

# The Liberating Secret Newsletter

October, 2006

Volume 22

## Ministry News

Watch [www.spiritradio.net](http://www.spiritradio.net) – See May' s conference, July' s conference with Steve Pettit, and see "WHAT IS MAN?" with Sylvia Pearce, daily on TV.

Excitement is mounting as we approach the month of October. My precious Dad always said, "May and October are my favorite months." My Father is in glory where there is no time or seasons, so, all the time (or no-time) is his favorite now. Why did he love October? Well, the weather, the temperature, the color, and just because my Dad was the most positive man I ever knew– although, Ed Fienning comes in second.

Who can be positive when October ushers in winter, and who likes winter? "Me, I do." Remember, I wrote, *The Treasures of Darkness*. Hint, hint. My Spiritual creative juices are peaked when conflict, trouble, darkness, cold, and lack manifests. Am I crazy, "yes, a little." I told Mimi Anderson today that I am a GLORY MONGER. When the world says that, it means: "I love to toot my own horn, so I can get the glory," but what I mean is: I love to see God' sGlory come out of darkneses, lack, conflict, etc. Hey, that is where GLORY hides itself, you know. And wouldn' t you know, itis mostly missed even by us Christian' s Scott Peck said in his book, *The Road Less Traveled*, that if people don' t embrace their problems and find our answers through accepting the pain, instead of flight, fright, or denial, then they will be unknowingly embracing more pain which lead to most of societies present-day mental disorders. Staggering isn' t it.

I know most people think that I am crazy when I say that "I am bored whenever there is a lull and I' m not working through somekind of negative." Someone said, "Well, you Sylvia have evidently not had enough hell, or you wouldn' t say that." "I beg your pardon, hell is hell, and I' ve had my share like everyone else, thank you." My daughter, Diane, said, "Mom, you need to write a sequel to "Treasures", and call it: "More Treasures of Darkness."

Doesn' t the Bible say that we move from "glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord" (II Cor. 3:17)? Doesn' tglory manifest itself as we gain the victory of the Romans 8 proclamation: "we are more than conquerors"? Where is victory if there are no giants to conqueror? And where are giants without problems? I know this kind of talk is absurd. But, the adventure of faith

has eaten me up. I think it is somewhat like Jesus said, "The zeal of my Father's house has eaten me up". All this has to be coming from the other side, otherwise I should be locked up.

Just recently I've seen glory pop into manifestation in my Daughter's x husband, (whom we should hate)--their marriage almost cost my daughter, her life. But, of course, "The love of God constrains us." ([Joan Carlson, its what we have prayed for](#)) I'm seeing glory come in old friends who are seeing great truths and experiencing what only the Holy Spirit could produce. I'm seeing my son Dave's x-wife broken and wanting help when she said with her own mouth that she didn't have to be broken. I told her different, of course. [Side-note: she put Dave in jail, although, she just came to our family dinner](#) And then there is my son, Dave, the x-cocaine addict--He is so bubbling over with the Spirit that he is preaching, teaching and blessing everyone he sees. Oh, Dave reminded me that the authorities say that, "once an addict always an addict." Well that is true if Dave were just a flesh man living in the flesh. Put praise God, he is a Spirit man walking in God's glorious Spirit who daily delivers him from "the lust of the flesh." So, God has the final word, not some authority, although we bless the authorities for their part too. Romans is right, the glory never compares with the suffering. I guess this is a little testimonial and praise report bundled into one.

Please indulge me, I'm so blessed. This doesn't even touch what has happened to my precious husband, Scott. You just have to see it, to believe it. He just retired several months ago. Already, people asking me to give some kind of negative report about our lives together now in retirement. I'm surprising them with a song (I really can't sing)-- Here goes anyway-- "Every day with Jesus, is sweeter than the day before. Every day with Jesus, I love him more and more." He's been taken over by a alien Spirit, that is, alien to this world-- it's none other than, the Holy Spirit. It is wonderful.

All this is to announce that I love October, just like my Daddy, in Heaven did and is still loving this October with all this great glory being manifesting in his family on earth. PS--Mama loves it too.

## News from the Web

Spirit Broadcasting Network: [www.spiritradio.net](http://www.spiritradio.net)

There were 987 visitors, and half were new visitors.

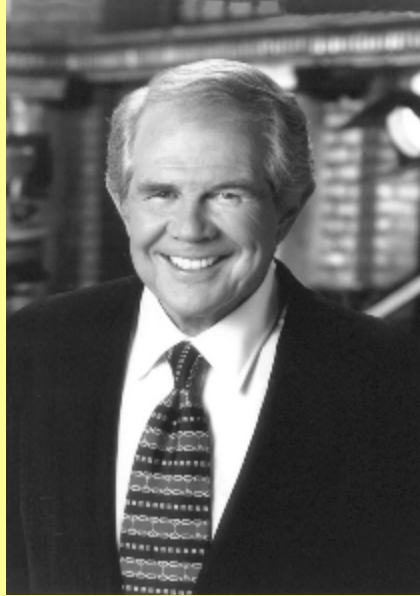
There were 22,072 hits, meaning, people were going from TV to Radio.

The Liberating Secret: [www.theliberatingsecret.org](http://www.theliberatingsecret.org)

There were 1,267 visitors, half were new

There were 15,127 hits.

**Great News**– Margaret Lester and I are going to eat Dinner with Pat Robertson– you know, the great Tele-evangelist, and founder of the 700 Club. Years ago Pat came to Norman to ask if he could come into the WEC. Norman told him that God had something else for him to do. This was a shock to Pat, but out of it, he started the 700 Club.



Here is his picture, pray for us–  
We meet him October 19, at 7:00 PM.

Brian Coatney has a new book coming out called, "Take These Wings." Remember Brian's inspiring "Dialogs," well the new book is a collection of these many dialogs cleverly done by Brian. You will soon be able to purchase it in The Liberating Secret Book Store.



Here is a word from Jenny Fienning to all Pawley's Princesses everywhere, but especially to those coming October 27-November 3, this year.

Just a note to all you Precious Princesses that are coming to Pawleys this fall... I have received your deposits and am so excited about each of you!! What a privilege to have time with you. Our Father is sooooo good!!

Between now and then, we will be praying for you & your families. God is "up to something" at all times. I dare you to be a "God Watcher"... Something He taught me many years ago. We have and will be in many circumstances,(pleasant and unpleasant ). Look to see our Father working in the midst of the given circumstance...

I love you all... Let me know if we can do anything for you...  
Your sister, Jenny

## Pawley' s announcement--

### HOW ARE WOMEN SET FREE?

(The same way Men are, dummy)

We will be looking at Galatians, the Bible' s "Decoration of Emancipation."

Check out [www.spiritradio.net](http://www.spiritradio.net) and can see the May and July conferences on TV.

This is our new announcement-- Spirit Broadcasting Network. We now have both radio and TV on 24 hours a day via T1 broadband internet connection, and we have it on WORLDWIDE. As Sharon White Skaggs always says, "Yeah God."

## LETTERS

Dearest Sylvia,

I am so happy for you and your ministry that you are now worldwide and reaching so many people.

I want you to know that we really enjoyed being with you at the retreat and for letting us stay in your RV. I am writing this to let you know that when the funds prevail I will be sending you a long overdue donation. Please forgive us for not getting one to you sooner. Gary is still not working as much as he needs to. Boy is god working on him. Our pastor today was preaching about how God breaks us, but not completely. He used the analogy of a stick being bent. God won't break the stick in half, but Satan attempts to and succeeds often. There was more, but I can't remember sermons very well. Sorry.

Another wonderful thing I heard in church today was that Steve (the banjo player), I don't know if you met him, but his son was killed by a drunk driver back in April. Steve is our neighbor and friend. Anyway, he testified in church this AM that he has totally forgiven the driver and went up to him in court the other day and took his hand and said he would be praying for him. The prosecutor's jaw dropped to the floor and he said he's never seen anything like that in his career/life. Praise God. This only happened 5 months ago. The man must face 3 years of jail, and Steve was sorry that he had to do that. Unbelievable. In the beginning Steve wanted to go for the jugular. So this drunk driver very well may come to the Lord while he is in prison. His name is Alfred Struble. He could use prayer.

Thank you Sylvia.



Dear Sylvia,

I long to find someone in the area that teaches the truths about identifying with Christ, etc., but don't know of anyone here that does. I am glad to be able to listen to Spirit FM on my internet again. I've also really been enjoying the book by Norman Grubbs, Who Am I? It's G-R-E-A-T, as Tony the tiger would roar! I read the chapter that talks about loving yourself, etc. That's a good one for me because I've done a lot of beating myself up over being human, etc. I was wondering about a situation that happened before going to bed. I fussed at my husband over some financial things, had my say, and of course afterwards I felt bad that I had done that, feeling that I was putting my security in my husband instead of trusting God for the future, and as a read that chapter I'm trying to figure out if I'm suppose to accept who I am in that situation and see the Lord as the positive peace to my negative fear, or . . . just how do I view the whole thing? I sure didn't leave my husband feeling very good!

Love,  
Mary

Dear Mary,

Fear is a human reaction, and usually expressed due to some upsetting outer stimuli, but not wrong in itself. (Jesus feared at Gethsemane Heb. 5:7b KJV) Fear is the opposite of faith. Fear is our jumping off place and opportunity to replace and see Christ faith-ing it (Gal. 2:20b) through us. Faith swallows up fear, as the Life of Christ swallows up our fearful flesh reactions. However, it is valid to express our concerns to each other, especially in our marriages. My husband and I say all the negatives, concerning our problems to each other, and most of the time we have a difference of opinion, then we help each other see through and watch God work right in the middle of the negative to solve it... Light shines out of darkness (II Cor. 4:6)... Some folks think that faith is constan tly staying positive, and most of the time that is achieved by self-effort...Pretty hard to do (really impossible)... No... Mark 11:22 says to speak to your mountain and call it a plain. How can we speak to something which we refuse to see? We are supposed to look at the mountains (problem) and see the negative for what it is, and of course we will react which is all normal and honestly recognized, then know that this very negative is the fuel for seeing God work in his quiet but normal (to Him) mysterious ways.

For so long we have been deceived and bully by satanic thoughts of condemnation concerning our humanity– thankfully, the day comes when

we are condemned no more, and we can be free to react humanly. However, our human reactions left to them selves are not the final word either, they are only what gets us in faith-gear to believe God in every situation. In my beginning days of discovering my human freedom, I probably took it too far. But sometimes we are so bound up that we almost have to. The Lord balanced me though, and reminded me that it is not really all about my human freedom, but it was about what He wanted to be accomplished through the negative. Now, it is totally important to get free enough to react without condemnation though, but the point is still " what are you up to Lord?"

Love you,  
Sylvia

"Fear knocked at my door, faith answered it, and no one was there."



Hi Sylvia;

Glad to see your email. I got slammed by a big depression yesterday after doing a lot a work on the house and probably wore my self out. Took 2 naps prayed etc., but I think it's because it's been 2 years that I've been going thru this and I'm getting impatient. Still not working much and need to find something. Thanks for your friendship and prayer. I know God's in this.

LARRY

Larry,

Don' t resist the depressions, they are notthe real you and are only a shadow on your soul level. If you resist it, it will dominate you, but if, by faith, you go with it, and say-this is not who I am anyway, you will be released. What you fight, fights you back, and what you resist, resist you back. " You are dead," and adead man can' t fight depression, however, if you falsely think that you are alive apart from Christ, then you will try to resist what is only a shadow. And like it or not the shadow them seems more real every day. Embrace the negative and watch God release you.

Love you,  
Sylvia



Sylvia:

Just found your radio program, (Norfolk, VA area) a couple of weeks ago and ordered a couple of books.

I am 61 years old and have not heard this message preached ANYWHERE, EVER! This is huge.

I'm so grateful to our Wonderful Lord for raising you folks up.

Stay with it and know that you have a friend out there in radio land!

Best Regards,

Mike Duckworth



Dear Brian,

As always, it was great to have received your letter. Immediately your first two paragraphs let in more light and warmth into my heart. You are absolutely correct saying that most people get so deeply focused on people-pleasing. It fogs our hearts and minds, making us forget Christ's sacrifice and promises. Throughout some of my life, I've said and done things to offend some people. My words and actions would then make me feel guilty, and I would spend my time focused on how to convince them to forgive me. I really believed that I could change their minds. You taught me that Jesus had to be in our spirits to have any capacity to forgive and love. The "I" could never accomplish any small amount of love and forgiveness. All I can do is pray to Jesus and ask Him to touch their hearts and give them the strength to forgive me. I'm still supposed to love them no matter what because Jesus commands it.

I like the challenge of life because with Jesus it's easy to love, and with Satan it's easy to hate. It's uncanny that when we turn to the "I" self, which I believe is pride and individualism, we surrender our shells to Satan and follow the dark path. We become monsters of ego when we ignore Jesus Christ. He can count on me to be His light in this world.

When I got zapped by the Holy Spirit, it was so transforming that I changed my behavior and became very grateful to Christ's undeserved love. God has conformed me to His will because there is much human evil here, but I will be a good example of Christ in me. It's easy to fall into evil, especially here where it prevails. Satan is near us all the time, but I am

absolutely confident that Jesus will remain the Light of my life. He is my glorious Master. I appreciate my place in His plan, and I will always be a living witness to His power transforming us, not resolutions. That is so very true my brother.

It is enough to know that Jesus is the certainty to forgive us our sins no matter how horrible they are. As Father Guissani wrote, "being depressed over one's own sin is precisely the way to stay ensnared by the wickedness within us." Our battles with the evil one give us strength. You, being a Navy vet, have probably heard that a calm sea never made a good sailor. I embrace my storms with joy because they're molding me into what Jesus sees in me., I can fight the storms of sin within me because Jesus is there. He keeps me from depression.

It was good to hear that Tandy and you attended the conferences with Sylvia. She's a great Christian woman. Give her my warmest greetings and love next time you see her.

I'll close for now with you and yours in my prayers. May the blessed Trinity grace you and your family with health, serenity, and love brother,

In Jesus and Mary,  
Greg

## What can we glean from Soren Kierkegaard?

### DIALECTIC

"Every truth is nevertheless truth only to a certain degree; when it goes beyond, the counterpoint appears, and it becomes untruth." (II A 751 – 1838)

"Only a dialectician can portray Christianity, because by continuously taking away all illusions he drills it, so to speak, into the present." (IX A 114 – 1848)

"The dialectical always ends in some way with pathos..." (X1 A 219 – 1849)

"Throughout Christendom, the dialectical element has been abolished." (X2 A 132 – 1849)

### PARADOX

"Paradox is the real pathos of the intellectual life, and just as only great souls are exposed to passions, so only great thinkers are exposed to what I call paradoxes, which are nothing other than rudimentary majestic thoughts." (II A 755 – 1838)

"Philosophy's idea is mediation – Christianity's, the paradox." (III A 108 –

1841)

" The irregularity in the paradox (is that) continuity is lacking, or at any rate it has continuity only in reverse, that is, at the beginning it does not manifest itself as continuity. (IV C 29 – 1842,43)

" If the learner does not collide in the moment in the collision of understanding, ...then the paradox thrusts him away, and he takes offense or is scandalized." (V B 11:4 – 1844)

" ..because all Christianity is rooted in the paradox, one must accept it (i.e. become a believer) or reject it (precisely because it is paradoxical), but above all one is not to think it out speculatively, for then the result is definitely not Christianity." (VI B 35:36 – 1845)

" Christianity entered into the world not to be understood but to be existed in. This cannot be expressed more strongly than by the fact that Christianity itself proclaims itself to be a paradox." (VI B 43 – 1845)

" Christianity must be foolishness to the Greeks, because God' s revelation of himself in suffering was precisely the paradox: suffering is abnormality, weakness, and yet it is the negative form of the highest – the direct form is beauty, power, glory, etc. (VII B 235 – 1846,47)

" The simplicity is simply to exist That is why Christianity is everywhere characterized by the paradox, lest the mistake be made of thinking that one has to speculate. ... To exist, to act according to the command – that is the simplicity; to speculate, to reason – that is the opposite of simplicity. What is expressed by means of the paradox is not something to speculate about; act according to it – that is, be simple. ... Speculation is the incessantly recurring sophistry in relation to existing. (X3 A 424 – 1850)

" The greatest possible striving – for nothing. This is as paradoxical as possible. But this is indeed the way it is if it is " grace" alone– consequently the greatest possible striving is for nothing, signifies nothing." (X4 A 641 – 1852)

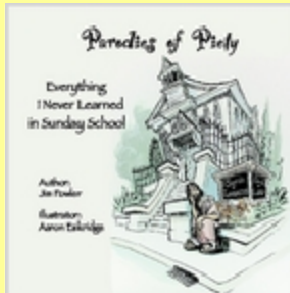
" What a paradox! How paradoxical and how consistent! To die and to die to the world are the very signs of being related to eternal life. Therefore the fact that eternal life is stirring within a person is not indicated directly by an intensified lust for life, but negatively, paradoxically, by being dead to the world, by being a dead and departed one! (X5 A 142 – 1853)

These Kierkegaard quotes are submitted by: Who else but: James A. Fowler. You can ask him to explain them if you don' t understand.

# Praise and Prayer Reports

We want to praise the Lord together for Jim Fowler's recovery, and also for Sam Henshaw's. The Lord is so gracious. Below is Jim's latest book that he has available on LuLu.com, an internet Publishing Company. Jim is back to his old humorous tricks putting out this book called, "Parodies of Piety." It can be purchased at [www.Lulu.com](http://www.Lulu.com)

## [Parodies of Piety](#)



by [Jim Fowler](#)

37 short parables that parody activities within the institutional church. It is time for contemporary Christians to engage in self-examination and self-criticism of some of their practices, in order to understand the spiritual reality of the Christian gospel.

# Poems of the Month

## AURORA

Brian Coatney

I could live alone in cold, dark space—  
give in to fear and let all the lights go out,  
so that no stars twinkle in the dark,  
no orb like the sun bask the green leaf.

Yet, when the stars flicker and would go out,  
the sun blacken into eternal night,  
the would-be stifled slave may choose  
an aurora instead.

In the last flicker of an appealing ember,  
before the black night of spin,  
royal freedom presents itself:  
"As many as receive."

Once, the dread of capture ruled;  
then the keeping took its place in my desire—  
the holy, lit mirror of transformation,  
standing unobstructed to the simple.

When darkness impinges,  
as it has a right to do, a fact remains of joy,  
in all the light of God that we behold,  
and loneliness must flee.

BC/9-28-06

## Words of Faith

Precious Sylvia!!!! I am just now sitting waiting on God for an answer for us to take His Gospel To The World. Surely He means us also when He wrote "Take the gospel to the whole world" Surely He can come up with the funds and whatever we need to go and tell the world that Jesus Is God Come In The Flesh And Paid The Price For Sin, To Reconcile Us To God! Your humble servant. Fran "Love" Giles

"Whatsoever you desire."

Mark 11:22-24

"Need produces desire; desire produces faith; faith quenches the pain of desire, and leaps and laughs at the impossible and shouts, "IT SHALL BE DONE." Sylvia Pearce... actually a little of Sylvia and a lot of CT Studd.

## This Months Article

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### What is Suffering?

Brian Coatney

Suffering comes from loss: security and comfort start to disappear. The book of Hebrews brings this out sharply, since the recipients of the book had already lost property and status for holding on to rest in God when attacked by those demanding works as a basis of knowing God. The

Hebrews writer told his original readers that they had not, however, “resisted unto blood, striving against sin” (12:4). So though one may start well in suffering, by coming to Christ as savior— even beginning a walk in the Spirit— intensified suffering, not seen from a glory perspective, can leave a person in danger of falling short of entering into God’ s rest and the calling to the intercessory priesthood— the priesthood of Melchizedek. We need, therefore, to know what the Bible says about the four kinds of suffering.

The first kind of suffering comes as the wages of sin, “for the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). This means that “Sin has its own built-in punishment,” as I once heard a minister say. Though we think of sin at first primarily as deeds, sin begins in the heart when the will turns away from God into darkness, resulting in words and deeds of darkness. God’ s response to this is love, for He sent His Son to be the savior of the world, which means that He longs to restore light and liberty where darkness and hell reign in the human heart.

All of us, except Christ, need that redemption. God means that sin extract its wages so that hopefully, in our freedom, we will cry out to find release, discovering Christ’ s atonement for us, which only He could make, since He came as the spotless God-man to sacrifice Himself for our sins, replacing the wages of sin with “the gift of eternal life” (Rom. 6:23). The first kind of suffering then is the darkness of separation from God, which comes from sin’ s wages; and the solution is the gift of Christ suffering for us.

The second kind of suffering takes place in the confusion and wretchedness of the Romans 7 experience, where the mind that serves God, and wills to do good, finds the bondage of sin in its bodily members. Here, the self still tries to deliver itself from sinful words and deeds, but cannot because the self, trying to do this independently, is self-reliant self that thinks, “I should try to be like Christ.” The issues of sin penetrate much deeper here because the will to serve God and do good masks Satan’ s lie, which is the lie that we can independently perform good or avoid evil. In this suffering, sin manifests in the works of the flesh, and in what we today call addictions, but the root is always the same— the self that tries to win its own battles for God.

The release from this kind of suffering comes when one cries out, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom. 7:24). This cry implies that the sufferer cannot in any way deliver himself but must totally be delivered by another, namely Jesus Christ. Freedom comes by rejecting condemnation for not being able to perform according to God’ s standards, for why take condemnation for what God knows that we cannot do anyway? He created us as vessels, temples, and branches to contain Him; so He did not even create us to perform our own righteousness: He always meant to

manifest Himself in and as us, we being His forms of expression.

Those discovering this deliverance and new understanding of what God always meant us to be, now set their minds on the Spirit and not on the flesh. Looking at the flesh always produces failure, whereas the mind set on the Spirit produces life and peace. Such is deliverance, and then one does not suffer any more from a deluded identity of an independent self trying to be what only God can be— perfection. Christ alone is our perfection.

The key point in these first two kinds of suffering is that sin produces them in the sufferer, and release from the suffering only comes when we exchange the wages of sin for the gift of eternal life in Christ, and then rest permanently from works of self-effort. Life becomes the quickening of the Holy Spirit of God, who produces Christ's life in us.

Now we move from the first two kinds of suffering to the third kind, which still has to do with sin, but not in the one suffering. In this case, the suffering comes from temptations and trials, neither of which is sin, though the sufferer is tempted to sin— which temptation is a form of suffering— or the sufferer experiences assault and loss spiritually, emotionally, and physically, often via God's convenient agent, the devil.

On an elementary level, temptation draws us through the stirring up of lust, which is not yet sin-level lust, but which would turn into sin to choose. But the main suffering from temptation comes from not getting to do what we want to do and having to die to it. In that death, the life of the Spirit can manifest through us instead of the enticement that captivated us in the drawing-out stage. Our temptation to fulfill ourselves by lust for what we can't lawfully have, or by what the Spirit forbids to us, gives us the opportunity to live supernaturally by the Spirit of God and His remarkable resources that bring us contentment.

However, an equally distressing kind of suffering occurs if we take condemnation for even being solicited and drawn in the first place, as if to say, "How could that have appealed to me?" or "How could I have been drawn out that far before seeing the need for rescue?" The release from these sufferings comes in knowing that God means us to be tempted even though He Himself does not tempt us, as James tells us. Norman Grubb often put this so well: "We're in Satan's camp; he has a right to shoot at us." I also loved remembering Dan Stone's frequent quip, "Do you know when you won't be tempted any more? When they look over at you and say, 'Don't he look natural?'"

We find peace in our temptations when we stop taking condemnation for them and say to God, "You're keeping me!" The worst kind of life as a

Christian is the fearful life of, "I know that sooner or later I will give in." When a person thinks like that, a see-saw experience takes place that looks like this: first, the one tempted thinks, "I'll hold out." But the suffering of trying to hold on, without giving in, becomes so agonizing, that the sufferer finally gives in to get some relief.

However, the price of giving in manifests in guilt, shame, and even torment. Satan, the enticer, no sooner seduces his victim into a sin than he jerks away the pleasure of that sin and pours in condemnation and torment. Next, the one who falls into sin, as just described, gets so miserable in reaping the wages of sin that abstinence looks like the way out of sin, thus a new resolution. This leads back to the first situation— that of trying to hold out, which again turns quickly into suffering, so that the cycle repeats itself endlessly without resolution (Romans 7) until one enters by faith into God's keeping.

Trials and tribulations, on the other hand relate more to what others say or do that affects us negatively. Finding no escape from these in this life, hopefully we discover that God means these as well. It's easy to recognize our trials and tribulations because they stem from what makes us feel angry or depressed. When we feel angry or depressed, we're also tempted to take condemnation for that, which is why I so much like Psalm 4:4 in the NAS: "Tremble, and do not sin; meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still." The marginal note for tremble is "I.e. with anger or fear." The Psalmist knows that we will experience those times, so he admonishes us to quiet meditation on our beds; and truly, sometimes, our emotions strike us so heavily that the wise thing to do is to lie down and meditate in stillness, waiting on the Holy Spirit.

Anger tells us that something is wrong, and we need to change it, so we try to change things, and find usually that we cannot. When anger fails us, and we realize that we can't restructure things, we think, "I'll get away from all this." Geographic solutions don't work well, though, because the same scenarios pop up in one place that pop up in another. We're left with our insides. So when anger can't propel us to change things, and withdrawal, even into depression, won't let us escape, we must live with a thing working on our insides until we get a resolution. Kierkegaard recognized this biblical truth and called it subjectivity, meaning that the objective side of life— the words and deeds of others— does not determine us; subjectivity, our inner responses, determine us.

Once again, though, we cannot respond on our own and find resolution: self-effort will not work and only keeps alive the deception that we can control things. Once we realize that we do not control things but can only respond to God, we begin to see God as the sovereign of the universe: He

means all things for good, whether people take them that way or not. This certainly does not imply the monistic error that makes good and evil the same or the error that posits evil as an illusion; but it does mean that we see through evil to say, "God I know that you mean this for good."

We may not even understand for a long time why evil treatment against us took place. Only after much suffering did Joseph understand that God sent him to Egypt to "preserve life" (Gen. 45:5). In the case of those the writer of Hebrews addressed, the purpose was to settle them in God's rest, no longer under law, so that they could begin to understand the new priesthood— that of Melchizedek.

This priesthood brings us to the final kind of suffering— suffering one willingly accepts from God with a view toward the deliverance and maturity of others in Christ. Paul tells us of this suffering in Colossians 1:24: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." Paul mentions this as a prelude to exclaiming the mystery of the Gospel, "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (27).

First, look at what Paul does not mean, namely any incompleteness in Christ's atonement, for we add nothing to the blood of Christ or to the body death of Christ. Those were and remain a finished work. Yet the ascended Christ does not reign detached from our suffering. Far from it— He still suffers in His body, the church, interceding through it. So when we suffer in an intercessory way, we see the sufferings as His sufferings. What happens to us happens to Him. And because we are seated with Him in the heavenlies, His glory is ours when we suffer.

In no other way could Joseph have told his brothers, "be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life" (Gen. 45:5). Joseph had to go all the way through to the Cross in his sufferings to see God's redemption in them, encouraging his brothers to see God's faithfulness in preserving the promise to Abraham.

To succinctly review, the Bible presents four kinds of suffering:

First we see the wages of sin, which Christ took upon Himself so that we could receive eternal life through Him.

Second, one suffers the repeated failures of sin when trying to do good by self-effort. God means us to live by the Spirit, for the Christian life is a miraculous life, and only Christ can live it in us.

Third, temptation and trials produce suffering— temptation when lust entices

us, and we must die to those lusts to live instead in Spirit life; and trials when Satan attacks us, leaving us in need on some level that only God can supernaturally supply. In temptations or trials, don't take the needless condemnation, but walk thankfully in God's keeping and infinite supply.

Fourth, expect to suffer for others to know Christ, either in salvation or in His fullness in them. Though Christ rose and ascended, seating us as well with Him in heavenly places, He still suffers in our bodies as He makes known to the world His completed work of salvation— first in His blood atonement for us and second in His body death, in which we are crucified with Him, but live, yet not we but He. For Him to make known the completeness of His salvation, He calls for intercessors who will come to know the highest form of suffering— the suffering that is for others. This is the priesthood of Melchizedek that the Hebrews writers urged his readers and us to press on to.

This priesthood might seem vague and esoteric, but really it is not. The foundation of the priesthood of Melchizedek is the new covenant, which is why the Hebrews' writer carefully makes the point that this priesthood is not based on genealogical descent or on our keeping of the law, but rather on the power of an indestructible life, seen in Jesus' resurrection.

The perfect priest, Jesus Christ, offered Himself as our sacrifice for sins and even as sin itself, being crucified as our old man, so that we might rise in Him as the new man, joined to Him in union, whereby He has put His laws in our hearts. Seeing this, we lose our appetite for sin, since we do not continue to live as physical selves but as spirit selves, discerning how to do that and discovering the real meat of the Christian faith.

This is a spirit covenant and not a flesh covenant, and so one must discern between soul and spirit to recognize it; for nothing mental or emotional will ever tell us of this covenant, but only the Spirit of God speaking to our spirits, beyond the rationality of the physical senses and bodily emotions. The Holy Spirit does this dividing for us when we are ready to see it.

This means suffering on our parts because we are so accustomed to interpreting everything by what we think and how we feel. Yet, the glory of this new covenant is so great that such a death is at most a momentary light affliction as Paul calls it. The privilege of seeing into the Spirit world— being born again so that we actually see the kingdom of God, is so unspeakable that loss on a physical level, even the daily dying that the Cross works in us, or even persecution and death itself, can no longer tear us away from the law of God written upon our hearts.

Now we live in this world by faith and not by sight, and though constantly

tempted to go back to law, we ever press on as the Hebrews writer exhorts us to, into that final priesthood, where we live only by the new covenant: Christ living the Christian life in us, no matter what threats come to us for doing so. When we see this, we do not go back under law, but live by the power of His indestructible life, a life in the Spirit, with minds set on the Spirit and not on the flesh.

It turns out that our primary temptations and trials center on maintaining our faith in the new covenant alone and God's law written upon our hearts, meaning that He is the one who works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure as Paul wrote the Philippians. All other temptations and trials have underneath them the temptation to abandon grace for law again and resume the fruitless, joyless endeavor of trying to be like Christ instead of Christ being His glorious self in us through faith alone.

It also turns out that intercessory suffering centers on the opposition we experience when we hold fast to the new covenant and do not go back again under law. Though we recognize the works of the flesh and identify them, we do not resort to law to change them but live by the Spirit, for it is by the Spirit that we mortify the deeds of the flesh. This is our grace and our glory, given by Him. To God be the praise!

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