

CHAPTER 26

DEALING WITH THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE OF LIFE (e³)

"For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come"
(1Timothy 4:8).

My father was a typical hard working, small business man—he was honest to a fault, he was forceful in the business world but quiet in a social setting, and he had a great love for his family and a strong loyalty toward those who worked for him. Actually it was a miracle that he was successful at all since he grew up without a father, as his mother and father divorced when he was quite young. I don't remember my father ever saying he loved me, but I knew he did; he just didn't know how to say it. He was thoughtful and industrious in many ways, but he never dealt with the most important issue of life—that is, not until he came face to face with open heart surgery.

In his early sixties my father was diagnosed with a number of blocked arteries, and his doctor recommended that he have open heart surgery. As was typical of my dad, he ignored the bad news; he simply didn't have time for open heart surgery. Actually he was able to work for another fifteen years before the chest pain became so unbearable that he could wait no longer. When it came time for the operation, I could tell that he was nervous. My mother had prayed for many years that dad would accept Jesus as his Lord and Savior, but she had seen little change in his attitude toward Jesus and the health of his soul. One evening shortly before his heart operation, I decided to drive to my father's home located an hour south of Seattle to talk with him about getting right with God before the operation. When I arrived at my folk's home, my mother shared with me that dad had prayed with her to accept Jesus as his Lord and Savior the night before. I knew, however, that even though dad had prayed and asked Jesus into his heart, he didn't really understand the born-again experience as well as **why** it was necessary for Him to accept Christ as his Lord and Savior. So I related to him an incident that a friend of mine Harald Bredesen had shared several weeks before in a breakfast meeting of Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship.

Harald Bredesen was a Lutheran minister whom my father had met in our home several months earlier—giving me an opportunity to relate the story as part of the evening conversation. Harald had been driving on the New Jersey turnpike at a time when the turnpike was still under construction. His gas tank was running on empty, but the gas stations on his side of the turnpike had not yet opened as they were still under construction. The gas stations on the other side of the freeway, however, had been completed earlier and they were open for business. Finally, in desperation, Harald made a U-turn across the median strip to the opposite lanes of the turnpike in order to obtain the gas he required to complete his trip. Just as he pulled into the gas station, a police officer pulled in behind him and wrote him a traffic citation for making an unlawful u-turn. Because Harald lived out of state, the arresting officer required Harald to accompany him to the local judge. The judge, also a Lutheran, saw Harald's white ecclesiastical collar and did not want to prosecute him. The judge said, "*Officer, this Lutheran minister is a man of the cloth. I really don't want to fine him; would you consider dismissing the charge?*" However, the officer, who was a staunch Roman Catholic, exclaimed, "*I wouldn't dismiss the charge even if he were a Catholic Priest!*" The judge told Harald that even though he didn't want to do so, the law required that he find him guilty as charged; and he fined Harald \$15.00 for the offense. (This incident occurred in the 1960's, when traffic fines were much less than they are today.) You see, because the judge was just and fair, he had to uphold the law.

Likewise, God is absolute justice—mankind has broken the law of heaven; he has committed treason. Even though God's "loving nature" wants to forgive mankind, He cannot violate His "just" nature, which requires that He find mankind guilty of violating the law. Like the New

Jersey judge, justice requires that God find mankind guilty, and man must pay the penalty for violating God's law.

Several days after Harald arrived home, he received a letter from the New Jersey judge. It went something like this:

"Dear Pastor Bredesen,

I am sorry that I had to find you guilty of the traffic violation yesterday; but justice demanded that I do my duty, and it required that you pay the penalty for your violation of the law. However, I have enclosed a check for \$15.00; I want to pay the fine for you. God bless you in your ministry. You see, I too am a Lutheran."

The letter was signed by the judge that had heard Harald's case.

I shared with my father that this incident in Harald's life reveals so clearly the reason that God has to hold mankind responsible for their sin; and it also reveals God's plan for the redemption of mankind. While God had to find the human race guilty of their sin, He paid man's penalty Himself. He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to die for mankind's sin and to redeem mankind from hell. Anyone who believes in what God's Son has done and accepts Him as his Savior (his Redeemer) is justified (declared righteous) and receives eternal life (the nature of God).

As I finished the story I could see by the sparkle in my father's eyes that he understood God's plan of salvation, and why it was necessary for him to ask Jesus to be his Lord and Savior. Because my mother prayed for my father for more than fifty years, he had the opportunity to deal with the most important issue of his life, "life after death." And he dealt with it just in time because two days later, my father died on the operating table. Will you have the same opportunity that my father did? It's possible that any one of us might be killed unexpectedly, like the young soldiers in Korea who all died when the military airplane crashed in the Han River, a story I related earlier in the book.

WHAT IS THE BORN AGAIN EXPERIENCE?

Most non-believers and even many Christians, though they have accepted Christ as their Savior, don't understand the incredible rights and privileges that belong to the born again believer. They think that being a Christian means that they have to go to church every Sunday, put their hard-earned money into the offering plate and try hard all week to live a good moral life. For the first forty-three years of my life, that is what I thought being a Christian was. I didn't understand that when we accept Christ, the Spirit of God moves into our spirit to empower us to live a victorious life.

My view of Christianity began to change when I came in contact with a book entitled *Power in Praise* written by Merlin Carothers (1), a retired Lt. Colonel in the United States Army. Initially I thought that it was a secular success motivation book, so I eagerly began to read it. After reading several chapters of *Power in Praise*, I realized that Carothers was not talking about business success; he was talking about spiritual success and God's gift of eternal life. He explained that God has given us many wonderful gifts, and they are free for the asking; but most of us only know them as ten-cent gifts, and therefore we never get very excited about them. Carothers said, "*Many church-going people think of God's plan of eternal life as a ten-cent gift. They believe they have to struggle to live a good life to keep their "free gift." Trying hard to live a good life puts them under such a continual strain that they often wonder if trying hard to be a Christian is worth it. To them it just means going to church on Sunday, staying away from things that might be a lot of fun, and giving their hard-earned cash into the offering plate*" (1). I didn't classify myself as a church person, but frankly that's exactly what I thought being a Christian was—I thought it meant leading a boring life.

In the first chapter of this book, I related a story in which my brother was seriously injured in a car accident. While he was in the hospital, my father promised God that he would build Him a new church if He healed my brother. Like my father, most of us have been conditioned to believe that we only get what we deserve or what we are willing to pay for. But God doesn't give eternal life to people who meet some minimum standard of behavior by being good or by

giving a large amount of money into the offering plate. God says, "I will destroy all human plans of salvation no matter how wise they seem to be, and ignore the best ideas of men, even the most brilliant of them" (1Corinthians 1:19 TLB). As I read *Power in Praise*, Carothers shared several scriptures from a modern translation of the Bible:

"This Good News tells us that God makes us ready for heaven- makes us right in God's sight – when we put our faith and trust in Christ to save us" (Romans 1:17) (1)

"...No one can ever find God's favor by being good enough. For the more we know of God's laws, the clearer it becomes that we don't obey them" (Romans 3:20). (1)

"Then what can we boast about doing, to earn our salvation? Nothing at all. Why? Because our acquittal is not based on our good deeds; it is based on what Christ has done and our faith in him. So it is that we are saved by faith in Christ and not by good things we do" (Romans 3:27-28). (1)

I, like many of you, knew that I was not living right and that there were many things in my life that were not acceptable to God. Therefore in my mind, I saw no way that I could ever be acceptable to God. But someday, I reasoned, maybe when I get older, I would begin to live a better life and then I could approach God. But reading the above verses began to change my thinking. They proclaimed that there was no way that I could get good enough to receive "eternal life"; I had to believe that Jesus Christ had already paid the penalty for my sin. I read this chapter on eternal life over and over for nearly two months before I had the faith to act on it. I remember the occasion vividly. I was at home in the bathtub with a Jacuzzi unit, massaging a chronic spasm in the muscles of my lower back. It was about 2:00 in the afternoon of March 8, 1976. I prayed "Jesus, I believe that you are the Son of God. I believe that you died and paid the price for my sins, and I believe that you have risen from the dead. Now I ask you to come into my heart and be my Lord and Savior." Then I continued, "Lord, help me to change the way I live." When my prayer was finished, I got out of the Jacuzzi and lay down on my bed and fell asleep, the most peaceful sleep that I had ever experienced. I no longer had the fear of death; I knew that if I died I would be in heaven with Jesus.

"It is from God alone that you have your life through Christ Jesus, He showed God's plan of salvation; He was the one who made us acceptable to God; He made us pure and holy and gave himself to purchase our salvation" (I Corinthians 1:30).

I continued to read *Power in Praise* for another seven months, particularly the third chapter of the book which was entitled "Power Unlimited." That chapter talked about the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Carothers explained that because we belong to Christ, we are children of God. We have entered His kingdom, and now the power, privileges, and rights that belong to that kingdom belong to us (Ephesians 1:3).

Then he went on to describe the baptism in the Holy Spirit, saying, "The very first free gift God wants His new children to ask for is the baptism in the Holy Spirit. That's right. The baptism in the Holy Spirit was provided as a 'first feeding' for newborn believers. They need it to grow." He explained that the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in the new believer the moment he accepts Christ as his Savior. Then he pointed out that Jesus had told His disciples that they were to wait in Jerusalem until they were baptized in the Holy Spirit, at which time they would receive the power to be His witnesses and tell others about Him (Acts 1:8).

Well, I could see from reading *Power in Praise* and reading these scriptures that the baptism in the Holy Spirit was an important gift. After all, the early disciples had received it just days after Jesus was raised from the dead and received into heaven, where He was seated at the right hand of the Father. But somehow I had the idea that this gift was only for spiritual people like a priest or pastor. I didn't understand that it was for everyone. But as I read and reread about the baptism in the Holy Spirit, faith was developing in my spirit. The scriptures have a lot to say about the benefits of praying in tongues. (The term *tongues* used in the Manufacturer's Handbook refers to a personal prayer language that the Holy Spirit gives to you when you are baptized in the Holy Spirit.)

Finally one evening in mid-September of 1976, in the living room of my home, I knelt down by our sofa and I asked Jesus to baptize me in the Holy Spirit. Realizing that I needed to receive it by faith, I thanked Jesus for baptizing me, and then I began to speak some syllables by faith—not complete words, just syllables—and the Holy Spirit took those syllables and formed them into words. They were words I didn't understand, but I could tell they were words. Praying with these new words seemed to energize my spirit, my inner man; it felt good. The next day, indeed the next several weeks, I prayed in the spirit whenever I got the opportunity to do so. Jesus became real to me; the Word of God came alive. I didn't tell my wife Barbara that I had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit right away because I wanted to make sure I understood it before I explained it to her. When I told Barbara about my experience, I thought she would be thrilled. After all, when we were married she had told the pastor who married us that she wanted to have a true Christian marriage. But I must tell you that Barbara was not very happy about me receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit and praying in the Spirit. She had been raised in a denominational church, which had taught that anyone who spoke in tongues was a "Holy Roller," a sect of Christians who were considered out of the mainstream of Christianity. But after watching the dramatic changes that took place in my life over the next several months, she too asked Jesus to baptize her in the Holy Spirit. The very afternoon that she was baptized, she was singing in the kitchen, and she realized that she was not singing in English but in a new Holy Spirit prayer language. As I related in the chapters entitled "Business as the Spirit Wills," and "Hearing the Voice of the Spirit in Business," the baptism in the Holy Spirit is very important to the manifestation of the "the gifts of the Spirit" and your ability to be led by the Spirit of God in your life and business.

Let me give you some information from the Manufacturer's Handbook which I believe will encourage and help you to receive and exercise your new prayer language. Actually the Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—all agree with the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The Father is the one who promised the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4 & Joel 2:28-29); Jesus is the one who actually baptizes us in the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11, Luke 3:16, John 7:38); and the Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the utterance, or the words (Acts 2:4). The "initial sign" of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is speaking in other tongues (Acts 2:4, Acts 10:44-46, Acts 19:2-6).

Because this gift has been such a blessing to me, I want you to become aware of some of the benefits which will accrue to you when you are baptized in the Holy Spirit and are able to pray to God in your own private prayer language. First, you will receive ability or power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you (Acts 1:8); second, you build up your most holy faith when you pray in the Holy Spirit (Jude 1:20); third, you edify yourself—a spiritual "battery charge" of sorts—when you pray in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:4); fourth, when you don't know how to pray about a situation, or an individual, the Holy Spirit will pray through you (in words that can not be articulated in English) the perfect will of God (Romans 8:26-28); and fifth, when you pray in tongues, you speak mysteries to God (1 Corinthians 14:2).

Because the individual praying in the Spirit doesn't understand what he is praying, some begin to wonder *what good is it doing to pray in tongues?* You see, when you pray in tongues, you are not speaking to men; you are speaking to God who understands everything you say. It is your private, coded prayer language to the Father; it is a language that the devil doesn't understand.

Believe it or not, some denominations actually teach that speaking in tongues is from the devil. When we ask Jesus to baptize us in the Holy Spirit, our heavenly Father is not going to give us something evil, He will give good gifts to whosoever asks (Luke 11:9-13).

Years ago I was in the vestry of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in the city of Renton, a suburb of the city of Seattle, when the telephone rang. I answered the telephone, and the man on the other end of the line who was calling from Gloucester, Virginia, asked for Father Dennis Bennett, a well-known Episcopal priest who had written several books concerning the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Father Bennett was the priest in another Episcopal church in the city of Seattle by the same name; the information operator had given this man the wrong church. The man said that he had just read Father Bennett's book entitled *Nine O'clock in the Morning*

and he wanted to know if he needed someone to lay hands on him and to pray in order that he might receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Because of my experience of having been baptized in the Holy Spirit while reading a book, I told him that he did not have to have hands laid on him in order for him to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. I assured him that if he would follow my instructions all he had to do is to act in faith and receive. I told him if he was ready, I could lead him into the baptism in the Holy Spirit over the telephone. He said he was ready, so I used a method which I have used many times over the years to lead people into the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It worked for the man in Gloucester, and it will work for you if you will simply follow my instructions and act on them in faith.

I generally share a few of the scriptures which I mentioned on the previous page, then I ask the candidate to listen very carefully as I read Acts 2:4, because I will give them a test on the content of the scripture. I read, "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). I generally read this scripture several times, and then I ask, "*Who spoke in other tongues?*" Most answer, "*The people spoke with other tongues,*" but occasionally some will answer that the Holy Spirit spoke in other tongues (because they believe that the Holy Spirit will supernaturally move their lips to make them speak in other tongues). Then I ask them, "*What does the Holy Spirit do?*" The answer of course is that He gives them the utterance or the words! I then generally explain to the candidates that words are made up of syllables. If they believe that Jesus has baptized them in the Holy Spirit, then after we pray, by faith they must speak some syllables and allow the Holy Spirit to have their tongue so that He can form the syllables into a new language or a new tongue. Like everything we receive from God, we must act on His word in faith to receive. Then I lead them in the following prayer: "*Father, the Word says that You have promised to send the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 1:4&5, Joel 2:28). *Jesus, the Word says that You are the baptizer* (Mark 1:7&8); *baptize me now in the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit, the Word says you will give me the utterance* (Acts 2:4). *I thank you now for filling me and giving me a new language, and I will now speak in other tongues. I seal my request in the name of Jesus.*"

After they have prayed this prayer, I encourage them to confess to me that they have just received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This is an important step, because we are to receive the answer to our prayer when we pray (Mark 11:24). Once they have confessed that they have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, I simply tell them to speak out some syllables and let the Holy Spirit within them have their tongue. After they have prayed in their new language for a minute or so, I ask them to stop, but then I ask them to start again. I want them to understand that they may pray in the spirit at will, that they may pray loudly or softly, and that they may pray in a monotone or with emotion. I want them to understand that it is up to them. The prophet controls his own spirit and his own tongue. The Holy Spirit will not make you do anything; He is a gentleman (I Corinthians 14:32).

Now that you have received the Holy Spirit, I encourage you to pray in your new language as often as possible. I do so at every opportunity because it gives me a spiritual battery charge and it builds up and strengthens my spirit. I have never known anyone who does not pray much in the Holy Spirit to flow in the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit.

IF YOU ACCEPTED CHRIST AS A RESULT OF READING THIS BOOK

If you have accepted Christ while reading this book, it is important for you to find a church that teaches the Word of God, continually reaches out to the community; to get people born again and baptized in the Holy Spirit, to help the poor and needy, and that has made it their primary mission to take the Good News of Jesus Christ to the nations of the world. While doing "business by the Spirit," is important to your business life, living your life by the Spirit of God is not only important in this life but in the life to come.

(1) *Power in Praise*, by Merlin Carothers, © 1972 by Logos International, (Pg 20,21,22 &41)