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## ARE YOU ALL IN?

On a Sunday afternoon last month I was sitting in my recliner watching golf. It is my habit all during the day to periodically pray in my prayer language silently or in a low voice when no one is around. As I was doing that I noticed some new words. That got my attention, so I turned off the golf, sat up and prayed aloud. I then asked the Lord for the interpretation of the words that I had spoken. Immediately some clear thoughts came to mind and I spoke them out in English. As far as I can remember in the 37 years since I had the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and received the gift of tongues, that is the first time this had ever happened.

The words that came to me were: **"My people, this is a time of greatly increasing pressure in the world, now is the time for you to choose to go all in for Me."**

Was that God or my imagination? Many people believe that every thought that comes into their minds is a word from God. They are wackos. It is entirely possible that I am a wacko, but I believe that I received a message from God for the following reasons:

- (1) That was a new and novel experience for me. It really got my attention. Of course, "tongues" and "interpretation" are two of the nine gifts of the Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12.
- (2) The words "all in" are to me a poker phrase. Although God probably knows all about poker (Do you think?), I would not consider putting that expression into a message from God. On occasion I have watched the World Series of Poker on TV (Oops! I shouldn't have told you that), where they are playing "Texas Hold'em" or Seven Card Stud. As the bet goes around the table, each better puts chips into the pot in the center based on whether he thinks his two hidden cards, his hole cards, combined with the five cards laid face up can beat the hand of the other players. Eventually someone may say, "I'm all in," and push all of his chips into the center. Then the other players must decide whether to fold or to go all in. If you lose, you are out of money and out of the tournament. God is asking us in this time of pressure, tension, and stress: "Are you all in for me?"
- (3) The two reasons just mentioned are interesting but not convincing. The main reason I believe it was a message from God is that not only is it undeniable that the world is in a time of greatly increasing pressure, but the challenge "to go all in for God" is Biblical. God did not send His Son to earth to start a new religion called Christianity where people attend services periodically and go on about their lives. Christ came to call us to a radical life of utter abandonment and obedience to God.

These are some of the things Jesus (or His followers) said about this type of life: "You must die to yourself, take up your cross and follow me." "As the Father sent me, I am sending you." "As you have been slaves of sin and slaves of the devil, I am calling you to be slaves of God." "You are not your own, you were bought with a price." "You are to make your body a living sacrifice for me." "You are to be totally transformed into a different kind of person by renewing your minds." "Don't think that living this type of life is going to make you popular, people in the world are going to hate you, curse you, even kill you, just as they will do to me, but don't let it worry you. I am going to prepare a home for you in heaven." Oh, yes, Jesus also called this type of life the ABUNDANT LIFE. He said it was a life of inner peace and rest, a life of companionship and adventure with the Creator of the universe where it would not be uncommon to see God move in great power, a life of freedom from addictions and bondages, a life totally devoid of all kinds of fears including the fear of death, and a life of anticipating unimaginable rewards in heaven.

Jesus tells us further that this type life is to be **marked mainly by love**. The Great Commandment, the commandment that summarizes all of God's commandments, is that you are to love God with all your heart and soul, and you are to love others, even your enemies, just as you do yourself. At the end of time Jesus will judge the churches that have existed all during history, and this judgment is described in Revelations, Chapters 2 and 3. The first church mentioned, Ephesus, is commended for their hard work and perseverance, but Christ rebukes them for having lost their first love. The last church mentioned, Laodicea, is rebuked for being luke-warm. They, too, had lost their first love. No matter what we do or how

faithfully we serve God, He is not satisfied if we don't have a burning, passionate love for Him - - - because that is the kind of love He has for us, the kind of love that would send His beloved Son to die on a cross for our sins.

A tour group visited Calcutta, India, to view the work of Mother Teresa and her Sisters of Charity. At the end of the day one of the ladies said, "Mother Teresa, I wouldn't do what you do for a million dollars!" Mother Teresa responded, "Neither would I." She was doing it for love, love of God and love for the poor. Are we really all in?

A few Sundays ago a lady named Gloria came to the altar with an eight year-old girl. She told me she also had two other children and that she was raising them alone. She told me she had been supporting her family with a low-paying job, but that she had been trained and worked in the past as a medical tech. She applied for a job in a clinic with two doctors. They accepted her, but she told them it had been several years since she had done that type work, so she had reservations. The doctors told her not to worry about it, that they would train her for two months, and they were sure she could handle it. So she resigned from her other job. After ten days they sent the office manager to tell her she was not working out, and they let her go. Her original job was already filled, and because she quit that job she was not qualified for benefits. She said, "I can't find another job. I am going to lose my home. I don't know how to feed my children."

I prayed for the lady, encouraged her, and told her to call our Helps Ministry. But to tell you the truth, I felt like a phony. I felt like the man James talks about who said to hungry people, "Go your way, be warmed and filled," without giving them any practical help. Because I know that our Helps Ministry is overwhelmed with the needs of desperate people. Rick Kenagy tells me they are getting fifteen or twenty calls a day from people like Gloria. What are we supposed to do? We can't assume the mortgages of twenty families, or forty or fifty families.

I have an idea: Let's say to the congregation that everyone is asked to bring all their savings to a special account at the church, cash in their 401-K's, their stocks and bonds, etc. We will say, If you have two cars, bring one to the church, or sell it and bring the money. If you have two houses, likewise. If you have a big house, call us and we will bring Gloria and her kids over to live with you until she can get a job. Of course, all of us who are leaders in the church should set the example. We can't ask the congregation to do something that we don't do first. Right?

You might say, Glenn, that is too extreme, too radical. But what if Gloria were your sister? What if Gloria is you. What if you lose your job and your home, and you have to start living in your car or in a tent down by the river? Does it sound extreme then?

Let's see what the early church did in the midst of difficult times: *Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.* (Acts 2:44) And later, when pressure and persecution had started by the Jews and by the occupying Romans: *Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands and houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold and laid them at the apostles' feet, and they distributed to each as anyone had need.* (Acts 4:32-35)

Friends, I am not really suggesting we do this. It is not up to me to make such a suggestion even if I thought it was the right thing to do, and at this point I am not sure what we should do. And if you continue to read in Acts 4 you will see that each member of the church had the freedom to donate or not donate to help those in need. There was no coercion, no putting guilt on people to participate. All I know is that the times are growing increasingly desperate. What if in the next year or two in our church (and your church) there are 100 Glorias? 200? 400?

Our government has lost its cotton-picking mind. Their solution to our nation's financial problems is to spend a trillion dollars of borrowed money, most of which was donated to big bankers and stock brokers. We are going to borrow and spend our way out of debt? Of course I did not go to Harvard, but to me that sounds irrational. Have you read what many economists are telling us? Our spending as a nation is unsustainable. Within a short time the interest on all our debt plus the entitlements will devour every dollar that comes in. There won't be any money for social programs or even for national defense. Our states are going bankrupt. By the end of this year many states will be closing schools, letting go policemen and firemen, emptying prisons. Some economists say that a disastrous slide is the best scenario. The worst is sudden, total worldwide economic collapse with resulting mass starvation, rioting, and insurrection. Our world has already crossed a threshold. We are never going back to the world in which we have grown up. Things will never be the same. If you disagree with this assessment, you are in denial. (Joel Osteen, I am not.)

In 1998 while I was on two separate mission trips to Mexico, I had three prophetic dreams about what lay ahead for our nation. I don't have time to go into those dreams, but I will briefly tell about the final dream I had while on another trip to Mexico in 2004. In the dream I was viewing the United States from space. Then I was standing on the East Coast, and I

saw a white battle-ship sailing up and down guarding the coast. Then a black plane came from the north and dropped a bomb which struck the middle of the ship. The ship immediately broke in two and sank. Then I heard words, "**My protection has been removed!**"

I believe the terrorist attack of 9/11/01 was a test for the United States. Not that God did that, evil men did it. But God viewed it as a test. We failed. Our country did not repent and turn to God. It kept on about its business of making money, power, ambition, gross immorality, and kicking God out of our nation, even revising our history to deny He had ever been a part of it. More importantly, the church did not repent and turn to God. We kept on about our business also. So in addition to 9/11, we are involved in two wars which we are not winning because they are unwinnable. (When those folks are not bombing our troops, they are bombing each other's mosques. They are not going to adopt a form of democracy because they don't have a world view that is amenable to democracy.) We have also had Hurricane Katrina, the bubble-bursting economic downturn of 2008, and the Gulf oil spill. Ahead, if we are in the end times that the Bible describes, are increased natural disasters, increased terrorism, and persecution of those who name the name of Jesus Christ and claim that He is the only way to God. (Are we really all in? Are we ready to suffer and die for that name?)

What should our attitude be? That God has birthed us in this place at this moment in history for such a time as this. It is a time of great opportunity to win souls for eternity, and we shall surely see God's hand move in mighty ways. Yes, there will be suffering, but the God who caused bread to fall from heaven and who fed thousands with a little boy's lunch is certainly able to take care of His own. Consider the reaction of the early church when it was threatened with the loss of all things: *So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said, "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them.....Now, Lord, look on their threats and grant to your servants that with all boldness they may speak your word, by stretching out your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus." And when they had prayed, the place where they assembled together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.* (Acts 4:24-31)

And Peter spoke comforting words to a church that was undergoing horrible suffering under the insane Emperor Nero: *Blessed be our God and Father who has prepared for us an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love...and rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.* (1 Peter 1:3-9)

Whether any of the scary things that I have mentioned come to pass, it is still true that God calls you and me to go all in for Him. Are you ready to push all your chips to the center of the table, anything and everything that you value in this life, and say, "Lord, I am all in for You!" I suggest that you reflect on Jesus' words to His followers in the upper room as He was preparing to go to the cross and as He was preparing them for what lay ahead: John, chapters 14, 15, and 16.

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## **WHAT ABOUT PEOPLE WHO HAVE NEVER HEARD OF JESUS?** From Why Faith

Makes Sense by Will Davis, Jr. (the words in parentheses are mine.)

The most troubling question about Christianity is that of the eternal future of those who have not heard of Jesus Christ. From statements like, "No one comes to the father except through me" (John 14:6), it's easy to draw the conclusion that god is calloused toward those who haven't had the chance to know Jesus. God seems to be saying that if someone happens to be so unfortunate as to be born in a land or time in which Christ is not known, then his soul is in peril.

Let's acknowledge the difference between not hearing about Jesus and rejecting Jesus. God does not hold people accountable for what they don't know but for what they do know. Jesus' statement, "No one comes to the Father except through me," is not saying that those who never hear of him are immediately condemned. He does not even address the eternal condition of those who don't hear about him. He was saying that if people are going to come to God, then they are going to have to come through the means God has established. When people believe in and yield to Jesus and his death on the cross, they are declared forgiven, holy, and adopted as God's children. But when people hear of Jesus and reject his claims, they reject the only means God has provided by which their sins can be forgiven.

But people who have never heard of Christ can't be judged the same way, but only for their awareness of God. According to the Bible, every person alive has an overwhelming awareness of God. Psalm 19, Romans 1, and many other scriptures make it clear that the case for God as revealed in nature is undeniable. (Romans 1 says that every person also has an inner knowing of the nature of God.) Every person has all the information necessary to come into a saving relationship with God

(or to inspire him to initiate a search for God to which He will always graciously respond). When a person humbly acknowledges God, I believe the effect of Jesus' blood is applied to them. They may have never heard of Jesus or been aware of his death on the cross, but through their humble acknowledgement of and submission to the God of creation, the saving grace of Jesus' death is applied to them. When Rahab, a harlot who lived in the pagan and godless city of Jericho, humbled herself and sought the favor of the God of Israel, Jesus became the way to God for her. Likewise for Jethro, the Midianite father-in-law of Moses, and for the people of Ninevah who repented after hearing the preaching of Jonah.

But scripture shows that there are conditions and limits to the access Jesus provides to God. Here are some descriptions of the types of people who miss the way:

- Those who hear about Jesus and reject him. Such people seal their fate for eternity.
- Those who believe there is a God but think he can be bribed. Rather than humbling themselves before god and seeking his mercy, they seek to appease him through religious practices, behaviors, or sacrifices. Isaiah 40 and Deut. 10:17 say that God cannot be bought. When an Aztec offers his son as a human sacrifice, or a Muslim attempts to gain favor with god by keeping the five major tenets of Islam, they miss the point (also when a Jew tries to earn his way to heaven by keeping the law, or a "Christian" by works of service and religion instead of through humbly trusting in Christ's sacrifice).
- Those who try to dodge the issue. Some people reason that if they don't vote for or against Jesus, then they can't be held accountable for their decision. Captain Chris is an example of such thinking. He runs a boat charter business on the island of Port Aransas, Texas. Chris refused to be nailed down on the issue of Jesus. He felt that Jesus was a great idea for those who needed or wanted him, but he isn't one of those people. He felt if he stayed neutral, stayed on the fence, then he was perfectly safe. But Jesus said, "If you are not for me, you are against me." There are no loopholes to allow us to worm our way out of being fully accountable to God. (That means that God becomes God to me, and that I am no longer my own God.)
- Those who redefine God. This group makes the God of creation into something less than holy and infinite, so that they do not need to humble themselves before him. Many Mormons believe that god is simply an evolved man. Buddhists claim that God is part of a pantheon of other gods, all of whom they can gain access to and become part of through reincarnation and good works. Hindus have a diverse belief system, which can include belief in one god, many gods, or no god at all. People who seek to redefine God clearly reject his revelation through nature (and through conscience). In doing so, they also miss the way that Jesus made available to them.

God, rather than being the brute that culture has painted him as, is actually a benevolent and gracious deity who has gone to extremes to make sure we all have the chance to know him - including the extreme of sacrificing his own Son.

### QUOTED

It is required of a steward that he be found *faithful* (not *famous*). (1 Cor 1:4)

It is dangerous to pray and seek to hear from God if you don't know the Word of God. The Bible protects us from being unbalanced and going off into weirdness.

The Bible says that our minds are to be "renewed," not "removed."

### OUR MIRACULOUS BIBLE

If you open your Bible to its center, you will find the Book of Psalms. Psalm 118 is the exact central chapter, the very middle of the Bible. There are 594 chapters from Genesis through Psalm 117, and 594 chapters from the beginning of Psalm 119 to the end of Revelation.

Psalm 117 is the shortest chapter in the Bible, with only two verses. Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible, with 176 verses. Verse 8 in Psalm 118 is the middle verse of the entire Bible. It reads: ***It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.***

This might be a good verse for all of us to memorize.

## **DO YOU WANT TO GROW AS A CHRISTIAN?**

If a young man loves to play golf, is an above average golfer, and decides his goal in life is to be on the professional golfing tour, how would he go about achieving that goal? Obviously it does not just "happen." There are many excellent golfers, but only a few can rise to the level of excellence required of those who become touring professionals. That young man must devote his life to the discipline and training required to give himself a chance to achieve his ambition. The same is true for a person who wants to be a professional musician, engineer, or physician.

It is remarkable that many Christians who truly desire to grow as Christians don't comprehend that discipline and training are required. If you are serious about this matter, let me suggest you search for some books about the spiritual disciplines. Following are some disciplines that you might learn about: **Prayer; Reading and meditating on God's Word; Fasting (of food, alcohol, sweets, TV); Giving (above what is normal, giving as led by the Spirit); Praying in tongues (praying in tongues a minimum of 15 or 20 minutes per day will grow your spirit); Silence; Solitude.**

I have not practiced all of these disciplines, but I am practicing some of them and learning about some of the others. There are many classic books and a few modern books on these disciplines. If you are interested, you can search them out.

Glenn

Web-site: [www.glennbrownministries.com](http://www.glennbrownministries.com)

I would like to thank each of you for your support of this ministry.

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