was on. But I admit that some people become very uncomfortable when I ask that question, and a few are offended. While it really doesn't bother me if people are offended or become uncomfortable, is that a nice way to treat other people? I don't like it when Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses try to push their beliefs onto me, or when my phone rings at all hours of the day and evening with robo-calls. So am I being an insensitive, religious bully by witnessing to strangers, or is it a good thing, a godly thing to do?

I think the answer is, it depends. It depends on my attitude and spirit when I witness to others and on my sensitivity to their verbal and non-verbal responses. If I have a superior, religious spirit, or if I am just trying to add another member to my church, then it would not be a worthy thing to do. Jesus warned the Pharisees in Matthew 23:15, *You travel over sea and land to make a convert, but then you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.* Whoa! That was not a very nice thing for Jesus to say! But it was a true and loving thing to say, because we know that Jesus was love incarnate. If I am genuinely concerned about a person's eternal welfare and am sharing out of obedience to the Lord, then it is certainly a good and important thing to do. Didn't Jesus command us to go into all the world and make disciples?

As far as it being "a nice thing to do," that is totally irrelevant. Being a nice person is not the same as being a Christian. (The definition of the word Nice today is: amiable, pleasant, tactful. Originally, it meant ignorant, silly or foolish.) Many folks think they are being pleasant and tactful when their real motive is fear of man and fear of appearing to be a fanatic. Or it could be that they subscribe to such a watered-down view of Christianity that they never consider obeying the clear commands of Jesus when it would require some level of sacrifice or discomfort.

In the lands of Muslims, Hindus, Communists, telling someone you are a Christian can get you put in jail or even killed. In America, admitting you are a true believer

can get you fired from many jobs or regarded as primitive and mentally suspect.

Are we under the impression that when Jesus sent His followers out to represent Him that He thought it would be a pleasant assignment? When He sent the twelve out (in Matthew 10), He said, ***I send you out as sheep among wolves!!!*** He said, *Some people will welcome you into their homes and some will reject you. If they reject you, just shake the dust off your feet and go on to the next house.* He said to His faithful disciples on His last night with them, starting at John 13: *If people (the world) hate you, keep in mind that they hated Me first. If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also.....The time is coming when they will kill you and think they are offering a service to God.*

Jesus said in another place, *Beware when all men think well of you.* Jesus also said in Matthew 10 that there would be situations where faith in Him would not bring peace to a home but conflict and that it would create friction and contention in homes instead of bringing peace to them. I have known of situations like that in every church I've been a part of, haven't you? He went on to say that if we love our own spouse and children and parents more than we love Him then we aren't worthy of Him. That's a heavy word, isn't it? But the fact is, it is only when we put Him first, where He deserves to be, that we can give our family the right kind of love.

Haven't we read what kind of response the early disciples had when they went forth sharing the Good News about Jesus? In many of the towns Paul preached in, it started a riot. He tells about what he went through in 2 Corinthians 11: Five times he was flogged by the Jews, three times he was beaten with rods, he was thrown in jail time and again, he was stoned by a mob, and so forth.

Some folks have the idea that love would never stir up a riot; that love would never cause someone to feel uncomfortable; that Christian witnessing if done right would never precipitate an adverse reaction like anger and violence. Good heavenly days, we need to look again at the life of Jesus. He was love incarnate and truth incarnate, and he ended up on a cross! Don't we comprehend that this world is in rebellion against God and that the Gospel is an offense to ungodly people?

Jesus was different from Mohammed, Buddha, Joseph Smith. They claimed that they knew the way to God. Jesus claimed to be God and that He was the way to God. He was Emmanuel, God with us. He died for us, for our sins, on the cross. Through faith in Him we receive eternal life, heaven. Apart from Him, we are doomed. (Read John 3:16-18.) This is either true or false. Do you believe it or not?

In Acts 4:12, Peter preaches to the Sanhedrin, *Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.* And Paul declares in 1 Timothy 2:5, *For there is*

one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. Do you believe it?

Are you sharing this amazing good news with others?

EVIDENCE OF GOD'S DESIGN - 2

Last month I quoted a bit from a book, Number in Scripture, by E. W. Bullinger, published in 1967. I said that Mr. Bullinger was a genius, which is certainly true. But Mr. Bullinger's intelligence, his brilliance, is not worth comparing to the genius who created the universe with its vast diversity, beauty, and design. And the same is true with regard to the Holy Bible. There were 39 authors from three different continents who wrote down the words of Scripture over a period of at least 1,400 years - - - but there was one Author composing a mosaic of such incredible beauty and design that it is breathtaking. The hidden design of numbers displays a part of God's genius. Following are a few gems taken from Mr. Bullinger's little book, and I am awestruck by the revelations in this book that I comprehend and even by the parts that I don't comprehend:

Daniel 8:13 says, *Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to him - "How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled, the rebellion that causes desolation...etc?"* Here, a revelation of a certain prophetic event was made to Daniel by a certain holy one, i.e., an angel; and another angel asked a question concerning numbers - *"How long, etc.?"* The name of that first "holy one" is given in the Hebrew and is placed in the margin with its meaning. His name is "PALMONI," and it means, *"The numberer of secrets,"* or *"The wonderful numberer."*

So there is a holy angel whose function has to do with numbers. Numbers, therefore, and their secrets, hold an important place in the words and works of God. This certainly looks like design; and, if so - if not only the days in which events take place are numbered, but the words are themselves also numbered, **then we shall have a great and wondrous proof of the Divine, verbal, and even literal inspiration of the Word of God.**

It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honor of kings is to search out a matter. (Prov. 25:2) In searching out the secrets of the Word of God, we are therefore doing an honorable work.

The actual number of the times each word in Scripture occurs always corresponds with its special significance. Where there is no special significance in the meaning or use of the word, there is no special significance in the number of its occurrences. But where there is a general importance in the word, apart from its direct significance, then the word occurs according to law. All such general and important words - i.e., such words on which the Holy Spirit would have us place special emphasis, occur a certain number of times. These are either -

1. a square number
2. a cube
3. a multiple of seven
4. a multiple of eleven

Seven is one of the four so-called perfect numbers: 3, 7, 10 and 12:

- 3 is the number of Divine perfection (3 Persons in the Godhead; The Holy of Holies, the place of God's presence, was a cube; the 3rd day Jesus rose from the dead; Jesus raised 3 persons from the dead; Jesus is Prophet, Priest, and King; etc, etc, etc.)
- 7 is the number of Spiritual perfection (God rested from creation on the 7th day; In Genesis 12, Abraham gave a 7-fold blessing; in Exodus 6, Jehovah made a 7-fold covenant with a 7-fold blessing to Israel; etc, etc.)
- 10 is the number of Ordinal perfection (10 signifies the perfection of Divine order: Noah and the flood began in the 10th generation; the 10 Commandments contain all that is necessary; the Lord's Prayer is completed in 10 clauses; the tithe is due from man to God; Abraham's faith was tested by a cycle of 10 trials; etc, etc.)
- 12 is the number of Governmental perfection (There were 12 patriarchs; 12 sons of Israel; 12 apostles; 12 gates; 12 angels; Jesus was 12 years old when He first appeared in public; the word "Palace" appears in the Hebrew Bible 12 times; etc, etc.)

The product of these four perfect numbers forms the great number of chronological perfection, $3 \times 7 \times 10 \times 12 = 2520$, the years of Israel's punishment, and the times of Gentile dominion over Jerusalem.

11 and 7 connect with the geometrical law:

In the plane, the triangle has 3 sides, the square has 4 sides = 7.

In the solid, the pyramid has 5 sides, the cube has 6 sides = 11.

As 7 is to 11, so is the height of a pyramid, whose base is a square, to the length of its base.

As 7 is to 11 expresses also the ratio between the diameter of a circle and its semi-circumference.

The product of the numbers: $3 \times 4 \times 5 \times 6 = 360$, which divides the circle of the heavens and also represents the Biblical year of 360 days.

The product of the number: $3 \times 7 \times 10 \times 12 = 2520$, which is the Least Common Multiple of all ten numbers, 1 through 10.

And as we have already seen, in the musical scale we meet these numbers 7 and 11 as the expression of the 7 primary notes and the 11 semitones.

This is just scratching the surface of this subject, but a question for you: **DO YOU THINK ALL OF THIS IS SIMPLY CHANCE, OR DO YOU THINK IT REPRESENTS INTELLIGENT DESIGN?**

CLAYTON GOLLIHER NEEDS HELP

My friend Clayton Golliher started ministering to homeless kids in Hollywood 35 years ago. He ministers to the hopeless, throw-away kids: drug addicts,

prostituted children, abandoned, abused, ex-prisoners, etc. As you can imagine, his ministry requires great personal sacrifice. As I recall, during the first year Clayton and his wife started this ministry, his car was stolen 5 times and his home was broken into twice, but he kept right on loving these unlovable kids, feeding them, providing a place for them to live, training them for a job, and leading them to Christ.

The name of Clayton's ministry is Hope for the Homeless, and of course they have a great number of volunteers who assist them with the ministry....and many of their Homeless kids "graduate" and become volunteers or move on to other ministries.

Presently, HHY has 4 locations in Hollywood and Los Angeles where they provide various types of ministries, but in a few months they are being displaced from the largest location which they have been leasing for about 10 years. Clayton thinks they should stop throwing away money for rent, which is terribly high in California, and purchase a place. They have found a small ranch on the outskirts of L.A. with a 2,500 sq. ft. home and several other buildings which is offered for only a million bucks (he has countered for 800K), and he has already received offerings and pledges for more than half.

I feel I should help with an offering, and I hope and pray that some of you will feel led to do the same. You can send an offering to me and I will forward it, or you can send it directly to Clayton at:

Hope for Homeless Youth
P.O. Box 26978
Los Angeles, CA 90026

PRAY FOR AMERICA

Following is a small part of a prayer for America by "Grace Extended Ministries" in Africa:

"As a nation, we in the US have sinned greatly. Our rivers flow with the blood of the unborn. Over the years, millions of children have been aborted. **The killing of our unborn innocent children is no different than the child sacrifices that occur (on Mt. Elgon) regularly in Uganda and Kenya and in many of the tribal regions in Africa.** And yet many in our nation have become anesthetized to the killing of babies.

The morality of the US is spiraling downward. The sanctity of marriage is being threatened. The entire issue of God-given creation and sexuality has been distorted. Our kids face indoctrination in most of our schools.

Dear Christian friends, we must pray with all our hearts for our dear land. We must repent for our personal sins, the sins of our churches, and the sins of our nation."

I would like to thank each of you for your support of this ministry.
If any of you want to receive tax credit for your financial contributions,
you may send them to:
CANYON VIEW VINEYARD CHURCH
736 24 ½ Road Grand Junction, Co. 81505