

“Now set your mind and heart to SEEK the LORD your God,” 1 Chronicles 22:19.

Dear Covenant Loved One,

A few weeks ago, while planning for an upcoming out-of-town meeting, God put within my spirit an urgent call to ***“SEEK THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD!”*** At first, I thought it was just for the upcoming meetings that had opened up for the ministry. And yes, this was a valid message for them. But, it was more than that. The burning call within my heart has not died down to only a few glowing embers. It has become a blaze within my soul, stronger than ever before.

How can we look around the world, our nation, our church, or our family and not see the shortness of time. Do we just simply disregard all of the floods, earthquakes, fires, wars, death, killings, and destruction as, *“Oh well, it is just another day,”*? Is it just business as usual, or, do we really see the nearness of the end of time? And, IF in fact, we do see the nearness of the end of time, what should we do? How do we prepare ourselves, and our family, for the hard times and enemies attacks that are yet to come?

We are in the throes of extreme record-breaking weather this summer, and yet, greater even than the extreme weather are the struggles that our families, churches, and nations, are going through daily. It seems like the enemy of our soul has thrown a spiritual Molotov Cocktail in our very lap. How many times have you wondered or said, *“Can things get any worse?”* Yes, they can, yes they are, and yes they will! We don't know just how bad things are going to get before the righteous Church is caught away, but of this one thing you can be sure – ***“Things will get worse!”*** I'm reminded of the Scripture, ***“And except that the LORD had shortened those days [last days], no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's [Israel] sake, whom He hath chosen, He hath shortened the days,”*** Mark 13:20.

The actions and words that are being blasted at us today would have been censored or at least against the law not too many years ago. ***There are no limits or boundaries to the depth of sin and perversion or disregard for the value of human life in today's world.*** It was just today that I read of an extremist leader calling for violence against women who expressed moral values. Yes, there have been times in the past when innocent blood was shed and a life had little to no value, but those nations and leaders have since been branded as evil and even satanic. But evil is on the rise again. The only difference today is that there is still a ***Body of Believers*** indwelt with the Holy Spirit, saved by the shed ***blood***

of Jesus Christ who will not bow the knee to anyone or anything except the King of kings and the Lord of lords!!! However, doesn't it seem that this Body is the Silent Majority? Oh, there are small pockets of revival going on throughout the world, but many times it looks like satan has the upper hand and we can't do anything about it.

What does it mean to ***“Seek the Presence of the LORD?”*** The simplest of definitions would be to seek - to grow - to go - to encounter a more meaningful relationship with God. Without a doubt, at least on the surface, every Christian would say that is the very thing that they want, but don't our actions speak louder than our words? If you want (need) a new job, you will probably go out and search the *“Help Wanted”* ads. If you are sick and need medical attention, you will probably call your *doctor* and make an appointment. If you are looking for a different house, wouldn't you call a *Realtor*? So, it makes sense that if we want/need a deeper relationship with God that we ***call on Him***, humbly calling upon His name.

“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,” 2 Timothy 1:9.

There have been many called by God into service at different times, different places, and for different reasons. Moses was called to the burning bush to accomplish God's Will to free the Israelites who were enslaved under Egypt's hard rule, in spite of their sins, as they prayed and cried before the LORD. Moses was reluctant (I think) because of his age, his stammering speech, and the deep seated fear of being rejected again because he still felt in his heart the rejection that stopped him in his tracks when he stepped in to the middle of a fight between two Jewish slaves when he was a prince in Egypt. The rejection was so strong that he ran away and ended up herding sheep. Quite a step down from being in Pharaoh's court. In spite of all of his objections, he moved upon God's call and led the Israelites out of Egypt, fought and won many battles, climbed Mount Sinai, delivered the Ten Commandments, and was buried by God Himself.

Seeking the LORD means seeking ***His presence***. ***“Presence”*** is a common translation of the Hebrew word ***“face.”*** Literally, we are to seek His ***“Face.”*** We desire to speak with Him – face to Face.

Several years ago there was a subtle but unmistakable



AMERICAN FAMILY ASSOCIATION

We were invited to be a guest speaker on the “The Hour of Intercession” hosted by Pastor Joseph Parker the first part of June 2023. Pastor Parker is the Director of Outreach and Intercession American Family Radio at American Family Radio, which is an outreach ministry of American Family Association. Pastor Parker and his wife, Birdie, have been active in ministry in the Tupelo, MS area for decades serving at the Bethlehem AME Church in Winona, MS. Pastor Parker is a writer, host of The Hour of Intercession, and most recently, has started a crisis mobile outreach pregnancy clinic for the Delta area with his wife, Birdie.

During my visit to AFR in June, I was blessed to meet many dedicated brothers and sisters in-Christ who live the ministry they serve. While there, I was also invited to be their guest speaker on seven different live and recorded broadcasts - webcasts - podcasts - and news programs that aired from Washington to Florida, from Texas to North Dakota.

pressing desire deep within my spirit to draw closer to my LORD. Oh, I had always gone to church, had my morning prayers and Bible reading, and did deeper reading and studying when researching for the Gospel Tracts and letters that God gave me to write. Yet, I must confess that there have been times that my life was so busy that God had to speak through someone else to get His message to me. This particular time, the wooing of the Spirit was different. But how was I to get closer to God? After all, when we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, He sends His Holy Spirit to reside in us. Isn't that close, or close enough?

To really see the Face of God through *SEEKING* Him is accomplished by continually *seeking* (looking) to (for) Him. Practically speaking, it is a life-style of “*setting of the mind and heart*” on God. It is a **CONSCIOUS** effort

to fix or focus our mind – heart – actions - and spirit on God.

God called Samuel as a child to be a mighty man of God in a lifelong servitude of obedience to the Master. Samuel had been dedicated unto the LORD as a very young child and was living in the Temple when he audibly heard the Voice of the LORD call him. **His obedience to God's Voice shaped the nation of Israel forever.**

There have been times that I have heard the Voice of God within my spirit, words of encouragement, instruction, warning, teaching, etc. At times His Voice was so loud (strong) in my spirit, it almost seemed to be audible. This time was without words but it felt more like a strong magnet that was trying to pull me closer, but I was just out of its magnetic range. It was there, but I wasn't.

God called Ananias to be an integral part of Saul's conversion. Ananias was afraid of Saul as he knew who Saul was and what he was doing and Ananias resisted obeying the Voice of the Lord. After being quickly chastised by the Lord, Ananias did as he was told and went to find Saul. The converted Paul later called him a devout observer of the Law and highly respected of the Jews. One can see that Ananias had Jesus in his heart by the way he yielded himself as a vessel to be used to further the Kingdom of God. He took the Lord to the fullest extent of faith and even called Saul “*Brother*” in faith of Saul's conversion to Christianity. This is the only mention of Ananias in the Word, but his obedience to the Voice of the Lord opened salvation to the Gentiles and made a way for every Christian today to know more about Jesus Christ through the witness, writings, and testimony of Paul the Apostle.

“SEEK ye first the Kingdom of God, and His Righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you;” **Matthew 6:33.** What things will be added unto you? The sixth chapter is so rich in teaching and instruction, that I would quote it here if there was more room.

If we are going to survive the nastiness that is occurring all around us and in this world, we need to move into a deeper relationship with God. Personally, even today, my relationship needs to go deeper than it was yesterday or the day before that, to stay in a position that God can use my vessel to the fullness of His Kingdom today, tomorrow, and the day after. I say that because we could always get a little closer to our Father and should strive to walk close under His Wing.

There has always been a time, a season of praise, and worship in my daily life. Sometimes these seasons have led me into an awesome awareness of *His presence*, or closeness. Much like a closeness or intimacy of fellowship that you get when spending a time of playing games, talking, or eating with family or friends. They are always your family or friends, but the inter-communic-

tion of the moment draws you closer, if even for a short time. We have all felt that closeness with God.

That is all I knew to do, communicate more with my LORD. God talks to us all of the time, but seldom do we hear His Voice. Sometimes He has to tell someone else, who is hearing His Voice, to tell us His message because we can't hear His yelling (speaking in a loud tone) to us over the noise of the world in our head or spirit. It is much like a friend trying to tell you something from the other side of a busy street. The more that we stop and hear His Words AND obey His Voice, the more He can trust us and He doesn't have to yell (or speak in a loud Voice), it is as if we are now on the same side of the noisy street.

The setting of the mind on the LORD is the opposite of "mental coasting" or just "reciting our daily prayers" without any depth. It is a *conscious choice* to direct our heart toward God. This is what Paul prayed for the Thessalonian Church: *"And we have confidence in the LORD touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you,"* 2 Thessalonians 3:5. It is a *conscious effort* on our part. But that effort to seek God is a gift from God and comes at a price.

That is exactly what I started doing. Closing my office door, choosing a spot beside my desk, I knelt on the floor and prayed, cried, and waited. *"Seek the LORD, and His Strength: seek His Face evermore,"* Psalm 105:4.

Over time, the noisy intense street traffic died down and we could talk in at a normal tone of voice level. But just talking wasn't getting me to that yearning for closeness that I was drawn to have with my Heavenly Father. How does the Word of God tell us to approach His Throne? *"Humble yourselves in the sight of the LORD, and He shall lift you up,"* James 4:10.

Knowing only that I felt in my heart that the LORD wanted me to come unto Him more than I wanted to take the time to draw close to Him, His drawing actually became an overwhelming urge to get to know Him more. I began to mentally, spiritually, and physically humble myself in every way I could think of. With my face in my office carpet, I started to speak and pray *humility*. The Light of His presence didn't suddenly brighten my darkened office. There wasn't that ooey-gooey feeling of His presence dripping on me. But over a period of going before Him, there was this gentle feeling like a familiar warm *Quilt of His Holiness* draped over me. Now I could hear His soft Voice speaking to me.

"Humility is the fear of the LORD; its wages are riches and honor and life," Proverbs 22:4.

There was no doubt that it was God's Voice. I noticed that the more that I obeyed His Voice, the more He would speak to me, or the more I could hear Him speak. Our relationship had grown – or deepened to the point

that at times I felt His thoughts as though they were my thoughts. Now, I am oh so quick to thank Him when He speaks even about the smallest things. After all, it is not about me, it is all about my Father.

"The meek (humble) will He guide in (His) judgment: and the meek (humble) will He teach His way," Psalm 25:9.

This next statement (as all prior statements) is not to lift me up, but rather to impress upon you that the Father's desire to have you humble yourself before Him as never before. GOD wants to have that deep fellowship with His Children, with you, for He is the Loving Father that loves His Children. *"Draw nigh to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded,"* James 4:8.

The closer we draw to Him, the closer He will come to us. The more we hear and obey His Voice, the more He can trust us with His Word. The more that He trusts us with His Word, the more He will speak to us. The more we obey His Word, the more He will give us to do for His Kingdom. The more that we choose to walk with Him, the more we find that He is walking with us. How close will He get?

"God said (to Elijah), 'Go forth, and stand upon the Mount before the LORD.' And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice," Kings 19:11-12.

There have been times that the presence of God has been so close, that it was almost like I could feel His breath on my ear as He whispered His Words to me. This is not an everyday occurrence, as we can't live on the mountaintop forever. However, we can visit the mountaintop and renew our faith and that close relationship that changes our lifestyle to *seek* His Face and His presence in everything we think, say, and do. We can stay in an attitude of prayer and walk in His righteousness in sunshine and in rain. We can be that Light that walks through the darkness. We can be the chosen vessel that pours out the Living, Loving, Waters of Salvation to a lost soul.

Your Covenant Brother in Jesus Christ Our Lord,

Phillip Buttram

Phillip L Buttram

[PORT MINISTRY]
The fastest way to the ends of the earth!



PORT MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

After leaving Tupelo, MS in June, we drove to Mobile, AL for the 2023 Annual Convention of the Port Ministries International (PMI). If you remember, in January of this year we visited Canaveral Port Ministry in Cape Canaveral, FL. There we met Mark Wodka, Director. This Port ministry is visited by 200 to 300 seafarers every day of the week. Mark is also the president of PMI and invited us to speak to their convention and distribute our newest translation of The Amazing Gospel in the language of Tagalog, the major language of the Philippines.

We have already received orders for this new translation. It is exciting to know that the Gospel of Jesus will be on ocean going ships to families all over the world that we would otherwise be unable to reach with the GOOD NEWS. Thank you Father for opening doors to Your Word.

EMAILS FOR PRAYER WARRIORS

Are you a prayer warrior for the LORD? If so, would you like to be on our email list to receive urgent prayer requests?

We receive many prayer requests. Sometimes they are a matter of life or death and need urgent prayer for God to intervene on behalf of the Body of Christ.

If you would like to help pray for these needs, please send us your email address so that we can put you on our Prayer Partner list.

NOTE: Your email address (and any other personal information) will NOT be given out to anyone. You are covenant family and treated as such.

CORRECTION

Last month I mentioned that my kids purchased me a book from "StoryBoard" that I had to write down some of my experiences through life. The correct name of the program is "StoryWorth" - not "Story-Board."

Writing about many of my life experiences has again pointed out to me the wonder and Grace of our Heavenly Father as I can see the thread of His Love that He has woven throughout the tapestry of my life. I want to strongly encourage you to do the same. Write your testimony of the wonders of God's Grace in your life and leave it as a legacy of God's handiwork for others to see.

POSTAGE RATES

The US Postal Service (USPS) has done it again. They have raised their POSTAGE rates again last month. Almost everything that we publish is sent out by US Mail. We compare rates using other freight carriers and will use the best means and shipping rates possible to ship you the Gospel Tracts that you order in the timeliest fashion possible. We will use the best rate possible to save God's money and be good stewards of what He has provided for us. Please help us by giving a little extra support to offset the postage rate increase.

FALL GOSPEL TRACTS

Before you know it, Summer will be a thing of the past and we will be in the middle of the Fall Season. Which means that you need to be stocking up on Gospel Tracts for Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Please plan ahead and place your order for Gospel Tracts and be ready for the Fall Harvest of souls for the Kingdom of God.

Please help us out by planning and ordering your Gospel Tracts early. If you need a list of Gospel Tracts for the Fall Season, or need to see some Sample Tracts, please contact us as soon as you can. Let's keep handing out the Seed of the Word into the Harvest Fields of the lost and needy.