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Philippians 3:12-14

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(Heb. 10:24)

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VAST OIL CRISIS JUST AHEAD!

Jim vH.

"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten girls who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. The foolish girls brought their lamps, but they took no extra oil. The wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. But the bridegroom delayed, and so they all dozed off to sleep.

"At midnight there was a shout, 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out and meet him!' Then all those girls woke up and got their lamps ready.

"But the foolish ones asked the wise, 'Give us some of your oil. Our lamps are going out.'

"The wise girls answered, 'There will never be enough for us and for you. Better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.'

"While they were away buying it, the bridegroom came, and the girls who were ready went with him to the wedding, and the door was shut.

"Later the other girls also came and said, 'Lord, lord, open the door for us!' 'I tell

you the truth', he answered them, 'I don't know you'.

"Keep awake, then, because you don't know the day or the hour!"

(Mt. 25:1-13 - WF Beck)



Both the Lord himself and his apostles repeatedly warned that in the last days there would be many false prophets and prophecies, teachers and teachings, all trying their utmost to entice the saints away from the simplicity that is in Christ. We were never told that such "prophets" and "teachers" would necessarily be non-Christians. In fact, there is every possibility that any true and valued servant of the Most High at some point develops a certain carelessness in his personal searching of the Scriptures. The fire that burned in his heart (Lk. 24:32) is dying down, and, subtly, he begins to use his own reason to interpret the Scriptures. Falling asleep spiritually, he is becoming an instrument in the hands of the master deceiver, the master sleep-inducer. One starts yawning and all start yawning! Are sleeping saints of any use to their Lord? For this reason Paul charged his coworker Timothy as solemnly as he did; and for that same reason the Holy Spirit charges us just as solemnly:

"Earnestly seek to commend yourself to God as a workman who, because of his straightforward dealing with the word of truth, has no reason to feel any shame!" (2Ti. 2:15 - Weymouth)

Ten Tired Girls

Perhaps the fact that in many Bible versions the ten young ladies are called virgins makes you think of ‘purity’. However, the term is used in much the same way as we, in the 20th century, used the word ‘girls’, or ‘young ladies’, or, more exactly: ‘young, unmarried women’ (see Acts 21:9 & 1 Co. 7:25-34). The important thing is, they were the bride’s friends! And they represent all of Christianity in the time of the end.

All girls dozed off - a sign of unpreparedness on the part of *all* of them? No doubt about it! But it was not sleeping which made the foolish ones foolish, nor did it make the wise ones less wise. From verse 13 it is clear that the Lord means his followers to “watch”, not to “sleep”. But He does not say that a “sleeping” Christian should be categorized among the five foolish virgins. If that were so, all ten would have been called “foolish”.

So here we have these ten girls in a very vivid picture of the *times of the end* – they are: 1) friends of the bride, 2) waiting for the bridegroom, and 3) all dozing off. That is where the similarities end.

Together, yet Poles Apart

On occasions the Lord likened his followers to people, who were either/or. But on two occasions only did He call them **either** wise **or** foolish (Mt. 7:24-27; Lk. 6:47-49; Mt. 25:1-13). What’s so important about this? Simply that a ‘foolish follower’ is not a *real* follower. Even though he *seems* to be genuine, he’s not! Our Lord sees the reality, and He wants us to see what He sees: the awful dividing line among the ones called by his name, the absolute parting of the ways. And, of course, He had already made this clear in other parables, like those in Matthew 13. He foresaw perfectly there would be the true and the false - right from the beginning!

His eye perceives what is not apparent to anyone else: the house that **cannot** stand, because it has no foundation, the oil lamp that **cannot** shine because it lacks the oil. But what is hidden to everyone else will become crystal clear at the Matthew 7:21-23 moment-of-truth when He declares that He *never* knew so-and-so. He even lets us in on the fact there will be

prophets among them, and exorcists, and miracle-workers, but their carefully constructed houses, seemingly doing fine without a foundation, come crashing down! This will be fully applicable to Muslims, Mormons and Moonies, to Buddhists and Baha’i, to Scientologists and Spiritists, but also to all those ‘Christians’, who just weren’t prepared to make Christ **LORD** of their lives.

Now we must ask ourselves the inevitable question: If in **no way** we can conceive of the foolish builder as representing true believers, then, *what* could now possibly lead us to conclude that the “five foolish virgins”, in total contrast, **do** represent true, born-again, believers?

Watch that Line!

In the parable of the ten virgins, one of his very last ones, the scene is very different, but again it is all concerned with Christ’s followers, and, again, the number is split right down the middle. Again it is an “either/or” situation. Either we are “have not” Christians, or we are “have” Christians. Either we have the “name of being alive”, or we “*are* alive” (Rev. 3:1). Either we are Christ’s followers so-called, or we are Christ’s followers, period. Either we are foolishly pretending to wait for the Bridegroom, lamps at the ready, though not bothering about the oil, or, by grace, we are waiting for Him, lamps ready **with** the oil - even if, unwisely, dozing off when his arrival takes longer than expected.

Are You Ready?

Whereas the foolish builder was typified by going *without a foundation*, the foolish virgins are typified by going *without oil*. Jesus specifically mentions them as taking no oil along with their lamps. *That* is what marked them as foolish.

What builder would be so incredibly foolish as to build a house on the sand, never thinking of threatening weather conditions? And what young lady, even in all the excitement of the great feast, would be so stupid as to take an oil lamp along and not bother about the oil? From Jesus we learn that half of “Christianity” is that foolish. In the first parable He teaches us that this is because **his Word** is not taken seriously.

The parable of the ‘virgins’ shows us it is because **his Holy Spirit** is not taken seriously, for ‘oil’ is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The two always go together. Most of us have to admit that we too were there, on that side of the dividing line. Then, perhaps suddenly, perhaps gradually, our eyes were opened and we saw the need of a foundation for our life’s house. We saw that we were in darkness and desperately needed light, and so, by his grace, we surrendered to our Lord and Savior. Through his grace we became “wise” (2 Tim. 3:15; Titus 2:11-14)! No more need to sing: “Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning!” He *is* our oil!

Crossing the Line Anyway.

In contrast with the builders, the ten girls are completely intermingled. No way to tell them apart, unless you’re aware of the presence or absence of oil. It’s the greatest of all *mix-ups*. The great Storyteller wants us to be fully aware that even if the Kingdom of Heaven is now among us (see footnote), the great adversary is busy – he does **not** sleep. He is invariably seeking to mix things up. In other words, when the *mixture* is evil (spiritually speaking), you may ask, what’s behind this? And behind it you’ll find a *mystery* that is evil. The girly mixture of Matthew 25 points straight to what Paul later confirms: “*The mystery of iniquity is already at work...*” (2 Th. 2:7). Why not check carefully what 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 has to say on this?

It also must remind us of four of the seven kingdom parables in Matthew 13, referred to before. Right from the outset and *all through* this kingdom age, there would be the satanic negative, feverishly working away among all the divine positive: “the weeds among the wheat”, “the birds in the mustard plant”, “the leaven in the dough” and “in the dragnet the bad fish among the good”. In each one He gives us most valuable teaching, so we may know ‘*where we are*’ in regards to God’s work at this time, and where we are in regards to Satan’s.

Then, almost at the end of his earthly ministry, in the parable of the virgins, the Lord tells us how at last the false are screened out from among the true, the foolish out from among the wise.

After that clear cut separation, there is the climax, the appearing of the Bridegroom. Mind you, that is not yet the absolute climax of HIM appearing **in glory** with all his saints (Col. 3:4; Ps. 45). That still has to wait a little longer (see footnote). For now, the wise ones having oil and light, get to see him (1 John 3:2), i.e. in that moment, like the twinkling of an eye, when He catches them away. They go with him into the feast. The foolish girls, on the other hand, stay behind and *never* even get to see him...

Oil, Oil, Oil ...

Lest it spill, neither the wise, nor the foolish, carried oil in the lamps. Oil was carried in a tiny container and transferred, all or in part, to the lamp when the moment of need had arrived. The wise were wise, because they carried this vessel filled with oil.

The three occurrences of “oil” in this parable are the very first in the New Testament and, without question, they symbolize the Holy Spirit. It follows that the five *without* oil represent professing “Christians”. They have lamps, but *cannot* produce light. They are merely keeping up appearances. They do *not* represent *possessing* Christians (who *have* the oil to burn in the lamps). The foolish ones represent “Christians”, of whom men may say at the grave side: “We know so-and-so was a good Christian man or woman”, but of whom the Bridegroom will say: “**I know you not!**” That devastating verdict is practically the same as the one we found in chapter 7:23. **Only** a person, *any* person, who is regenerated, indwelt and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, the guarantee of the eternal inheritance (Rom. 8:9; Eph. 1:13-14), can be said to “carry oil” and therefore to be among the five wise virgins.

In other words, a huge part of “Christianity” (remember: Jesus splits it right down the middle) belongs to “it”, but not to **Him**. For them Christianity is not **Christ**, it is tradition, liturgy, Sunday (or Sabbath)-worship, hierarchy, sacraments, penitence, sacrifice, moral living, good intentions, good works, austerity, you name it, possibly even home-schooling and home-churching. Excellent at keeping up appearances they may be, yet behind the façade there is a gaping void. The “oil” of the Holy Spirit does not burn in their hearts. It does not shine out through their eyes and mouths and hands into the dark night of this world. It *cannot* burn there, because there *is* none.

More than One Twinkling of an Eye?

We must assume that the Lord speaks to us in this parable about the coming rapture of the saints, which takes place when He comes for them. We only need to examine the parable in the light of 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4. The “bridegroom” clearly enough is a picture of our Lord Himself, and, even though the “bride” is not mentioned at all in the story, just as obviously, the (wise) virgins do represent Christ’s followers, that is, they are identified with the bride and expecting to enter into the wedding feast through the open door.

Will the whole true church of Christ be raptured in the “twinkling of an eye”, i.e. all those truly redeemed, or ... should we look for one rapture now and then another one

later on, at a “second twinkling of an eye”? Must the “last trumpet” sound a second time, perhaps in mid-Tribulation? If, as many teach, the “foolish virgins” also represent true Christians, though backslidden, to whom the door is closed, then, clearly, we are bound to believe in a partial rapture, or, more correctly, in two partial raptures. Then half the true Christians will be with the Bridegroom, celebrating the Marriage of the Lamb, while the other half are left to face the ‘maulings of the Beast’ in the Great Tribulation. Eventually, so it is believed by those who take this line, these will also have sufficient “oil” and the Bridegroom will then “know” them and “open the door” to let them in after all. The idea is that the “wise virgins”, though not perfect when the bridegroom appears, are “pure enough” Christians. They can go in just as they are, but the “foolish ones” need a thorough “purification” first, which they will get in the Great Tribulation, a kind of “purgatory” for them. This view, of course, alienates us from the Gospel of the grace of God, through which every **true** believer is “accepted in the Beloved”, however imperfect his earthly life (Ro. 3:27-28; Eph. 1:3-6).

He Who Has an Eye to Read, Let Him Read

Looking at a rapture passage like 1 Thessalonians 4, we find Paul writing about the resurrection of the saints. We are bound to ask the question here, ‘How many of them are brought from the dead, with Christ, at that moment of his appearing (vss. 14 and 16)?’ Paul says, “**those who sleep in Jesus**”, the ones who are “**dead in Christ**”. Notice he doesn’t say ‘some’, ‘many’, or ‘most’, it is simply, “**the dead in Christ**”. That includes **all** those Christians, who throughout past centuries were truly born of the Spirit. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 is just as emphatic.

Now if we ask, how many Christians have lived lives of perfect obedience, holiness and usefulness?, the answer is: None! In other words, **none** deserve to be raptured. But if Christ is perfect and if am found **in Christ**, it follows that – dead or alive – God does with me what He does with Christ. He sees **that** perfection! Issues of carnality and disobedience are not dealt with here, as they are in other chapters. Here he states the fact that true Christians “are in Christ”, even when they have died. So, being **true** Christians, they must be **truly** raised and raptured in Christ. In other words, this resurrection and this rapture will **not** just happen to a certain section of elite redeemed. All mere ‘professors’, yes, they are left behind, but all true ‘possessors’ are taken!

And then, at the **judgment seat of Christ**, all the unfaithfulness, disobedience, worldliness of the saints, which had not been checked, confessed and put under HIS control, **must** be dealt with. The outcome will affect the believer’s reward (Ro. 14; 1 Co. 3; 2 Co. 5). Interestingly, in the following parable (Mt. 25), the one about the talents, Jesus himself draws our attention to this fact.

It All Happened Before, Sort of...

Lot, called “righteous” or “just” by Peter no less than three times, was “raptured” out of Sodom (2 P. 2:6-8), not because he was an exemplary saint, but simply because through faith he belonged to God. Peter also speaks about Noah. Noah was everything that Lot should have been, but wasn’t.

Conditions in Noah's time may have been even worse than those that prevailed in Sodom and Gomorrah. At any rate they were universal, whereas the S&G situation was local. Peter would have been correct in calling Noah "righteous", but he goes further and describes him as "a preacher of righteousness". Some difference! Even if much in Lot's life and testimony was negative (just think of the sordid epilogue of Genesis 19), our Lord himself uses **both** Noah and Lot (Lk. 17:26-30) as "precedents" or examples of the "Great Escape", the rapture of his Ekklesia. There will be millions of spiritual Noahs, and, most likely, even more millions of spiritual Lots, all of them receiving at last the full inheritance for which the Holy Spirit had sealed them when they first believed (Eph. 1:13-14).

In other words, the "oil lamps" of the many "spiritual Lots" throughout the centuries may have produced more "smoke" from their "wicks" (or "flaxes") than "flame", yet the Lord states that He will not extinguish that flame, however small (Is. 42:3; Mt. 12:20). What the smoking lamp needs (if there is oil in it), rather than being put out, is an adjustment of the wick. That is what will restore a bright flame. It is not a question of the oil. The oil is there, but it has been obstructed in the wick.

Spiritual, yet Smoky?

So the picture is of *two* categories of people. Paul mentions them in 1 Corinthians 2 & 3. There is the 'natural or psychic' man and there is the "spiritual" man. But then he does go on to a third category, or *sub*-category: the 'carnal' man, i.e. a true Christian, who is *not* living out the spiritual life, rather allowing the flesh to have the last word on many issues.

In our parable we are also faced with two categories first: foolish virgins (no oil, no light) and wise virgins (no lack of oil and, normally, no lack of light). However, that is where we discover there is a third category: among the wise virgins foolishness may creep in. If they have left their wick unattended, then their light has become dim, while smoke has become plentiful. In Paul's terminology: the Spirit is there, they are spiritual, i.e. truly born of the Spirit, yet the flesh (carnality) may easily encroach, threatening to take over. But aren't there clear instructions as to how to keep our "wicks" properly "trimmed", so that the Lord's light and testimony may freely shine, continually energized by the oil of the indwelling Spirit (Lk. 9:27, Ro. 12:1-2; Gal. 2:20; 5:16-26; 6:14; etc.)? On another occasion, when illustrating the constant need to be ready for his return, the Lord tells his disciples to let their "loins be girded" and their "**lamps burning**" (Lk. 12:35).

SUDDEN CRISIS!!

All ten virgins woke with a start when the call sounded; all started to trim their wicks. Yet, however much the foolish ones trimmed, they were unsuccessful. No light was produced. The verb usually translated 'trim', can be equally well translated 'light'. What sense is there in trimming and lighting when there is no oil? Their foolishness was exposed!

It makes us think of those 'Christians' of Hebrews 6:4-6, who stopped short of true repentance and regeneration. Twice it says of them that they "tasted". It is the key word

in that passage. Countless multitudes on all continents insist on being called 'Christians', but all they have ever done is taste a bit here and taste a bit there. Many keep on "tasting" without ever *drinking*. That is the important thing to note: "tasting" is not "drinking" (compare Mat. 27:34). We might say that the lamps and the wicks of the foolish virgins had a 'taste' of oil to them, but *the oil was missing!*

No Pussy-Footing

It should be clear by now that the '*oil crisis*' of the Lord's parable is worldwide. So-called 'Christians' everywhere have blissfully dozed off by the millions, unaware of what is upon them. It is *their* oil crisis. There is no crisis with the One who supplies the "oil". His supply is unlimited for all who discover their need and come to him. There is one thing though that is even worse: millions of **true** Christians - 'oil Christians' - have opted to join the slumber party! That is the picture Jesus painted, and it is exactly what we see. The wise ones *will* enter in when He comes, yes, but meanwhile they are no earthly good to any of these foolish ones, i.e. the 'name-Christians', that surround them, who need to come to Christ with true repentance and faith.

The trend of not bothering with the oil may have started with Simon-the-sorcerer (Acts 8:9-23). This was a 'baptized believer', but notice that when Peter confronted him, he didn't mince his words. He told him straight: "**You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore...**" Here we have a 'wise one' giving a terrific jolt to a 'foolish one'. And it looks like Simon did wake up.

All of Us Together!

There is a popular idea that, in contrast to bygone days, the Lord is **now**, in these last days, preparing his Church for that moment of his return. And so to many it follows that worldwide revival must be about to break. The thought is that the many thus prepared will go with Him in the rapture. Those that did not allow Him to prepare them, or revive them, will remain behind. However..., the ten sleeping virgins tell us a different story.

Such an idea could be compared to a mother who usually speaks of the *two* children she has at home as if they were her *only* ones..., but, in fact, she has another *eight*, grown up and married. They are hers just as much as the two youngest ones. Like this woman, many have lost sight of the fact that the Lord has *many* children who are not with us anymore. He has *always* been preparing his Church. The company of the redeemed, still alive on earth when the trumpet sounds, is no more than a remnant of the complete Church. It should be obvious that we are not to think of a present-day-remnant-*only* that will be caught away. It will happen to the **whole** Church of Christ, all true Christians of the present *and* all those of the past. In fact, this is Paul's argument in 1 Thess. 4. The saints still alive will not precede the ones whose bodies slept in Jesus. Rather, once *they* rise from the dead, *all* will go to meet the Lord in the air - **together!**

Wise and Wide Awake!

The apostle wants us to understand that true Christians "are all one in Christ Jesus". That is not an ideal, it is a wonder-

ful spiritual reality, all the more wonderful, when we remember that, at the time of writing, he was addressing those pretty carnal Galatians (3:28). **In Christ there can be no division**, not between past and present Christians, and not between spiritual and carnal Christians. The one and only proper 'division' must be between those who are "in Christ", and those who are **not** "in Christ", the merely professing ones. If we want to win such to Christ ('nudging' them or 'jolting' them to wake up and get their 'oil'), we must be clear first that what these folks have is **religion**, only religion. What in reality they need – desperately - is a true and living **relationship** with the risen Christ!

Any attempt to achieve any kind of practical unity, i.e. between true possessors and mere professors, *on the basis of compromising the truth revealed in God's Word*, is doomed to fail. Those who are 'wise **and** wide awake' will know how to value God's Word far above all human persuasions.

We may be successful in filling pews with new 'members' of a denomination, but no "oil" is to be obtained that way. What the heavenly Father is after is new "Family members". That requires the Holy Spirit's work of repentance and regeneration by faith in Christ the Savior. Instantaneously, the new believer is thus **sealed** by the Holy Spirit of promise (Eph. 1:12-14). *That* is 'wisdom', evidenced by the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. From the moment in which He takes up his abode in the new believer, there is an indivisible unity with **all** who are God's children (of whatever creed, denomination or time period). That true unity *in Christ cannot* fail to be real also in our joint resurrection and rapture...

Churchianity ..? Christianity ..?

What a spectacle to see all of those girls lying about and asleep. None of them should have been. The point the Lord makes is that, with not knowing the exact time of the bridegroom's coming, they should have been wide awake, all of them. Five of them should have used their precious time to hurry and get oil while they still could. But the other five? What should they have been doing? What else but to keep on nudging the foolish ones, waking them up, persuading them of the lateness of the hour. **They all slept**, no noticeable difference among them. A sad spectacle, indeed. Like it or not, **it is the prophetic and absolutely realistic picture of the whole of present day Christianity on the eve of his return**. It is the culmination of long centuries of wholesale backsliding. Parents in one generation, true Christians, stop taking the Lord and his Word seriously... Result? Their offspring, the next generation, though still insisting on calling themselves *Christians*, in all likelihood never have a personal experience with the Savior.

The five wise virgins, instead of being wide awake, straining to hear the bridegroom's call, and seeking to wake up their five foolish friends, choose rather to relax with them, to take things easy, possibly telling each other: "Well, at least **we**'ve got our oil, so why worry?" True, they have no "oil crisis". However, as we have seen, it is just as clear that every true believer **will** have a "**judgment-seat crisis**". Interestingly we get the word "*crisis*" from the Greek; it literally means "judgment". Every single one of us

will have to answer before that tribunal about the things done in the body, whether good or bad (2 Co. 5:10).


The picture our Lord paints of *sleeping Christians* at the time of his return undoubtedly is a picture of **Christianity**. However, "**Churchianity**" might be a more suitable term, in view of all the mix-up of *true Christians with pseudo Christians*. The situation reminds us of that awful apostasy in Elijah's time. But when it seemed there was *no one* left who followed the Lord *but* God's one prophet, he was told there *were still 7,000* who, like him, had *not* bent their knee to Baal (Ro. 11:3-4). They were the wonderful exception to the rule.

God is looking for present day exceptions! For 'virgins', who are not only wise because they have their oil, but who are also *wide awake* and doing his work! For that, **his GRACE is sufficient, for you, for me, for everyone.**

.....
Footnote: With Christ's coming to earth, and through his life, death, resurrection, *and* Pentecost, He firmly established his Kingdom as a 'beachhead' on what Satan, the 'prince of this world', considers his territory. His "**Ekklesia**", indwelt by his Holy Spirit, *in* the world, but not *of* the world (John 17), *is* that 'beachhead'. Under incessant attack by the great usurper, and often falling for his vices and devices, the **Ekklesia** will none the less be suddenly removed. It **must** be ready for the **Wedding of the Lamb**. It is at the **Judgment Seat of Christ**, that He makes sure she is fully prepared!

On earth, during the 7 years of **Great Tribulation** (i.e. Jacob's Anguish - Jer. 30:7), when the Antichrist holds sway, the Day of Grace is not yet over, and the greatest revival of all time breaks out. Heaven's 'beachhead' is reestablished, though at the cost of wholesale martyrdom: "**A great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb... These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb**" (Rev. 7).

Many, if not most, of these martyrs once were "foolish virgins". Now they have understood their error, they have repented and are regenerated. They have their 'oil' and their lights are brightly burning, even if they have to pay with their lives. So, at the very end of the Dispensation of Grace, at this late hour, these believers are made, even now, citizens of heaven. And when Jesus Christ - LORD of Hosts - appears victoriously in glory **with** his hosts, **all** his saints will be there, appearing with HIM in glory (Zech. 14:5B; Col. 3:4; Rev. 19:14)!

In John 5 Jesus already alludes to the fact that there will be more than one resurrection. In 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15 we are obviously told about the first of these. But then, in Revelation 20, we find that the martyrs (of the Tribulation period) are also incorporated. Theirs is not considered a '2nd resurrection', but still the "first resurrection": "**Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God ... they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years... This is the first resurrection.**" After that, at the end of Revelation 20, the last resurrection is described! 

Shock and Awe

Preview of Things to Come

By Tim Cameron

The following are scenarios as they may play out in the USA, seconds and minutes after that sudden and shocking moment-of-truth, when millions of people, many of them good church folk, realize they have been left behind! Slowly it dawns on them that their loved ones had been right all along as they commented on the imminent return of the Lord Jesus

Christ for all those who are his own. That Great Rapture and Sudden Disappearance of the Saints is bound to cause ghastly accidents when Christian drivers and pilots are snatched from their driving seats. Everywhere babies are missing, millions of them - the panic and perplexity of the parents can hardly be imagined, leave alone described.

However, this is **not** a typical USA scenario; **it is a worldwide scenario!** It will be like this everywhere, in every continent and country! **Are you ready?**

.....

The first call comes into an emergency call center, “Yes, 911, what is your emergency?” A mom is hysterically screaming: “**Help, please help!**” “My little boy just disappeared”. The 911 dispatcher replies, “Ma’am, what do you mean? Has someone taken him?” “No, I was holding him in my arms and he’s just gone! Help, please help!”

“Flight 418, this is Delta Tower. Please confirm your plans to descend. Flight 418, please check in, OVER.” Nervous silence fills the tower’s control room. Turning to her supervisor, the air traffic controller gasps, “Sir, Flight 418 is not responding!”

Nervous travelers begin to shout, “What’s going on?? We are passing our destination!” (But the cockpit is empty - the flight crew has disappeared.)

A husband and wife are heading home from a ballgame, following a car on highway 39, when the car they are following suddenly veers off the road. The husband jumps out and rushes to the car, only to discover there’s no one in it...

A nurse runs out of a hospital nursery. She’s screaming: “**All the babies are gone!**”

A twenty-one-year-old girl is dancing the night away at her favorite nightclub. Just a few hours earlier, she had cussed out her parents and told them to never preach to her again. Now she dials her parents’ phone, frantically - only to hear it ring and ring. Then she dials their cell phones, only to get voice mail. Her heart races as she recalls her dad’s warning, “Honey, please turn to Jesus... He is coming soon!”

A man pulling his car into his favorite restaurant’s parking lot, flips off another driver as the car races by and crashes into the building. Angry but shocked, he jumps out to see what just happened. As he opens the door..., nobody is there! A terrified, panicking woman rushes out of the restaurant screaming, “Where is my baby? Someone help! Anybody! Where is my baby?”

The man’s heart begins to race, as he immediately dials his home phone..., there’s no answer. Jumps back into his car and drives frantically, turning onto the interstate. Cars are piled up everywhere. He illegally backs up the off-ramp and, almost simultaneously, a 757 airplane crashes in the distance. His mind is besieged with fear. Racing to his house he finds no one home. He shouts for his wife. He runs into the living room, and there sits a Bible, her clothes are there—but she is **gone!**

Another man, husband and father, puts a shot gun to his

mouth, tears rolling as he looks at a family picture and his kids’ clothes on the floor. He knows what has happened, and he knows it’s too late. Crying out his last words, he pulls the trigger, “Why, why didn’t I listen?”

“911, what is your emergency?” “911, what is your emergency?” “911, what is your emergency?” Report after report of loss and chaos continue to pour in...

Breaking News...CNM... Lead anchor Andrew Cooper reporting...: “Suddenly without warning, seemingly thousands, if not millions, of people have disappeared! Meanwhile, 911 emergency response systems are crashing everywhere due to overload.” A roving reporter stands by with a word from White House correspondents.

“This just in, a one-hundred-car pile-up on a Los Angeles freeway..., wait, another report..., New York subway systems are reporting a major subway crash. The President is getting ready to address the nation. Right now he is on a conference call with world leaders..., this is not just a national crisis...! Reports are coming in literally from around the world. They keep coming. Thousands of people have just died in one of the worst airplane crashes in history. A 757 airliner just crashed into downtown Chicago and exploded, blowing up five apartment complexes!”

All networks report: “**Urgent message from the President of the United States...** ‘Good citizens of the United States, and fellow citizens of the world, it appears we are in the midst of the most catastrophic event of our lifetime...’”

Jesus gave us this stark warning:

“As the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the Flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming...!”

Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect”

(Matthew 24).



Dear reader,

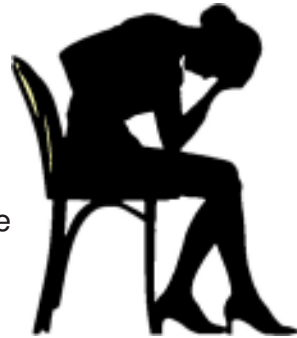
We think and we hope that you will enjoy this latest issue of **PRESSING ON!**

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).

*Discouraged
Depressed
Defeated*



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).
 - I have access to professional-quality production facilities. I only need a print-ready PDF copy to become a printer-distributor of **PRESSING ON!** in my region (at my own cost). I need info about the format to be printed.
 - 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.

YOUR INFO: Name _____

Address _____

Country _____ E-address _____ @ _____

Signature _____

- OUR INFO:**
1. Print this form, fill out what applies, sign it, then mail to: Apartado 31, 29700 Vélez-Málaga, Spain. **Or:**
 2. Once printed and filled out, scan and email the form to: **presson@telefonica.net**

“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.