

# The UNION

*Get Ready to Meet the King!*

God Calls His Church to  
Truth, Faith and Holiness

2019

*Joan H. Richardson*

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# My Story

When the Syrian army laid siege to Samaria, the capital city suffered famine and hardship. Then Elisha prophesied that bounty would belong to Israel in just one day. Meanwhile, four lepers were considering their hopeless condition outside the gates. Determined to survive, they would have surrendered to the Syrians, but when they arrived at their camp, they found it abandoned. God had sent a spirit of fear against their enemies who left all their provisions behind them and ran for their lives!

The men agreed they would not keep the good news to themselves but would share the wealth with their people who lived within the city walls. The famine ended when the lepers freed the people by the news of their discovery outside the gates.

The Word of the LORD strengthens the weak and the outcasts and cleanses and heals the lepers. As we survey our enemies' deserted camps, He reveals the victory of His divine power and gives us the plunder. Then at last, God sends us who have lived outside the gates to set them at liberty within the city walls.

The lessons were hard—we nearly died, but He made us whole to take good news to the city of our brethren: “Look! The LORD has scattered our foes, and the famine is finished!” [See 2 Kings 6:24-7:16]

## My Conversion to Christianity

<sup>26</sup> For you see your calling, brothers and sisters, that not many are wise according to human standards, not many are powerful, and not many are born well. <sup>27</sup> Yet God chose the foolish things of the world so He might put to shame the wise; and God chose the weak things of the world so He might put to shame the strong; <sup>28</sup> and God chose the lowly and despised things of the world, the things that are as nothing, so that He might bring to nothing the things that are—<sup>29</sup> so that no human might boast before God. <sup>30</sup> But because of Him you are in Messiah Yeshua, who became to us wisdom from God and righteousness and holiness and redemption—<sup>31</sup> so that, just as it is written, “Let him who boasts, boast in ADONAI” (1 Corinthians 1:26-31 TLV) [*ADONAI* = LORD, YHWH]

In 1969 during a “nervous breakdown” in my senior year of college, I knew my sins had found me out. The stress of the

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breakdown forced me to acknowledge my spiritual condition. Then I turned to faith in Jesus who instantly delivered me from heavy smoking, overindulgent drinking, incontinent cursing, and substance abuse. My mind had been filled with perversions and fascinations with the occult. After receiving the unknown spirits of mysticism, I had quickly become a boastful, audacious liar.

When I asked the Lord Jesus into my heart, however, my faith in Him changed everything at once—in a moment of time! I was sincerely repentant, and the Savior was wonderfully kind. Instantly I knew it was true: Jesus is the Son of God and the only way to the Father. He had paid the price for my sins and then circumcised my heart; suddenly removing my many bad habits, He changed my world. My life has never been the same.

My extraordinary salvation experience provided all I would need for the terrible battles ahead. I grew certain that He who had transformed me would also give me victory. Though my new life had begun, I would face years of mental and emotional afflictions. Several psychiatrists diagnosed my case as paranoid schizophrenic, and the prognosis was dreadful. Some pastors were unconvinced that I'd received the Lord, but they could not dissuade the tenacious faith He had given me.

<sup>51</sup> He hath shown strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. <sup>52</sup> He hath put down the mighty from *their* seats, and exalted them of low degree. (Luke 1:51-52)

Though Jesus had changed my heart, for the next three years, I fought devils that confused and oppressed my thoughts and emotions. Indescribable, even supernatural—despondency, fears, confusion, paranoia, delusions, and turmoil overwhelmed me. The battlefield was my mind, and the prize was my soul.

The Savior was my only hope; the Word of God, my only strength. Losing was not an option. Persevering, I won battles, insisting the Bible was true—that its verses were more real than my trials. Driven by the fear of God, I gained the victory.

His Spirit has taught me to walk on water; when all around, life falls apart, I walk in peace. Though seas and storms rise and fall, I rest in His presence. Yielding to His will with my faith in Jesus Christ, I can obey His Word by His empowerment. As I

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decrease, emptied of my willful and selfish desires, His Spirit increases in me and holds me up. I have become accustomed to walking on water since I know that otherwise, I would sink.

The impression of my past remains with me today. Turning back is unthinkable. Through terrible afflictions, I desperately cleaved to my faith in Christ, embracing trials like a vessel that yields to its Artisan; the Potter's hands broke me to reform me. Now I am convinced that He who healed my deceived, confused, and shattered mind can also heal the deceived, confused, and divided church. In fact, His words change all who turn to the truth from falsehood, but for those who have not yet taken up the cross, the hour is so late!

### The Thorn

I have two gifts: a painful thorn and a tenacious will. The irony is that without either one, I would not need the other. I wish it weren't necessary, but my testimony is in my frailty that magnifies His strength. He shows His power in my weaknesses to reveal His glory. I know the Lord called an unlikely one for this project, but I can't shrink back. Tenacity has its rewards: My faith has been tested to do this one thing well.

<sup>7</sup> And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.<sup>8</sup> Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.<sup>9</sup> And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.<sup>10</sup> Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:7-10 NKJV)

Having been inspired by the visible presence of the Spirit in a missionary at a Bible conference in 1970, I took his exhortation to die to my own will by surrendering my whole life to Christ; I died and yet lived! Charles Woodbridge had based his talk on Romans 12:1-2: *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy,*

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*acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God.*

### The Mantle

In 1974 I heard a deep, resonant, audible voice, the supernatural voice of the Lord—or was it an angel? I was standing in the balcony of the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh when He spoke words I could not have known: that she would not live much longer and that He was giving me Kathryn Kuhlman's mantle. In moments, she said the same words just below me and shared her prayer for God to give someone else her mantle. The Holy Spirit covered me, and I dropped into my seat face-down.

I never personally met Miss Kuhlman, and she never knew what happened that day. I thought if she knew my past, she'd never believe God had spoken to me. She said something else that struck me that morning: that she wished she had known the Holy Spirit better than she had. I am not Kathryn Kuhlman, but I've had to depend on the Holy Spirit ever since my conversion.

When I asked my pastor what to do next, he told me God would do it, so I patiently waited. For forty years, I lived expecting God to do what He'd already done. Then I blamed myself for missing His will till I realized God has had everything in my life under His control. Since the day His name touched my lips, He has been teaching me His truth, even giving me glimpses into mysteries. It would have been senseless to have forged my own way; He alone opens and shuts doors that can neither be closed nor opened apart from Him; having given up my life, I couldn't miss His will.

### The Commission

Months after the Pittsburgh meeting, YHWH opened the first door, radio broadcasting. Beginning at an AM/FM combination in Philadelphia, from nine till noon every Sunday, my husband and I co-hosted a new contemporary Christian music program we called *Man Alive!* For the next eight years, we spread the gospel across America, syndicated on more than fifty stations—with free airtime.

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In six years, we were on Mexico's XERF, live nightly, covering much of the world on the border blaster. Most of our audiences were secular. Our contemporary music blended with the stations' formats. Some professing Christians who denied the miracle-working power of God called it "the devil's music," but we thought angels were singing when we heard *Easter Song!*

Together we worked in broadcasting for the extent of our marriage, twenty-three years, propagating the gospel to untold numbers. Then in 1996, Mike contracted brain cancer. Seventeen months later, the man who had taught me love passed on to be with Jesus at 46. After his death, it seemed strange, picking up the pieces of the life that remained. I did my best to console and strengthen our three children, but we were all overwhelmed. By the grace of God, we made it through.

Though sated with His Holy Spirit for several years, I didn't know what to do about it. I'd been speaking in nursing homes since 2002 but longed to serve Him more. Often I'd cried out in prayer, "I feel like I'm pregnant, ready to give birth. Lord Jesus, what do You want me to do? Write a book? Who'd read it?!" I wanted to write about what He'd been teaching me, but I was unknown and without credentials—the idea seemed impossible and unreasonable. I couldn't step out on my own; that would be testing the Lord. I had to be certain His Spirit was leading me in everything and that my heart was submissive to His will.

Suddenly one morning in the fall of 2003, His voice woke me with a stunning command: "Write a book!" Of course I had to obey God, so I began writing. For Him to work out His glory, first I needed to expose my shameful past. Not until halfway through writing *A Thorn in My Flesh*, did I realize God was making me a writer. I never imagined I'd be one.

By 2008, I'd added four prisons and a homeless mission to my speaking venues but longed for more opportunities. I hadn't found an editor yet, and the fullness of His Spirit was overwhelming, stirring me to move, but which way? What could I do but pray?

After a few uncanny events, a strange name entered my mind: Reinhard Bonnke. Since I couldn't contain the fullness of the Spirit any longer, I typed a quick email and explained my difficulty. The following day I received a personal invitation

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from Reinhard Bonnke for face-to-face time with him in Florida. In less than a week, I sent the required materials and paid the price by faith. Three weeks later, in early September, I boarded the plane to Orlando.

### The Anointing

The first morning, I sat among twenty-two evangelists from around the world, there to meet for twelve hours with the tireless leader. As we stood for early worship, I shut my eyes, unaware when Brother Reinhard took his place directly in front of me. I opened my eyes, and the ceiling opened—Whoosh!—the Spirit suddenly fell on me. I nearly dropped to the floor! Heaven got my attention when the vat of power from above poured over me.

When the evangelist asked us to introduce ourselves, there was no strength left in me. Still trembling, I raised myself from my seat by holding onto chair backs; searching for the words, I burst, “I don’t know about the rest of you, but I can hardly stand up!” Had it happened to them too? The group looked at me quizzically. I was shaken, weak, and unimpressive.

I asked our brother, “What should I do with all this power?” He gave his normally terse reply: “Press in,” he said. That was it for me, but it was all I’d need. Those words would return to me much later as I wrote, pressing in while searching for the truth.

I have learned to understand the Word by first believing it; next receiving it; then hearing its message. I began to see a God who doesn’t conform to our ideas or opinions of Him: Sovereign, He doesn’t live to please us or to do things the way we expect Him to do them. When we abide in His will and have faith that He will answer us, we can be certain He will respond in the affirmative. Our prayers reach the heart of God, but He keeps His words; even so, our humble faith is His pleasure.

A few years passed before I could relate my experience in Orlando to others. Then I recalled a request I’d made thirty-five years before, kneeling at my bedside in a psychiatric hospital where I’d cried out, “I want it all! I want the double portion, Lord!” In my weakness, I needed His strength, but He’d wait to answer that prayer: first with Kathryn’s mantle and now this!

The outpouring still supports me: when life’s tests require a strong but yielded mind, His gracious strength sustains me. Since then, I’ve spoken with stunning results by abandoning myself to

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the Holy Spirit, trusting in Him to speak His words through me. I also found the editor for my first book, and the next year, I published *A Thorn in My Flesh* and was freed from my disgrace at last! One of the first copies saved a soul from suicide. Then some good news came—my story was giving hope, comfort, and life to prisoners, and they rejoiced to read it. I had planted my life like a seed that died to bear fruit, and my shame died with it.

One morning in January, 2010, the Word of the Lord quietly came: “Haven’t I taught you the truth?” I replied, “Yes, Lord, You have.” He’d been teaching me His Word for years, and it was setting me free. He continued, “But the church is divided by deceptions.” So that was it! His Spirit proceeded, leading me to write another book. Satan invaded us with confusion and deceit to divide us—how did that happen? I began investigating history and searching the Word.

## The Vision

When I was young, I believed it would take years for me to gain credibility. I’d endured many terrible trials, which I thought disqualified me, but I was wrong. Father does not require the credentials of this world. He uses the least likely and changes the most foolish to glorify Himself, bringing to nothing the idols of the world. He makes His strength perfect in us when we have no strength without Him. When we don’t understand, we must rely on Him whose ways are not like ours.

Not many years ago, I considered how long I’d worked to gain dignity and how quickly I’d lost it. Instantly His Holy Spirit spoke to me in a thought: “This is not about your dignity. This is for My glory.” I believe He chose the least of all to ferret out the truth of His words so that no flesh would rob Him of glory for the hour is late, and we are lost in the maze of confusion.

I am neither a theologian nor a scholar; that is to say, I have not received my instruction from men. I have no degree and am not ordained by any man; I have no agenda, and am not obliged to anyone but Christ. I desire the truth at any cost.

His Holy Spirit is my greatest Teacher and closest Ally. Though I longed to know the roots of the truth, He kept me from a Bible-school education, convincing me to trust in Him instead of men who’ve learned from men before them—He teaches me, and that’s all I know.

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Without foreseeing His plans, I instinctively searched for an accurate understanding of the apostles' writings. I'd rarely read books other than the Bible, not seeing the sense of reading others since His words had been changing my life. I fearlessly resolved to believe God only—a *daring* move! My commission became the work of the Holy Spirit. As I wrote, His Word straightened the crooked paths of my misunderstandings. I pressed into the Scriptures, taking them in, meditating on them, and then tearing down the strongholds that had prevented my faith from receiving their words. I shunned opinions and interpretations, praying and mulling over everything I read, imploring His Spirit to open His Word and reveal the truth. He led me on, renewing my mind.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.” ”

(Revelation 2:17 NKJV)

It came to me in 2010: it began as a dream in the night: the man of God told me to deliver the message; then its fire shot into my heart, and the dream turned into a vision. I woke up, stunned by the fire still burning inside me! This has not been my own doing; the fire became a passion, filling my days and nights with meditations. I've been writing under His fire since then.

At first, I thought it was for economy, but now I know that for His glory, I've written, proofread, edited, and typeset this book, relying on His Holy Spirit. He taught me all I needed to know. I learned as I believed and pressed into the Spirit for answers to my many questions. The Lord had called me to learn His Word with His Spirit as my Rabbi-Teacher.

Some say I'm misled because I expect to find the truth—that I'm arrogant to try, and that no one can know what the truth is. If He is not the Teacher, I'd be incapable of the meditations and revelations I've experienced since 2010.

Now may His shalom be with all who love the Lord Jesus with unashamed, uncompromised, and undying love. Blessings to all who live for the only Savior, the Lord Jesus, praying, “Oh, Light of the World, shine, speak, live through me!”

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The Revelation of Jesus Christ