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INVISIBLE GOD

A pastor told about the conversation he had with his 12-year old son. The boy said, Dad, it's really hard to believe in God because He is invisible. How can you believe in someone you can't see? The father replied, Why, Son, you have never even seen your mother, and you believe in her, don't you?

He then went on to explain how each of us is in essence a spirit, that we have a soul, and we live in a body, but that we can't really see the person/spirit/soul.

This becomes clear to us when a loved one dies. I lived with Doris for over 53 years, but ten years ago she died suddenly while sitting next to me in our car, and Doris was gone. (She got an offer she couldn't refuse, an infinitely better deal than hanging around with me.) She left her carton, her envelope, but the beautiful, lively, gentle person that we knew and loved was gone to be with God.

Our spirit fills our body like a hand fills a glove, but the glove is not the hand, and the hand is not limited by the glove. If you suffer the amputation of an arm or a leg you are not any less a person than before. If you lose all your limbs and all of your body you are no less a person than before. As long as you have a body you are omnipresent in your body, but not limited to it. Your consciousness is not limited to your physical brain but exists independently of it. That is why you can tell your brain what to think or not think, and you can decide how you will feel and react to things that happen to you and around you.

Several years ago Steve Sjogren, a Vineyard pastor, died during surgery. He tells in his book, The Day I Died, how he rose out of his body and saw his wife praying and weeping in the Chapel, and how he rose up above the hospital and saw a tennis shoe on the roof, hidden from view of the ground, before God encountered him and sent him back to live for a while longer in his body.

God fills the universe like we fill our body. He is an invisible Spirit. He is omnipresent (and omniscient and omnipotent) in the universe, but He is not limited to it. *That which is seen is temporal, that which is unseen is eternal.* That is why we are so foolish to love and hold onto and invest ourselves in that which is seen.

Have you met the mysterious God who created this universe? He has made it so that we can know Him if we will seek Him. Consider His intelligence, wisdom, and power! He created the infinite reaches of space; He created the microcosm of the atom, and the atom has enough innate power to release a massive nuclear explosion. Madame Guyon, the mystical French lady who lived in the middle ages, had a vision one time of God walking around heaven smiling at something in His cupped hands. She said, "Father God, what are you looking at with such joy?" God responded, "I'm looking at my universe!" Wow! What a God! And His love and compassion are as magnificent as is His wisdom and power. Jesus said that to discover Him is like a man who discovered a treasure hidden in a field, and he sold everything in order to possess that field. Our lives are like a mist that appears for a brief time and then disappears. Let's be wise and purchase that field, let's seek that treasure!

BELIEVE.....AND BE SAVED!

God has decreed that we enter into a saving relationship with Him through faith, through believing. *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.* (Acts 16:31) Note: People will not face judgment and condemnation because of their sins (the evil things they do), but because of something they do not do - - they refuse to believe in the Lord. *He who does not believe is condemned already, because light has come into the world and men loved darkness instead of light.* (John 3:18)

The issue I want to raise is about how we come to faith, to belief in the Lord Jesus. The Apostle John consistently writes that we must believe **IN** the Lord Jesus Christ, but the Greek word is actually *eis*, which is rightly translated **INTO**. Jesus

said, *You must eat my body and drink my blood!* He was saying that when we believe in Him His Spirit enters into our very marrow and becomes a part of us. Paul writes in Romans that faith comes by hearing the Word of God. So we know that the Word of God is more than words, it is living and active. It transmits more than information, in some way it conveys the very Spirit, the reality, the essence of God Himself. As a person hears the Gospel, and hears, and hears, faith can be born in the heart, **or not!**

The deciding factor is in the heart of the hearer. In John 12:37, it is reported that *Although He (Jesus) did so many signs, they did not believe.* (NKJV) Look at how the New International Version words it: *Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still **would not** believe in him.* Ah! Here is the issue. **Belief in the Lord Jesus Christ is a matter of choice, a matter of the will.** God never overwhelms people with the truth. God presents the Gospel in a nuanced, subtle way so that we have to wrestle with it and choose to believe. Because, as you know, belief in the Lord is more than intellectual assent, it is a yielding of heart and life to His loving will and direction.

NO PRACTICAL JOKES!

Proverbs 10:23 reads: *To do evil is like sport to a fool, but a man of understanding has wisdom.* (NKJV) A pastor said that God revealed to him that this verse pertains to practical jokes. I absolutely agree. What is the purpose of a practical joke? To embarrass, humiliate, or frighten someone in a public setting. Horrible! Can you think of anything loving or Christian about embarrassing, humiliating, or frightening someone? About making someone appear naïve, gullible, stupid, or weak? About shocking and scaring someone? There is even a television show dedicated to “pranking” people. They show someone being set up by his “friends” in some scenario to frighten, embarrass, or humiliate him, then everyone laughs at the victim. Very funny. Let me share some ministry experiences about this subject:

I ministered to a woman in Mexico. About six years prior to our meeting a “friend” phoned and told her that her sister had been in an auto accident and had been killed! It was just a “joke!” I can’t imagine someone being that cruel. The woman was seriously traumatized and had never gotten over it. It affected her sleep and her health. She still had flashbacks about that situation. I led her to forgive the ignorant person who perpetrated that vicious attack against her (you can probably tell that I am still angry at them, so Lord, I choose to forgive them!), and we ministered to her wounded heart to be healed of the trauma.

We were praying for a man in his 20's who had been traumatized as a boy. He lived on a farm, and one day he and his best friend were jumping out of a hay loft onto bales of hay. His friend pretended that he had missed the hay and fallen onto the ground. He cried out and then acted as if he were unconscious. The young man was so traumatized that he had a panic attack and couldn't breathe, and he had been having ongoing problems with panic for years. Of course, this was just a childish trick, and the other boy had no idea that his prank could hurt his friend, but this demonstrates the danger of practical jokes.

The worst situation of this type was with a man in Mexico who was perhaps 35 or 40. He said that when he was a little boy he was very close to his father and mother. One day his father said he was going to take him to town on a streetcar (there are still streetcars in some towns in Mexico). The boy was excited about getting to go on this adventure with his dad. They got on the streetcar, got a seat in the back, and it gradually became packed with riders. When the boy was looking out the window, his dad slipped into the crowd and hid several rows away so that he could peek at his son but the boy could not see him. When the little boy discovered that his father had disappeared, he went into a panic. His heart was racing, and he was utterly terrified and did not know what to do.

The father stayed hidden for nearly an hour before the streetcar emptied and he came back and laughed about what he had done. This broke the bonding between the son and his father. After that experience, he never loved or trusted or confided in his father until the day his father died. How terribly sad.

People, and especially children, are very fragile. Do not purposely frighten, embarrass, or humiliate anyone, especially your kids. Do not use fright-masks. Do not wake them up suddenly with a loud noise. Do not go along with family or friends who want to prank someone. *To do evil is like sport to a fool.*

LOVING MONEY

Jesus warned us clearly in the Sermon on the Mount: *Do not store up treasure on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal, but store up treasure in heaven. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. No one can serve two masters. You cannot serve God and Mammon.* Jesus is telling us that something is going to get our hearts, and that love of money has the potential of stealing God from us! Jesus says you cannot serve both God and Mammon. He uses the term Mammon instead of money, because Mammon was the pagan god of money, and Jesus is warning us that love of money becomes idolatry. It is demonic. It is a trap of the devil.

The power that money has over people is absolutely amazing. The History Channel recently had a series about the early financial barons in America: Carnegie, Rockefeller, J. P. Morgan, Henry Ford, Edison. They led in developing railroads, oil, automobiles, etc. They did a lot of good for the new nation. But they were all cut out of the same cloth as far as money was concerned. They were never satisfied with being the richest, most powerful man in the nation. They always wanted more. Being a billionaire (in today's dollars) was never enough. They wanted all the money, all the power, on earth. They destroyed their competitors. They destroyed their employees and consigned them to live in poverty. Sometimes they destroyed their friends and members of their own families. They were driven and consumed by the desire to have more.

When surveys have been made of the public, it has been discovered that nearly everyone feels that they need 25 or 30% more income in order to be satisfied and secure. This is true whether people are living on a poverty level or if they are millionaires or billionaires. All those early plutocrats wanted was more.

I want to ask you a very personal question: How much more money would you need in order to be satisfied, happy, and secure?

(Please email me your answer, and I will take care of it.)

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS NOT AN "IT"

I know that only extremely intelligent and spiritual people read my newsletter, so I apologize for bringing it up, but recently I heard a preacher refer to the Holy Spirit as an "it." In referring to the Holy Spirit, he said, "We need it in order to lead a Christian life." What? The Bible reveals that God exists in three divine persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We cannot comprehend that, but we accept it as revealed truth. In John chapters 14-17 Jesus says a lot about the Holy Spirit, and He says in different places that after He (Jesus) leaves, *The Holy Spirit will come to you; the comforter will come to you; God the Father will come to you; I will come to you; We will come to you;* etc. The Holy Spirit is God with us. He is a divine person, not an object, not an it.

Imagine that someone in our church asked a friend, Do you know Glenn Brown? And he answered, Yes, I know it. It's an old fossil that attends our church.

I would not like that. I admit that I am an old fossil, but beneath my dessicated, lizard-like exterior there still exists a human being, a person. You will have to take my word for it. Likewise, God is not an it. God the Father is in heaven. Jesus is seated beside Him in heaven. The Holy Spirit is the only God who is present with us on earth. (I am not entirely sure about that, but I think that it is the way it works.)

BETRAYED BY GOD?

That is a strange question. But it is true that it is all too common for Christians to feel that God has let them down, has broken His promises, or has in fact betrayed them. Wasn't that what Jesus was feeling when He cried out from the cross, *My God, my have you forsaken Me?*

Those people described in Hebrews 11 surely must have felt the same way. They all were commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. (Heb. 11:39) Abraham had been promised all of the land of Canaan, yet when he died he had not received any of it! Do you think he was tempted to feel deceived by God? But he did not believe that temptation, he continued to trust God – a fact that came from faith alone.

R. T. Kendall says that God does not betray us – ever! It has never happened. It never will happen. Dr. Kendall is one of my favorite preachers. He tells how he went through a time when he felt betrayed by God. When he was a young pastor he began to have visions. They came unexpectedly during a six month period. In the visions he saw his dad sitting in the

front row of a large tent, smiling and approving of his ministry. R. T. had changed from the denomination of his father and had been fearful that his father would be unhappy with him, but he felt greatly encouraged by the visions. However, his father came to see him and was greatly displeased and accused him of breaking with God. Then R. T. and his team purchased a huge tent that seated 2,000 and started holding evangelistic meetings. His father never attended the meetings, and no more than 30 people ever attended and it closed down in failure. R. T. felt betrayed. He was sure those visions came from God. But he refused to give up. He didn't understand the visions and still does not understand them, but he held onto God and repented for blaming Him.

Breaking the betrayal barrier is a spiritual achievement. Only if we can press on to trusting God, as Abraham did, as Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and the other great heroes of the faith did, as our Savior did, can we win the victory in our own lives. Here are some suggestions for you and me from Dr. Kendall:

- 1. Know that it is God's idea for you to break the betrayal barrier.** God often plays hard-to-get. You see that time and again in the Bible. Remember how Jesus treated the Syro-Phoenecian woman? The way He treated Joseph, Moses, and David. Those stories are in the Bible as examples and encouragements to us. The next time things go terribly wrong and God hides His face from you, press on. Don't give up. The breakthrough will come.
- 2. Accept this opportunity to know Him intimately.** God wants to know how much you truly want Him; whether or not you will be rebuffed by His keeping a painful distance from you. If you want the reward, you must persist in faith!
- 3. Don't complain, and do be grateful.** This is crucial. Grumbling and complaining does not work if you are trying to get God's attention. We are commanded to *Give thanks in all circumstances; not for them but in them.*
- 4. Pray and read your Bible more than ever.** When you feel let down by God, seek Him in prayer and in His Word. God likes your company. Press on and press in!
- 5. Walk in the light God gives you.** If you do this, God will show you things: about sin you didn't know you had; ways forward you hadn't thought about; new ways to be obedient that are important to your walk; a sense of duty that will put you on the right road.

I (Glenn) need to confess that I have been grumbling a lot because I have felt that God has not kept some promises about my family and other things. I want to publicly confess, repent, and ask God's forgiveness. This teaching by Dr. Kendall really pierced through the darkness and self-focus in my heart. I have determined to trust God with all my heart. God has never failed to keep His promises. Even when we are unfaithful so many times, He remains faithful. Let us choose this day to receive His love and forgiveness and to persist in faith. Never, never, never give up!

God Bless
Glenn

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