

# Pressing On!

Philippians 3:12-14

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NEW  
TESTAMENT  
MINISTRIES -  
UNLIMITED

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PRESSING ON!

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is published 3x-a-year

## Watch How You Build

Howel  
Jones

Lessons from  
1 Corinthians

The Corinthian letters together represent a full dialogue between Paul and a church with real needs. But those *real* needs were different from the ones they thought they had!

Having had a disastrous time in Athens, Paul had come to Corinth focusing on basics: the "preaching of the Cross" as the answer to problems and the foundation for life. A church was established, but the Corinthian believers were exposed to a number of influences, both in terms of pagan practices in the cosmopolitan city, and in the message and personality of other visitors to the church. The result was compromise, low levels of moral behavior, misperceptions and confusion. It was to set them right that he wrote this letter.

In looking at the letter as a whole we can identify two phases in his approach. In the first four chapters he repeats his 'basics' and explains that the preaching of the Cross, though disparaged, is in fact the secret of life. It takes away sin and establishes a positive wisdom in its place. Christ is the foundation: and on that foundation they are to build a structure. Paul's contribution is to lay that foundation and to help them build. Their role is to do the building with care, knowing that it will be "tried by fire". The choice of materials - in the form of right behavior - is therefore critical. As it is, with quarrelling, compromising, and slacking, they are immature, like children wanting milk instead of strong meat. It is this 'meat' that he delivers in the letter.

The second phase is a survey of their existing structure measured against the standard of "the Cross". It doesn't look good, for in chapters 5 and 6 there is evidence of lust and lawsuits. In 7, 8 and 9 there is confusion over "things in this life only" - issues which are part of Christian living but are, at best, only temporary arrangements whose proper use is intended as 'scaffolding' to help spiritual growth. That leads to a challenge. So far, their structure would hardly stand, so God sends testing experiences, intended to develop the good. Moving on to chapters 11 - 15 it becomes apparent that even those spiritual elements they *did* have were being used wrongly: worship was a shambles, the exercise of gifts - especially without Love, so wonderfully expressed in chapter 13 - was a matter of proud boasting rather than mutual help; and in doubting the resurrection they were in danger of losing their 'raison d'être'. Their predicament was not a happy one. Their building was more combustible "wood, hay, stubble" than enduring "gold, silver and precious stones". Paul was writing to them as their father, to correct this and to encourage them to be "*steadfast, unmovable, always abounding*", so that their work would not be in vain.

What can we learn from this passionate letter? So many of its features are familiar territory: living as Christians in a hostile environment, adverse influences, diverse messages, etc. It is back to basics, and a recognition that the Cross divides the new from the old, introduces a positive and sets the challenge of how to build on that given, unique, foundation!

The challenge is: "*let each man watch how he builds*" and be careful what materials you use and how you use them. There is no room for the forbidden (lusts and lawsuits). And the natural things of this life (marriage, material things and even rights and privileges) are to be used judiciously as temporary arrangements. The essential elements of worship and service are to be governed by love, **true** love, and the whole fitted into the framework of a firm belief in the reality of the hereafter.

Whether those lessons were learned and practised is something we shall look at in the next book - *Second Corinthians*.





**Fifty  
years  
ago**

# June 17, 1963

The woman who proudly called herself "the most hated woman in America", Madalyn Murray O'Hair, America's foremost atheist crusader, filed a lawsuit, in which she asserted that it was unconstitutional for her son William to be required to participate in Bible readings at Baltimore public schools. A landmark Supreme Court ruling in her favor ended official Bible-reading in all American public schools...

It was a great victory, but her diaries release glimpses of doubts about her cause and its impact on her life. "I think atheism is done for this time. I have failed in marriage, motherhood, as a politician." At times there appear cries of despair. "Somebody, somewhere, love me," is written six times. In 1995 she was kidnapped with her other son, and a granddaughter, by an atheist colleague. Their disappearance remained a mystery until in 2001 the culprit led the police to the place where, after murdering them, he had dismembered the bodies and buried the remains.

Charles Colson wrote: **"Madalyn Murray O'Hair sought to live her entire life in a manner consistent with atheism. And yet, in the secrecy of her diaries, she admitted it was impossible."**

\*\*\*\*\*

## *William J. Murray's Testimony of the Grace of God*

I was born into a home of near constant rage and violence. My mother never married my father or my brother's father. As a result of my mother's constant angry outbursts, she could not hold down a job and she, my brother and I lived with her parents and my unmarried uncle in a small row house in Baltimore, Maryland.

My grandfather had never filed an income tax return and most of what he did do during his life was illegal or ill advised. He had no savings. My grandmother read Tarot cards and sent out demons by burning human hair.

My uncle kept hoards of pornography in his room and my mother filled the house with statues of mating animals which she worshipped.

My mother accepted the communist doctrine when I was about ten years old and from that time on there were socialist and communist study group meetings in the basement of our Baltimore home.



I was taught that because there was no God there was no such thing as right or wrong. My mother told me it was better to be a homosexual than to be a Christian. She taught me that the most important things in life were the physical pleasures of drink, food and sex.

For many years I lived the life I was taught. I drank a quart of vodka a day and by the time I was thirty I had been married twice. I lived only to eat, drink and have what I thought were sexual pleasures.

But a time came when women and booze no longer gave me the happiness that my atheist mother told me they would bring. I was consuming so much alcohol that it no longer got me high. I started using marijuana and other drugs to supplement the alcohol which had betrayed me.

At age thirty I began to realize how empty my life had been. There were no people in my life. My only friends were cigarettes and booze. It was that realization that led me on my search for God. I had seen every evil in the world and now wanted to see the other side of life...

I turned to a "Twelve Step Program" to stop the drinking and there found my first awareness of a loving God. Yet that God had no name. In a novel I read the story of the great physician, Luke, and I yearned to have the relationship and love of God this man had, but I did not know how to reach God.

On January 25, 1980, as I slept in my apartment in San Francisco, God spoke to me. He directed me to seek the truth in the Holy Bible. This was the one place I had never looked for the nature of God, for it was this very book that my mother had removed from our nation's schools by her lawsuit in 1963.

Now awakened by the call of God I drove to a downtown discount department store and there found a Bible under stacks of pornography. The gay checkout clerk laughed at me for buying a Bible.

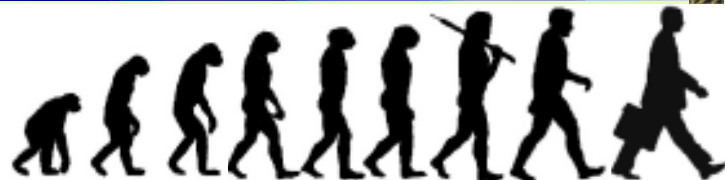
But, it was in this Bible that I found the truth about Jesus Christ. The truth that sets a man free. That truth is that Jesus paid the price for my sin so I could be born anew and be a new man and have the gift of eternal life. I learned that this gift was mine for the asking. All I had to do was repent of my sins and ask Christ into my life as Lord!

My life began when Christ came into my life. Your life too will begin again when you turn to Him and let Him reign in your heart!



## PERSPECTIVE OF ONE EVOLUTIONIST

"There is a popular image of human evolution that you'll find all over the place, from the backs of cereal packets to advertisements for expensive scientific equipment. On the left of the picture there's an ape - stocky, jutting jaw, hunched in the knuckle-walking position. On the right, a man - graceful,



high forehead, striding purposefully into the future. Between the two is a succession of figures that become ever more like humans, as the shoulders start to pull back, the torso slims down, the arms retract, the legs extend, the cranium expands and the chin recedes. Our progress from ape to human looks so smooth, so tidy. It's such a beguiling image that even the experts are loath to let it go. **But it is an illusion."**

Bernard Wood, paleoanthropologist & evolutionist  
(Source: CREATION Magazine - Vol. 34, N° 1)





# The Angel, the Key-Man, the Tongues and the Fragrance

## Centurion Cornelius and King Herod Agrippa,

of Acts 10-12, are **both** stationed in Caesarea, **both** may be called seasoned imperialists, **both** have lots of friends among the Jews, **both** have the visit of an angel, **both** react to the apostle Peter and his message, and **both**, though beholden to the "king of kings" in Rome, are confronted with the Gospel of the true **King of kings**.

### THE CONTRAST

**King Agrippa** reigns by the grace of Rome, but he has no sympathy for the Gospel of the grace of God, and prefers to follow in the steps of his grandfather, Herod the Great. His astute policies, premeditated for his greater glory, land dire consequences on his head, even as he sits on his glorious throne...

An angel of God strikes him, and Agrippa comes to a most inglorious end.

**Cornelius, the centurion**, deeply meditates on all that his Jewish friends tell him about the one true God (Acts 10:2, 22). An angel tells him what to do and, when faced with the Gospel, Cornelius says "**Yes**". In fact, it could be said that at that moment he meets his death - the death of his old life.

He receives **new life** and henceforth is committed to a new "**EMPIRE**" (Daniel 2:35, 44).

(For your interest we have included a graphic of the Herod family on page 5. Don't miss it!)

### THE ANGEL

Have you noticed the ministry of angels in Acts of the Apostles? If you have, it will have confirmed to your heart that the activities of 'Acts' weren't just human activities. Evidently heaven was much involved in the establishment of its kingdom on earth. Apart from the appearance of angels in certain circumstances, there were other indications of the supernatural - the resurrected Lord himself might appear, there might be a voice or a vision, and most importantly the Holy Spirit would communicate his guidance and his enabling, again and again.

The fact that at times angels were involved during those 30 odd years, must not be exaggerated. Of the total of 28 chapters in Acts, there are only five where we meet an angel on a mission, i.e. in chapters 5, 8, 10, 12 and 27. Was that angel the very same one every time? All we know is that he is called "angel of the Lord" or "angel of God". In chapter 5 he opens the prison doors; in 8 he gives Philip his marching orders; in 10 he delivers a message to Cornelius; in 12 he first gets Peter out of the maximum security prison, then strikes Agrippa; and in 27 he stands by Paul who is about to be shipwrecked.

In Hebrews 1 we find the vast contrast between, on the one hand, the "**Son of God**" - the Creator - and, on the other, the angels, who after all are no more than creatures. Psalm 104 is quoted to describe them: "**Who makes his angels spirits and his ministers a flame of fire**". At the end of the chapter the rhetorical question is asked: "**Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to min-**

**ister for those who will inherit salvation?**"

Then in Hebrews 2 the angels are contrasted again, this time with "man" and with the "**Son of Man**". In creation angels are higher than 'man', yet in redemption the 'man-in-Christ' is just as much 'higher' than the angels, as the Christ is higher. Paul asks the Corinthian believers if they don't know that 'we' are to judge angels (1 Co. 6:3). We have much to be grateful for! God's angels minister to his children, even though most of the time we are not even aware of them.

Cornelius - no doubt a hardened soldier - had a good scare as God's angel suddenly appeared. But how deeply appreciative, and full of anticipation, that visit must have left him. Taking action right away, he got three trusted men to prepare to travel to Joppa the following morning early...

But why didn't the angel simply give him the Gospel in the first place? Why did Cornelius' men have to travel all the way to Joppa (i.e. 30 miles) to find Peter, and back again? Do angels not know the Gospel? To this last question we must reply that they know the Gospel better than we do. They are highly intelligent beings. Added to that, their emotions come into play over one sinner on earth who repents. Throughout the centuries and millenniums the angels have been closely watching God's plan of redemption unfolding (1 P. 1:12). Did not God give us a practical illustration of this when He commanded Moses to make two cherubim on the "mercy-seat", but in such a way that they would be looking downwards (Ex. 25)? Why downwards?

Right there at their feet the blood of the sacrifice was to be sprinkled once a year by the High Priest to make atonement for the sins of the people. God was illustrating the fact that all heaven would "hold its breath", looking on from above, as the new High Priest, the Lord Jesus, would make atonement for sinful man, not with animal blood, but, as the Lamb of God, with his very own blood!

The angels themselves, though watching and worshipping, do not have the benefit of that atonement. It was for man's redemption that the Redeemer died and rose, redeeming him from sin and Satan, and for God. Angels do not have that personal testimony of redemption; yet that is what Cornelius required.

### THE KEY-MAN

Something else must be remembered too. The apostle Peter had been given "the keys of the kingdom", i.e. he had been designated to open the doors of repentance and faith to three groups of people: Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles (see Mt. 16:19; Acts 1:8; 2:38-39; 8:14-17; 10:34-48; 11:18; 15:7-9). When in chapter 5 Peter and the other apostles were imprisoned, he had already been instrumental in opening the spiritual doors to the Jewish people - so how about the material prison doors? Logically, the "keys" given to him were only designed for spiritual release and liberty, on the one hand, and admission into the Kingdom, on the other. They were not like a magic wand that could be used to open material doors. Yet, in such moments, there is never a need for despair. If a prisoner should be free, God can very well get an angel to do the job. That's how it happened in Acts 5.

Then, in chapter 8, Peter's "keys of the kingdom" are used for the Samaritans. They receive the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, in chapter 10 and 11, we see a Gentile entering the Kingdom - but not just Cornelius on his own; a whole group of Gentiles enter! They too receive the Holy Spirit, i.e. at the very moment of regeneration, when Peter hasn't even finished speaking to them! Subsequently they are baptized, and with that Peter might have gratefully said: "**Mission accomplished!** My Lord's 'keys' opened the Kingdom doors to all peoples!"

At this point we do well to keep in mind that the evangelization of the Gentiles was really Israel's job. To Abraham the promise was: "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed". But his descendants shirked their responsibilities - the prophet Jonah, of course, is an eloquent example. In his epistle to the Romans, Paul is at pains to demonstrate the link between Jews and Gentiles, and in chapter 15 he provides testimony from all parts of the Old Testament. Luke's story, then, about the first Gentile conversions after Pentecost, might be expected to reflect that background!

### THE TONGUES

At the moment of their conversion and regeneration, as they received the Holy Spirit, this group of Gentiles in Caesarea "spoke in tongues". What was the importance of that?

In 1 Corinthians 14 Paul quotes Isaiah



28 to explain the phenomenon of "tongues speaking". He says: ***"In the law it is written: 'With other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; and yet, for all that, they will not hear me', says the Lord. Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe."***

"This people" is an obvious reference to Israel, i.e. the ever rebellious children of Jacob, who would eventually crucify their own promised Messiah. Yet even after Calvary, Israel's God did not give up on them. His promises cannot fail, and at their feast of Pentecost, He gave them a powerful sign of his sovereignty and faithfulness. It was the fulfillment of Isaiah 28 - He spoke to them in "other tongues" (in foreign languages). In other words, He was telling them, that the time had now definitely come for the proclamation of his message **to** the Gentiles, **among** the Gentiles and **by** the Gentiles **to** the Jews. Paul says that the 'tongues' are for a sign to the unbelieving nation. Any prophetic message from God, on the other hand, is directed especially to the believers among them.

And so it happened - "the sign" of foreign languages was given, but it did not convince the unbelieving nation. Then, however, came Peter's straightforward message from God, and thousands of them were "cut to the heart", and they repented. They believed in their crucified and risen Savior, and were baptized. All this happened strictly among Jews. Now a clear-cut confirmation from among the Gentiles must still be expected. That confirmation came as Cornelius and company in Acts 10 experienced God's powerful intervention. *"And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God"*.

"Those of the circumcision", as Luke calls them, listened to Gentiles speaking in a number of foreign languages, and it was obvious they were magnifying God. It is a repetition of God's "sign" to Israel, but this time through people that were not circumcized. No wonder there was great astonishment among the Jews. From verses 23 & 45 we know that Peter was not the only Jew present; a few Jewish brethren from the Joppa congregation had come with him. Then, from 11:12, we learn that these companions numbered six. Amazingly, they went on to Jerusalem with Peter. Possibly they returned to Joppa first to spend a night or so, but then accompanied Peter all the way to Jerusalem. They numbered seven in all, which was significant. Their united testimony in Jerusalem to "those of the circumcision" carried so much weight that all the serious objections voiced against the Jew-Gentile contacts were dropped, and the whole company ***"glorified God, saying, 'Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life'."*** Of course, the unbelieving nation of Israel would soon hear of all these things. But Isaiah's fulfilled prophecy did not make any difference; they just hardened their hearts. This is further underscored by Paul's experience among the Jews in Rome; he quotes Isaiah 6 to them (Acts 28:25-28).

Significantly, in that same chapter 11, there is a huge outreach with the Gospel. The refugees fleeing the persecution in Jerusalem can't keep their mouths shut. First, they **"preach the word"** to the Jews only, but then, in the far north, in the Antioch area, they speak to the Gentiles as well, **"preaching the Lord Jesus"**! Luke calls them Hellenists. ***"And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord."*** ***"And a great many people were added to the Lord!"*** Well might it be said that Peter's opening of the 'Kingdom doors' in chapters 10 & 11, proved to be nothing short of an opening of the 'floodgates' for the Gospel...

### **PASSING THE BATON**

Meanwhile, in Jerusalem, Peter is imprisoned again, this time to be executed just like the apostle James before him. King Herod Agrippa, throwing his weight about, goes to any length to please his Jewish friends (Acts 12). If Peter was indeed conscious at this time that his mission with the "keys of the kingdom" had been completed - the doors of repentance and faith having been opened to all peoples on earth - then that might well explain how he could be so soundly

asleep... He was in the custody of sixteen soldiers, shackled to two of them, and he must have realized that this was to be his last night on earth... But with his specific mission accomplished, was he not ready now to meet the Commander-in-Chief? Once, not so very long ago, he had panicked as he was confronted with arrest, prison and death, and he miserably denied the Lord he loved. But God's grace had changed all that. As a strategic warrior of the Kingdom, not just a door-opener; Peter was involved in the great strides the invading Kingdom was making in enemy territory.

Was there a further task awaiting Peter? We realize there must have been - even if we have few details. Luke describes how God's angel wakes him, gets him to dress and put on his sandals, then ushers him out of the prison. At Mary's house intercession has been made for him without ceasing, and Peter drops in to greet the brothers and reassure them. Most likely Paul and Barnabas, just before their return to Antioch, would also be there among them. Peter then disappears into the night...

But some eight years later, Paul and Barnabas are back in Jerusalem. And Peter also 'reappears'. The occasion is the serious controversy that has arisen about circumcision - should converted Gentiles be circumcised, yes or no? (Acts 15). Peter's participation in the discussions is of great importance. Furthermore, his Lord evidently assigned to him the writing of his two epistles. Also, it is known that Mark depended on him for many details needed to write the gospel named after him.

Almost unconsciously, we have now come to the realization that there are two main parts in the book of Acts - they have everything to do with the acts of the two 'protagonists', i.e. with Peter and Paul. From chapter 1 to 12, Peter is the 'protagonist' - he is handling the "keys". Then, at the very end of that chapter 12, Barnabas and Saul (re) emerge, and, from then on, it is Saul, better known as the apostle Paul, who is seen to be the new 'protagonist', i.e. from chapter 13 to 28.

### **THE FRAGRANCE**

It is Paul who in 2 Corinthians 2 gives us a wonderful description of the Lord's doings. We might apply it to Peter in Acts 10-12. Paul writes: ***"Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of his knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?"***

Peter was being led along in Christ's triumphal march. As the Lord's 'captive', it was his Lord's precious fragrance that was perceived by the many whose lives he touched - from Jerusalem to Samaria, on to Lydda and Sharon, to Joppa, to Caesarea, back to Jerusalem and... in prison too. It wasn't Peter's fragrance, it was his Lord's - an **"aroma of life leading to life!"** Just think of Cornelius, his family and his friends - what impact did it not leave on them!

Even so, what is fragrant to God, is anything but fragrant to his enemies. It is to them, says Paul, an **"aroma of death"**, and it "leads to death!" To us, Peter's miraculous escape from prison may be a thrilling story - to his sixteen guards it was less then thrilling! Agrippa held them responsible for Peter's escape and that simply meant execution! But, in a sense, their way of dying was benign in comparison to Agrippa's own death, which is described in the same chapter. God's angel struck him, and worms ate him alive...

No 'captive follower' of the triumphant Lord can avoid this fact - the Lord's precious fragrance in and through him will be utterly repugnant to some of his acquaintances, if not to most of them. After all, the fragrance of heaven down here on earth, in what in reality are the portals of hell, vividly reminds the "prince of the world" of his total defeat at the hands of the KING.

As you let **the KING** wholly 'captivate' your heart, and lead you onwards in his triumphal march, the fragrance of Christ will permeate your life, your work, your testimony. **You** will not be "sufficient for these things", but **HE** will be!





Antioch the Idumean

married with:

Doris

Antipater II  
Executed  
by Herod  
in 4 BCE.

Mariamne,  
Maccabean princess.  
Executed by Herod  
in 29 BCE.

Alexander  
Executed  
by Herod  
in 7 BCE.

Aristobulus,  
married to Berenice I.  
Executed by Herod  
in 7 BCE.

Marianne,  
daughter of Simon,  
the high priest.

Herod Philip,  
married to Herodias  
(Mt 14:3, Mr 6:17).  
|  
Salome  
(Mt 14:6, Mr 6:22, 28)

Herod Agrippa I

Herod,  
king of Chalcis,  
married with Berenice II.  
died in AD 48.

king of Judea  
(Acts 12:1-23).  
Died in AD 44.

Herodias  
(Mt 14:3; Mr 6:17)

Berenice II  
(Acts 25:13)

**Herod Agrippa II**,  
tetrach of Iturea (Acts 25:13).  
Died in AD 100.

Drusila,  
wife of Felix  
(Acts 24:24)

The four Herods most mentioned in the New Testament

The life styles of the first three, and the brutal murders they perpetrated, gave them great notoriety. Their victims included, respectively, Bethlehem's children, John the Baptist, and the apostle James.

Malthace  
from Samaria

Cleopatra  
from Jerusalem

Five  
more  
wives

Herod Antipas.

tetrarch of Galilee y Perea, and married to daughter of Ardas IV (2Co 11:32); later with Herodias (Mt 14:1; Mr 6:14; Lk 9:7). Was exiled to Lyon (France), where Herodias followed him. Died in AD 39.

Archelaus.

tetrarch of  
Judea until  
AD 6  
(Mt 2:22).  
Died in  
AD 18.

Philip.

tetrarch of  
Iturea and  
Trachonitis,  
married to Salome  
(Lk3:1).  
Died in AD 34.

When HEROD the GREAT died (Mt 2:19), his kingdom was divided among his sons Herod Antipas, Archelaus and Philip. Archelaus' reputation as a ruthless ruler led Joseph, on his return from Egypt, to bypass Judea and settle rather in Nazareth in the north (Mt 2:22-23). Emperor Augustus deposed Archelaus in AD 6 after the Jews seriously complained about him.

HEROD ANTIPAS, who had had John the Baptist beheaded, was in Jerusalem during the last days before the crucifixion. Pilate sent Jesus to him, hoping to 'wash his hands' of the case (Lk 23:6-12), but no such luck.

This Herod built the town of Tiberias, honoring Emperor Tiberius. But Emperor Caligula exiled him and gave his tetrarchy to his nephew HEROD AGRIPPA I, who is the one that had the apostle James, brother of John, killed. Peter was next on his list (Hch 12:1-4). Not long after that, struck by an angel, he died himself (12:20-23). The year of his death, AD 44, is well established and helps to determine other dates in Acts of the Apostles.

**HEROD the GREAT** obtained his title of "King of the Jews" from the Roman Senate. In 37 BCE he occupied Jerusalem and reigned till he died in 4 BCE. He rebuilt the Jerusalem temple to curry favor with the Jews (Jn2:20). To further ingratiate himself with the Romans, he built the city of Caesarea.

In the Bible he is known as the king who was "troubled", i.e. when he heard from the oriental magi that "the King of the Jews" was born.

**From Cuba:** My dear friends in Jesus,

Above all I hope that God is richly blessing you in Jesus in all peace, harmony and the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and may you and your family enjoy good health. For a few years now I have been doing missionary work, taking the Gospel to groups of Muslims from Pakistan who are here to study medicine.

Sharing Jesus with these persons has been a great experience for my personal and spiritual life. They so much need to get to know the God of love and mercy, and receive salvation for their souls, getting away from their ritualistic and traditionalist practices. I have been praying for the Lord's guidance in this work and that He might show me his will.

Up till now I have been working with very little help and counsel, and feel I should rather integrate with a team of workers. I trust the power of the Holy Spirit to be working in you all and move your hearts in respect to this call to His work.

I am yours in the Lord Jesus.

GOP.

**From Missouri:** Jim, I appreciate your **PRESSING ON!** mailings. Thank you so much for your service to those of us who receive it. And may our great God richly bless you. TD.

**From Holland:** I have just read the meditation that you sent me, brother. Many thanks! There is so much teaching in it! I specifically like the mention made of the church. This is something that at this time would seem to be getting less important in the eyes of the believers. The majority have the Kingdom of God in view and the church is relegated to second place. CV. 🙏

**Four of the readers below reacted to Spanish material, received by email or seen on one of our Spanish web-pages. If *you* have Spanish-reading friends, put them in touch. We'll be delighted to supply them discreetly with a Spanish pps, e-article, e-testimony or e-book!**

**From Argentina:** Dear brother,

Thank you for your message and for taking the time to send us what God has given you, distributing wisdom from on high. May the Lord continue to give you strength and keep you healthy, as you transmit His faithfulness from a distance.

I have a special prayer request - I am suffering from cancer. But I am in the hands of Him who specializes in the impossible! UN abrazo en el SEÑOR, NN.

**From California:** Hi, dear brother Jim,

I am very grateful for the excellent note you sent me, which I really enjoyed. It can be very helpful for a Bible study. To say the truth, I don't remember how we came to be in touch, but I give thanks to God for the opportunity you have to share such excellent material. Thank you, and may God continue to bless you abundantly and your ministry.

AMR

AMR



# Irrepressible Grace of God

Our house was directly across the street from the clinic entrance of Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. We lived downstairs and rented the upstairs rooms to outpatients at the clinic.

One summer evening as I was fixing supper, there was a knock at the door. I opened it to see a truly awful looking man.

"Why, he's hardly taller than my 8-year-old", I thought as I stared at the stooped, shriveled body. But the appalling thing was his face, lopsided from swelling, red and raw.

Yet his voice was pleasant as he said, "Good evening. I've come to see if you've a room for just one night. I came for a treatment this morning from the shore, and there's no bus back till tomorrow morning."

He told me he'd been hunting for a room since noon but with no success, no one seemed to have a room. "I guess it's my face... I know it looks terrible, but my doctor says with a few more treatments..."

For a moment I hesitated, but his next words convinced me: "I could sleep in this rocking chair on the porch. My bus leaves early in the morning."

I told him we would find him a bed, but to rest on the porch. I went inside and finished getting supper. When I was ready, I asked the old man if he would join us. "No, thank you. I have plenty." And he held up a brown paper bag.

When I had finished the dishes, I went out on the porch to talk with him a few minutes. It didn't take a long time to see that this old man had an oversized heart crowded into that tiny body.

He told me he fished for a living to support his daughter, her 5 children, and her husband, who was hopelessly crippled from a back injury.

He didn't tell it by way of complaint; in fact, every other sentence was prefaced with a 'thanks to God' for a blessing. He was grateful that no pain accompanied his disease, which was apparently a form of skin cancer. He thanked God for giving him the strength to

keep going.

At bedtime, we installed a camp cot for him. When I got up in the morning, the bed linens were neatly folded and the little man was out on the porch.

He refused breakfast, but just before he left for his bus, haltingly, as if asking a great favor, he said, "Could I please come back and stay the next time I have a treatment? I won't put you out a bit. I can sleep fine in a chair." He paused a moment and then added, "Your children made me feel at home. Grown-ups are bothered by my face, but children don't seem to mind."

I told him he'd be welcome again.

And, on his next trip, he arrived a little after 7 in the morning. As a gift, he brought a big fish and a quart of the largest oysters I had ever seen! He said he had shucked\* them that morning before he left so that they'd be nice and fresh. I knew his bus had left at 4:00 a.m. and I wondered what time he had had to get up in order to do this for us.

In the years he came to stay overnight with us, there was never a time that he did not bring us fish or oysters or vegetables from his garden.

Other times we received packages in the mail, always by special delivery;

\* "shucked" > removed the shells.

fish and oysters packed in a box of fresh young spinach or kale, every leaf carefully washed. Knowing that he must walk 3 miles to mail these, and knowing how little money he had, made the gifts doubly precious.

When I received these little remembrances, I often thought of a comment our next-door neighbor made after he left that first morning.

"Did you keep that awful looking man last night? I turned him away! You can lose roomers by putting up such people!"

Maybe we did lose roomers once or twice. But, oh!, if only they could have known him, perhaps their illnesses would have been easier to bear.

I know my family always will be grateful to have known him; from him we learned what it was to accept the bad without complaint, and the good with gratitude to God.

Recently I was visiting a friend, who has a greenhouse. As she showed me her flowers, we came to the most beautiful one of all, a golden chrysanthemum, bursting with blooms. But to my great surprise, it was growing in an old dented, rusty bucket. I thought to myself, "If this were my plant, I'd put it in the loveliest container I had!"

My friend changed my mind. "I ran short of pots," she explained, "and knowing how beautiful this one would be, I thought it wouldn't mind starting out in this old pail. It's just for a little while, till I can put it out in the garden."

She must have wondered why I laughed so delightedly, but I was imagining just such a scene in heaven.

"Here's an especially beautiful one", God might have said when he came to the soul of the sweet old fisherman. "He won't mind

starting in this small body." ***"The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."*** (1 Sam. 16:7b)

All this happened long ago - and now, in God's garden, how tall this lovely soul must stand.

Anonymous.



## Beautiful Flower, Broken Pot





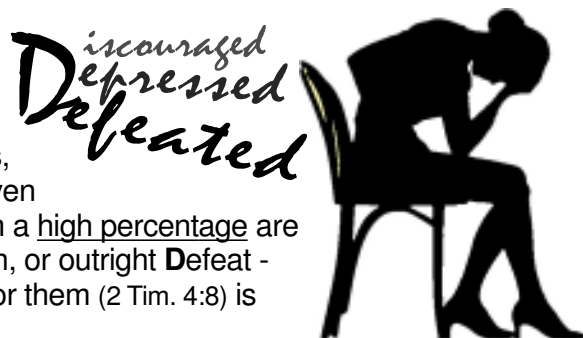
Dear reader,

We think and we hope that you will enjoy this latest issue of **PRESSING ON!**

Like every other true Christian, you're in the "race", in the spiritual one. And you know that after a while it's easy to start dragging your feet, lose sight of the "finishing line", get side-tracked, faint, even turn back. **Pressing On!** is here to inform you, to encourage you and to challenge you about **counting on God's grace for all of the race...**

As Philippians 3 informs us, there's the **goal** and there's the **prize** that are set before us, but then Hebrews 10 tells us that the "**considering**", the "**stirring up**", the "**exhorting**" are the things **all** of us are involved in: "**Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching**". It will be obvious to you that the 'considering, stirring up and exhorting' have everything to do with the "assembling". Jesus says that two or three in his name are sufficient for him to be very much present in the midst of them with all that He has to offer. It is absolutely basic for fruitful encouragement and challenge, that you and I plus other 'runners in the race' do so very humbly around HIM, looking to HIM and his open word. You too can be wonderfully used for your fellow "athletes". **Pressing On!** prepares and encourages the encouragers, and can prove to be a very worthwhile tool in your hands...

Picture yourself traveling round the planet, say from Canada, to Croatia, to Cameroon, to the Comoros, to Cambodia, to the Cook Islands, to Colombia or to Cuba. In every one of these countries you'll find true Christians. You may find some big groups, meeting in churches, and you'll find there are small groups, meeting in homes or wherever, even in prisons, but as you get to know them, you'll also find that among them a high percentage are feeling the effects of Satan's 3-D strategy - **Discouragement**, **Depression**, or outright **Defeat** - Christian "athletes" falling, or fallen, by the wayside. The crown laid up for them (2 Tim. 4:8) is receding and could be taken from them (Rev. 3:11).



Not in every country can such folks read English. In many of the 70 countries to which we send **Pressing On!**, English is not even the second language. However, there usually are individual Christians who know sufficient English to grasp the message. And some of these are receiving up to 30 or 40 copies for regular distribution.

We are fully persuaded that you too can become a most valuable encourager of the brethren! And we want you to plainly realize that **PRESSING ON!** is entirely at your disposal to help you, in other words, free of charge!

**Please, consider the form below, pray over it, then fill out what applies and send it to us:**

- \*\*\*\*\*
- ☐ I can be a regular distributor to Christian individuals, house church(es) or other Christians in **my** region. I need \_\_\_ free paper copies of future issues (even of this one too if available).
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  - ☐ Regardless of having the printed copy (copies) sent snailmail, I'd also like you to send me the **pdf** e-copy, so I can easily forward it by email to my Christian friends.
  - ☐ Separately I am sending you names, addresses and e-addresses of Christian friends who have confirmed they would like to be on your mailing list, either for email or snailmail.
  - ☐ If the Lord should make it clear I must contribute in some other way, I'll let you know, so you can tell me how to go about it.

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Apartado 31, 29700 Vélez-Málaga, Spain. **Or:**  
2. Once printed and filled out, scan and email the form to:  
**pressingonstill@gmail.com**

**"And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward"** - Mt. 10:42.