



Glenn Brown

February 2017

441 ½ Lark Drive

Grand Junction, Colorado 81504

telephone 970-434-1377

GOOD SHEPHERD CHURCH

I just attended the Missions Conference of the Good Shepherd Church in Loveland, Colorado, the church I formerly served as founding pastor, and I can't tell you how proud I am of them. They support 20 missionaries in key parts of the world, among whom are: A YWAM minister at the University of Illinois; a church planter in Mexico; the directors of huge ministries in Haiti, Turkey, the Philippines, Israel and Malaysia; and leaders of an orphanage in Thailand. They not only help financially support these missionaries, they love them, pray for them, and regularly send teams to visit and work with them.

They have added three new missionaries since my last visit: a young lady with YWAM who ministers in Ireland (a very dark place spiritually); a man who ministers to those trapped in addictions at a ministry in Haifa, on the edge of Mt. Carmel, in Israel, and "Sam," in India. Let me tell you a bit about Sam. Sam was a successful internet entrepreneur in India, very smart and very wealthy. He accepted Christ as his Savior and before long he heard God speak to him clearly. God told Sam to leave his business, home and money - - just to abandon everything - - and to take only the money in his pocket and go to a certain city. Sam obeyed. He went to that city, found his way to a certain park and sat on a bench. He noticed that across the street they were auctioning children of various ages. The traffickers would take them out of the boxes in which they were nailed and auction them off. They brought a little girl up on the platform, and God said to Sam, "Buy her!" Sam bought the little girl, took her to the apartment he rented and started ministering healing to her.

From that starting point till now: last year Sam bought and freed 2,500 children. God gathered a team around Sam. The children are taken into group homes and ministered to by ladies (they have been traumatized by men) for almost a year, then adopted out to Christian homes. Sam and his team live on the edge, for they are hated and threatened by the traffickers. Likewise, our missionaries who live in Muslim lands are not living in safe places.

Last month I addressed the question, "Why go to church?" This is certainly a part of the answer to that question. Together we can do things as a church, a group of believers, that we cannot do as isolated believers. Friends, God has placed us in a church, a family, His family. To God be the glory!

HONORING OUR MISSIONARIES

At the conclusion of the Missions program, I was given the opportunity to say a few words and would like to recap my remarks:

I am so honored to represent these wonderful missionaries that you have just highlighted. What amazing servants of God! Many of you have visited and worked with these people and know them personally. Another word for faith is trust, and trust is always connected to courage. This group of missionaries shows us what faith and courage look like in our world.

I was born in the Holy Land (Texas), and you have probably observed that all the men born in Texas are extremely manly and courageous as well as good looking. My dad fit that mold. Unfortunately, I never felt that I measured up except, of course, for the good looking part. My mom was a very fearful person, and I took after her. Things that would probably be no big deal for you to do were a real trial for me because of fear.

When I was in my 30's, with a wife and four children, I believed that God wanted me to become a minister, but it was very intimidating to me and to Doris, and it took all the faith we could muster before we finally made that jump. Similarly, when I had an experience with the Holy Spirit and decided I must leave the Methodist church and start a non-denominational church (that became Good Shepherd), once again it was a very fearful thing for us.

When I was challenged to start ministering in prisons, it was again a very fearful decision. (Once you make the step, you learn that it is no big deal, but for some reason it seems like a big giant when it is before you.) I've met some great guys in prison, and I'm still doing it. Dave Rohlman and I just ministered in Delta prison last month and in the prison in Rifle in September.

Ford Wilson asked me to start going to Mexico many times before I worked up my courage enough to start...and again I loved it and went to Mexico probably 30 or 35 times over a period of 20 plus years. I went to the Amazon three times after I was over 80 years old, so God has helped me overcome a lot of those fears.

One story about the Amazon. On one trip, a lady came on the team and it was her first trip outside the United States. She was past middle-age, plump, with blue hair. I can remember people helping her into one of the long motorboats one morning as her team headed for villages along the river. That night she was walking on a cloud! She had gone into a thatch hut and prayed for a little girl who was paralyzed, and God healed the little girl instantly! Wow! There is a special anointing on people who obey Jesus and "Go into all the world." God is not looking for ability, He is looking availability, for willingness.

So I challenge you, my friends. If God has been speaking to you about doing something that seems scary, gird up your loins (whatever that means) and go for it. You will never be sorry.

Good Shepherd gave me a stack of almost 100 birthday cards. I won't share the personal notes that touched my heart, except for one young person who wrote:

- "Congratulations on your accomplishments."

And a few other special messages:

- "Once upon a time, a very special person was born who was destined to change the world..... Calm down. It's not you, it's Jesus. I think He'd want you to have a happy birthday though."
- A special message via Dr. Seuss: "Who's another year older? You do not show it in your face. You do not show it anyplace! You do not show it in your hair, Not even in your derriere! You do not show it in your mood. You've got a youthful attitude. Golly gee! How can this be? You're older now, but who can see?" Amen.

A NICE FUNERAL FOR A NICE LADY

One of the members of my cell group just told me something that made me very angry. She said that two weeks ago she attended a funeral for a friend of hers. The funeral was at a big denominational church in downtown Grand Junction. She said that the pastor did not mention God or Jesus even one time during the funeral. What he said a number of times was that the lady was a nice lady. What an abomination!

Is there a purpose to our lives, or does everything end when we die? Is there a final judgment by a holy God? Is there a heaven and a hell as the Bible teaches, or is there only a heaven and the way we live is irrelevant? Was Jesus' death on the cross a meaningless charade, or did it have cosmic significance? Did Jesus rise from the dead on that Sunday morning, or is that a fairy tale on the order of the Easter bunny? Please read the first six chapters of the book of Romans.

I don't know who that lady was, and I am certainly not the one to judge her life. But I do know one thing: according to the Bible, if she believed that being a nice person was her ticket to heaven, then I am fearful about her eternal destiny.

God have mercy on that pastor and on that "church."

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ANCIENT WISDOM?

By God's grace, on Feb. 20th I will be 90 years old. I don't think I have any special wisdom or know anything that you don't already know, but I would like to share some insights that are important to me.

- **Life goes fast.** Following are some descriptive metaphors from the Bible: **Life is like: *smoke, grass, a mist, flowers, dust, evening shadows, a dream.*** **We are: *pilgrims, foreigners, aliens, sojourners, temporary residents.***

We live in: *a tent.*

Time is a mystery. No one has been able to adequately explain it. Einstein's insights about time and space and relativity may be true, but they are of no value in explaining how we experience time. Moments and days can drag by interminably, but years pass in a blur. If you are 45 years old or so, only half my age, you have already observed how rapidly the years zip by. Right? James tells us that we should not presume that our life will last indefinitely, but that when we say, "I'll see you next year," we should add, "if God wills." Since I had a heart attack in October, I either say that or think it when I talk about the future. In fact, as George Burns said, "I've stopped buying green bananas."

- **We only age on the outside:** our carton, our body. Inside, our soul and spirit, we are timeless.

We can still feel and act like we are 20 years old because that is the way we feel inside, but when we look in the mirror we discover, with a shock, that we have turned into the Walking Dead.

- This is a good spot for Johathan Cahn's night and day paradigm (from The Book of Mysteries): "The way of the world is to move from day to night, from light to darkness. We go from day to night, from youth to aging, from strength to weakness, and from life to death. But this is not the way of God. 'There was evening, and then there was morning.' It is the night that comes first. The children of this world live from day to night. But the children of God live from night to day. They are born again in the darkness and move to the day. If you belong to God, then that is the order of your life. You are to go from darkness to light, from weakness to strength, from despair to hope, from guilt to innocence, from tears to joy, and from death to life. Every night in your life will lead to the dawn." Hallelujah!

- **Surrender.** The word surrender is only in the Bible a few times and is never used to describe our connection with God, so my theology is probably mistaken on this point, but it has always seemed to me that "surrender" should be used to describe what happens when we "accept Jesus Christ as our Savior." The Biblical words are "repent and believe." To repent means "to change your mind," to be sorry for your life of rebellion and sin and surrender to a new Manager.

Lots of church folks don't seem to understand the New Testament concept of "salvation" or of "believing on the Lord Jesus Christ" which is radical. It involves the "surrender" of ownership of our very lives: *You....are called to belong to Jesus Christ.* (Ro. 1:6) *Those who belong to Christ Jesus.* (Gal. 5:24) The Bible calls us to be "servants" of God (actually "bond-servants" in many places) and "slaves of God," which is much closer to what "servants" actually means. (Do a word study of servants and bond-servants.) To believe in our minds the Biblical teachings about God and about Jesus is no hard trick, but to surrender our will to His will in an ongoing way is the hardest thing we will ever do. Lots of people, especially a lot of men, simply will not bow their knees and surrender to Him.

(As if the Loving Father who sent His Son to rescue us from sin and hell wants to mess up our lives.)

- **The Morning Star Journal** quotes Zoro (?) who explains the concept of servanthood as follows: "There are only two ways to live life. We either live a life of self or service. If we choose to serve, we will discover a life of great significance. If we live a life of self, we will meet with grave disappointment and dissatisfaction. God created us to serve. When we're not serving, we cease to be fulfilled inwardly because to live is to serve." (I thought Zorro was a guy with a sword who looks a lot like Antonio Banderas.)
- **Pornography.** I was introduced to pornography by my closest friend when I was in high school. It deeply marred my soul. It grew to dominate my thoughts and life. Jesus said, *The one who sins becomes a slave of sin.* (There is that word slave again.) Porn and alcohol became my escape from the pain of life. When I accepted Christ at age 30, I was set free for a time, but they crept back in. (Actually, I chose to allow them back in.) Except for the grace of God they would without question have shipwrecked my marriage, family, ministry, and walk with God. When I see what our society is allowing to be instantly accessible to young people, and older people, I shudder in apprehension. God have mercy on us!
- **Devil and demons.** I need to remind you that according to the clear teaching of Jesus Christ, who was God come to live among us, the devil is a real being, not a cartoon character. Likewise, demons are to the devil what angels are to God, and they can and do attack, tempt, and torment humans, including believers when the door is open to them. (See my teaching, Ministry to the Demonized, on my website, glennbrownministries.com. The teaching is in written form and on video.)
- **It's a fight!** Summarizing all that is written above, the Christian life is a fight, as if you didn't know. *Fight the good fight of faith*, Paul says. (1 Tim. 6:12) It's a good fight because its purpose is to make us mature and useful servants of God. And it's a fight we can win because God has provided *the weapons of our warfare*, and He is with us and promises victory. Hallelujah!

GOD'S HEALING IS USUALLY A PROCESS

In Francis MacNutt's classic book, The Power to Heal, he explained some important insights about divine healing. For instance, he points out that when God heals through prayer, usually people are not completely, instantly healed, but they are improved. Most things are that way. Healing through medicine is that way. We go to a doctor and come away happy as long as healing has begun and improvement has been shown. We are delighted if the doctor holds out hope that in a week or a month our body will be restored to wholeness. But in some teaching about healing there is a kind of absoluteness that makes it imperative that all healing through prayer be immediate. "Can you claim your healing now!" puts sick people in a bind. They want to show faith in God by saying yes, but they want to be honest, too, and say, "But I still can't walk so I'm not sure." Remember that even Jesus prayed for a blind man twice (Mark 8:22), and the ten lepers were healed "as they went."

Francis points out that (1) there is a time element in most healing. Even in healings that seem instant there is at least a period of minutes in which the change takes place. (2) There is also an element of more or less power, more or less authority in me, since I am not God. Faith is of course a key element in all healing, but in some mysterious way our relationship with God, our faithfulness, our character, also seems to be a key. Remember the seven sons of Sceva that tried to use the name of Jesus to heal a demonized man, but the demons in that man recognized that's the seven men didn't have a relationship with Jesus, so they beat up those men. (Acts 19:14)

One of the big problems is that people confuse the logos (written) Word of God, with the rhema (spoken, heard Word of God). Some preachers insist that if something is in the Bible, a logos word, we can claim it by faith. But remember the time that Jesus invited Peter to step out of the boat and walk on water in a raging storm. That invitation to Peter was a rhema, "now" word, and not many preachers would insist that we can claim that word for ourselves. Yes, we are told to go forth and do the same works Jesus did, and Jesus' final words to His followers (Mark 16) were that *those who believe would lay their hands on the sick and they would be healed*, and God, in His grace, heals people again and again as we pray for them. But we need to distinguish between faith and presumption. For instance, we should never assure people that they have been healed and can throw away their medicine just because we have prayed for them unless we, or the sick, person, has received a rhema word from God.

SAYING NO TO WORLDLY LUSTS

A guy I know told about a doctor friend of his who at the end of a long, frustrating week exploded and said some very politically incorrect things to one of his patients. He said, "Mr. Smith, may I speak frankly to you?" When the man said yes, the doctor said, "ARE YOU FREAKING CRAZY? YOU'RE GOING TO DIE! You're almost 100 pounds overweight, you don't get any exercise, you have a stressful job, you eat fast food and drink pop, you're blood pressure is over the top, you're developing diabetes, your feet and legs are breaking down, and you want me to prescribe some high powered drugs and fix you." After some further conversation, the man went home and changed his life style and started getting well. (Oh, God, give us more doctors, and preachers, like that!)

Paul wrote to his young Gentile Christian preacher protégé who was working at a tough assignment on the island of Crete, and said, *The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.* (Titus 2:11-12)

Friends, we live in a culture here in the U. S. that will not say no to themselves - - and that includes Christians. We are eating ourselves to death. And we are killing ourselves with our unrestrained sexual lives. At a minimum, 110 million people in the U. S. have an STD, more than one person in three, and most of these horrible diseases are incurable. (Google the subject and look at the frightening photographs.) Our politicians are concerned that we might deny rights, including bathroom privileges, to someone, but who is standing up and saying that our sexual mores are sick and out of control? I'm so outdated that I was shocked when the state of Colorado was one of the first states to approve recreational marijuana, and internet gambling and casino gambling is inundating our nation and the world. We will not say no to worldly lusts, and we are certainly reaping what we have been sowing.

Note: self-control does not equal salvation. Many will not say no to worldly lusts because they cannot. They have lost their freedom. They need a Savior. Paul writes, *Our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.....gave His life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people.* (Titus 2:13-14,NLT) The Good News is that Jesus came to forgive and empower us to do what we cannot do in our own strength. God is not condemning us for our out-of-control lusts. He sent His Son to save us and set us free.

God Bless

Glenn

e-mail address casabrn441@gmail.com

WEBSITE: www.glennbrownministries.com

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CANYON VIEW VINEYARD CHURCH

736 24 ½ Road Grand Junction, Co. 81505