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HOPE IN THE NEW YEAR

Back in October, on the History Channel, there was a two-hour program named “Prophets of Doom.” There were five or six scientists, Ph.D.’s, experts in their fields, who explained that our world is on an inevitable course of destruction. They quoted statistics, used maps, graphs, and historical tables, to prove that we are doomed. The major areas they discussed were :

- Water - Because of growing over-population, global warming, and draught, water is running out, and we are DOOMED!
- Economy - Our debt and social programs are unsustainable, and we are DOOMED!
- Fossil fuels - The rate the world is using fossil fuels, which contribute to pollution of air and oceans, is unsustainable, and we are DOOMED!
- Terrorism - It is just a matter of time until the bad guys get hold of nuclear material and destroy our cities, so we are DOOMED!

The experts who shared this information are good men and very smart men, but I noticed something: there was not a hint, not a suggestion in all the time they were sharing that there is a God. They were secular men, and their view of reality is like this little match-box I’m holding in one hand. Everything, in their minds, is inside this box: the world, people, the earth, the solar system, the cosmos, and we have these insoluble problems and we are all alone. Our situation is hopeless!

- I would remind you of those videos named “Transformations,” by George Otis, Jr., that show communities that were utterly transformed when the churches came together and cried out to God.
- You may have heard of Madame Guyon, the famous lady who lived in France in the 1600’s. She was so close to God and used so powerfully for revival that the institutional church put her in prison and tried to burn all of her books. She had a vision one night. She saw God walking around heaven looking down into His cupped hands and smiling. She asked, “Father God, what are you looking at that gives you such pleasure?” He answered, “My creation.”
- Rick Joyner recently wrote: “In 1988 I asked the Lord to let me hear His audible voice. He immediately said He would speak to me this way, and I got ready. When He spoke, it was not loud, and I don’t think it even rattled the windows, but I have seldom been as terrified. I felt like an atom standing before the sun. I quickly understood why the children of Israel had asked Moses to get their messages from God so that they would not have to hear His voice again. I repented for judging them. The acute fear of the Lord stayed with me for days, and I was truly afraid that He might speak to me in His audible voice like that again. This is how I felt, but what He said was one of the most personal and loving things He ever said to me. He said, ‘Call me Abba (Daddy).’ I struggled for years to do this, but was hardly ever able to because I felt arrogant whenever I did. Since He told me to do so, I did not give up trying.”

Someone ought to tell those “prophets of doom” the good news! 2,000 years ago a bright star appeared in the sky and a light shined down into our darkness and hopelessness. Angels announced that a Savior had been sent from heaven on a rescue mission. Hallelujah!

But Glenn, you might say, didn’t you recently tell about a series of dreams you had in 1998, 1999, and 2004, prophesying judgment and destruction on our nation? I surely did. But the Lord has a practice of warning, rebuking, correcting..... and encouraging His faithful ones in the same message:

- Isaiah 24:5-6 – *The earth suffers for the sins of its people, therefore a curse consumes the earth.*
- Isaiah 26:21 – *Look, the Lord is coming from heaven to punish the people of the earth for their sins!*

- Isaiah 25:4 – *But you are a tower of refuge from the storm.*
- Isaiah 26:3-4 – *You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in You.*

I learned one time that in a good sermon you, (a) Tell ‘em what you’re gonna tell ‘em (b) Tell ‘em (c) Tell ‘em what you told ‘em.

Jesus followed this little outline when He came among us. When He went to the synagogue in Nazareth, He stood up and read from the scroll of Isaiah, a prophesy that was given to the Jews 700 years before Christ was born: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.* (Luke 4:18)

You will note in this prophetic Scripture the outline of what Jesus would “tell ‘em.” First, the necessity of the power of the Holy Spirit: *The Spirit of the Lord....and His anointing, then the outline:* (1) Preaching the good news (2) Healing emotional and physical wounds (3) Liberating the slaves of the enemy (by casting out demons).

Then, Jesus proceeded to “tell ‘em” and to “show ‘em” by His whole earthly ministry. First, He needed the empowerment of the Holy Spirit: *When He had been baptized, Jesus came up from the water; the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.*

Then, He ministered: *And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and disease among all the people....and healing those with torments, the demon-possessed, epileptics and paralytics; and He healed them.* (Matt. 4:23-24)

We could go through Matthew, Mark and Luke and show multiple occasions when Jesus followed this same format: Preaching and teaching the good news; healing all physical and emotional wounds; and casting out demons.

Then in Mark 3:14-15, after He modeled His ministry, He gave authority to do the same ministry to the twelve: *Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out demons.*

Then in Luke 10 He gave this same authority to 72 others (to preach, to heal, and to cast out demons).

Then in Mark 16:15-18, the resurrected Christ gave this same authority to the church: *He said to them, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature;.... In my name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents;....they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.* In Acts 5:16 and 42, you will see that the first church began to fulfill the mandate Jesus gave to them: *A multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.....And daily in the temple and in every house they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.*

So what were Jesus’ marching orders to the church He would leave on earth? They are found in what we call the “Great Commandment” in Matthew 28:18-20 - *All authority has been given to Me in heaven and earth. God, therefore, make disciples of all the nations.....teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you, and I am with you always...* And in John 14:12 – *He who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works.....* The works that Jesus did, and the works He commanded His disciples to do certainly included the “big three:” Preaching and teaching the good news; healing all kinds of physical and emotional sickness; and casting out demons.

But wait, Jesus told His followers, before you go to do these things you need power, you need my presence in you, empowering you, and *You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you to be my witnesses to....the end of the earth.* (Acts 1:8) And Acts 2 tells the thrilling story of Pentecost, how the Holy Spirit filled the 120 so that they could do the same things Jesus did.

The Acts of the Apostles should really be called The Acts of the Holy Spirit, for signs and wonders, miracles, healings, and deliverance from demons are found throughout the book. Following are a few examples:

- Chapter 3 – A lame man instantly healed by Peter and John, *walking and leaping and praising God.*
- Chapter 5 – A multitude...of sick people...and those tormented by unclean spirits...were all healed.
- Chapter 8 – Philip went to Samaria and preached Christ, performed miracles, cast out spirits, and healed the paralyzed.
- Chapter 9 - Peter heals a paralyzed man, and raises Dorcas from the dead.

- Chapter 16 – Paul casts a spirit out of a slave girl.
- Chapter 20 – Paul raises a young man from the dead.

I could continue this list for another full page. The book of Acts records 36 supernatural events in the 28 chapters, but some of these events were multi-faceted, reporting that *All were healed*, etc.

These were the reports that God chose to be reported in the first 30 years of the church. So why did God record these in Scripture? Was Acts the history of the early church? Yes, of course. Did these supernatural acts validate Jesus as the Messiah? Yes, they surely did that. Was it because this was a special time in the church age, a time when the door was opened to Gentiles? Yes, that was true also. But beyond these reasons, is Acts supposed to be a template or pattern for the church of Jesus Christ for all time? I submit to you that it was.

Some denominations believe that that all healings, miracles, and exorcisms ceased at the end of the 1st Century. But that is simply not true. John Wimber published a book listing some of the signs, wonders, healings, deliverances, miracles performed by the church in each and every century since Christ. And we have heard of the mighty acts of God being performed as a matter of course by in the new churches in Sudan planted by our teams, and the works being done in Mozambique through Iris ministries; and the works we have seen in our own local church and its related ministries. So why do certain churches deny that God still performs these works of healing and liberation through believers today? I think it is because their particular type of faith blinds their eyes.

You have heard the saying, “Seeing is believing.” That is not true. It should say, “Believing is seeing.” What you believe in your heart controls what you see and perceive with your eyes. Jesus healed the sick, cast out demons, and raised the dead, but the Pharisees could never see that He was the Christ, the Messiah. They believed that He was demonic, a false Messiah, and therefore they could not perceive who He truly was. I have been used by God on many occasions to heal the sick and cast out demons, and in a few instances even the people who were healed explained it all away!

What do we people in the Vineyard denomination believe? In a little booklet containing our “Core Values,” it states: “We are a people of the ‘Kingdom of God’ – our central theological lens through which we understand the teaching of Jesus.” Then the booklet lists a number of values that we embrace. The first value listed states: “We are a people of the Kingdom of God who partner with the Holy Spirit to accomplish what humans could never accomplish on our own.”

In a companion booklet stating what we Vineyard people believe about the Holy Spirit, it explains why we pray “Come, Holy Spirit”: “Without the Holy Spirit active in our churches, and without our willingness to allow the Spirit to work in various ways in the contexts of our local churches, we believe we have nothing to offer the world....The church of God needs the power of God to fulfill the mandate of God in the world.”

All of this to say that we need the Holy Spirit, we must have the Holy Spirit to function as a church of Jesus Christ in the world. We need the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which for me and for many was an experience subsequent to salvation. When I was 30 years old I received Christ as Savior; when I was 35 I entered the Methodist ministry and went to seminary; I became pastor of a Methodist church at age 38; I back-slid into my old sins of alcohol, pornography, and anger while I was a minister; and at age 45 I received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gift of tongues. It was like being born-again, again! God graciously forgave me and led me into the ministry of inner healing and deliverance.

The Bible clearly teaches that when a person receives Christ, he receives the indwelling Holy Spirit at the same time (1 Cor 6:19, 2 Tim 1:14). The Bible also presents a subsequent, second experience. *When the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.* (Acts 8:14-17. See also Acts 10:44-46 and 19:1-6).

The Bible also teaches, exhorts, and demands that all Christians be filled with the Holy Spirit as a continuous action. See Acts 7:55, 9:31, Eph 5:18, and many more. Again and again we need to ask God to fill, and refill, us with His Holy Spirit - - because, as the old saying goes, “We leak.”

As we enter 2016 in a time of great spiritual darkness, God desires to bless us and to bless our families. So please permit me to challenge you to pray about several different matters:

- SALVATION – Do you know for sure in your heart that you have eternal life? That if you died this year, or this week, that you would go to heaven? The Bible declares that following our earthly life there will be a judgment, each one of us will stand before God, and there are only two possibilities: heaven or hell. Have you repented of your sins and received Jesus Christ as your Savior?

- SURRENDER – Either you are in control of your life or God is in control. Have you accepted Christ as the Lord (Master) of your life and surrendered control to Him? Christ wants to lead your life into fruitfulness and blessing, but He can only do that if you surrender control to Him.
- BONDAGE – Many Christians are trapped by: Fear, Anger, Bitterness, Unforgiveness, Depression, Pornography, Sexual Lust, Love of money, Alcohol, Street Drugs, Prescription Drugs, Gambling, Wife abuse, Child abuse, Etc. I know this is true because I was trapped in some of these things as a Christian and a pastor before Jesus started His rescue mission to me. He then led me into His ministry of compassion and liberation to other Christians. Remember that Jesus started His ministry by declaring that *He came to heal the brokenhearted, and to bring liberty to the captives.*
- BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT - Have you received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit? Have you ever asked Jesus to give this great gift to you? Just like salvation, all you need do is ask in faith and receive by faith.
- GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT – The gifts of the Holy Spirit are listed in 1 Cor 12: healings, miracles, faith, word of knowledge, word of wisdom, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues - - nine of them. The Holy Spirit uses us to transmit His gifts to others as God wills, by “the dancing hand of God” as John Wimber called it. For instance, God will use us on occasion to heal the sick, but we don’t carry the gift of healing in our pocket. It is not “we” who heal the sick, it is the Holy Spirit operating through us under His control. The gift of tongues as a personal prayer language is the exception. When you receive this gift, you can use it any time you choose to use it. It is a precious gift. 1 Cor 14 says that this gift “edifies” (blesses, strengthens) the user, and it may also be used to pray a perfect prayer to God. Many times we do not know how to pray in difficult situations, but the Holy Spirit knows. There is much bad teaching about this gift, but simply ask yourself, “Would God give us a gift that is nonsensical and purposeless?” There is an old saying, “God don’t give no junk.” The only reason not to ask for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, including the gift of tongues is: (1) Fear of Man (2) Unscriptural teaching.

I pray that as we start this new year you will review the above challenge and respond to our Heavenly Father with faith and trust.

“EXPERIENCE GOD IN YOU BEING GOD THROUGH YOU”

Above is the title of a little booklet by my dear friends, Paul and Gretel Haglin, from St. Louis, which tells about their introduction to the Holy Spirit forty years ago, when they were cold and dead denominational Christians, and their amazing faith journey. Paul and Gretel are on my short list of the most loving, wise, courageous Christians I have known in my life’s journey, and their little booklet, which is endorsed by Bob Mumford, Peter Horrobin, and John Loren Sandford, is a treasure which I hope you will order quick, quick, quick! Order at: rcmin2@charter.net, or www.rcmin.org, for only \$10. Following are a couple of their stories:

“One of the first times the gifts of healings flowed through the hands of our family was when we were all gathered around the unconscious, bloody body of our beautiful Irish setter. She had been hit by a car, and her left chest was obviously crushed in. She was hardly breathing. Her eyes were clouding over, but we could still see the pleading in her spirit for us to help her!

“The Holy Spirit led us all to lay our hands on her, and amidst our tears, we all prayed in tongues for God to heal our beloved puppy. I vaguely remembered a verse promising God’s protection ‘over our flocks and herds,’ so I cried out in anguish for God to heal Irish, because she was our only ‘herd.’ For a few agonizing minutes, we prayed and cried. Suddenly, Irish moved. She raised her head and started to lick our hands that were still lovingly on her. Life came back into her eyes, and she stood up on her feet. Her chest was normal, and she went right over to our cat’s bowl (don’t even ask!) and started gobbling down the forbidden treat. Beloved, God totally healed that dying dog right under our loving hands.”

Another of their stories: “I was a speaker at a St. Louis Catholic Charismatic Conference. Following my teaching, I sensed the Holy Spirit wanted to minister a word to the assembly. I asked Gretel to confirm that God indeed wanted her to speak in a tongue with me interpreting. She spoke with an awesome anointing on her ‘words.’ I got a clear interpretation that seemed out of sync with the meeting, but I spoke it forth and remember it almost word for word to this day: ‘Oh, my sweet apple-of-my eye. I see you trembling in your insecurity as a little brown sparrow among all the mighty peacocks all around you, and I want you to know and be at peace in the depth of my love for you and my pleasure with having you here in your new home. Enter my peace and be secure in my presence.’”

“There was a slight commotion in the back of the hall, but Gretel and I proceeded to pray for the saints who had lined up in the front. At the end of the line a mature lady explained about the commotion. She said, ‘When you two spoke, my new friend here totally collapsed in a heap at my feet. When she regained consciousness she told me her story. She had just arrived from Ireland and was still dressed in the simple, brown habit of her Irish order and was feeling totally overwhelmed by all of the important people surrounding her. When Gretel spoke, she spoke in her grandmother’s ancient Celtic-Irish language – syllable by syllable identical to her beloved grandmom’s voice – and when you translated it word for word, the Holy Spirit drew her into a place of peace and light, wrapped in Jesus’ arms. When she regained her composure she insisted that I bring her up to meet and thank you for your deep ministry into her lonesome heart.’”

DEEP CALLS UNTO DEEP

You have seen those pictures that seem to be three-dimensional. The picture or drawing is just a mass of squiggly lines. You turn it this way and that, and suddenly you “see” a face or an animal. The Bible is sort of like that. You read all these strange stories, you turn them this way and that in your mind, and suddenly you “see” God! He reveals Himself to you. Psalm 42:7 says that: *Deep calls unto deep.* This is the way God speaks to us through the Bible and in other ways: Deep to deep, which means Spirit to spirit or Heart to heart. God by-passes our intellect and speaks directly to our spirit or heart.

PRAY FOR GUILLERMO!

One of my close friends is a man named Guillermo Bremauntz, whom I met about 16 years ago in Cuernavaca, about an hour’s drive from Mexico City. It is a beautiful city, called ‘The City of Flowers.’ Guillermo was the head ER doctor in the hospital there. He translated for me as I preached in that church. We became friends and stayed in touch with each other all these years. Guillermo was blessed by God with one of the most amazing healing ministries I have ever known. It is surprising that his hospital kept him on, for he cost them a lot of money because of all the people that were healed when he prayed for them. And most of the people who were healed accepted Christ as their Savior, along with their whole families.

Guillermo’s sister, Yvonne, just called me from San Diego to say that he has been diagnosed with a large tumor on his kidney, apparently encapsulated, and surgery is scheduled on Jan. 21st. (Go figure!)

Please pray for Guillermo.

God Bless
Glenn

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