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Light.
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‘Jesus said, ‘I am the light of the world.’

(John 8:12)

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To dad and mom – Mickey and Kathleen Walker

'I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace.'

(Acts 20:24)

Introduction

You can only see what you see. This sounds obvious, but determines everything.

What you see determines where you go and what you do. Do you see a path ahead? You see it, therefore you head in that direction. You don't see it, you go elsewhere...

Do you 'see' value or meaning in this career? You 'go' in that direction. You invest, study, sacrifice, meet up with...

The light in your eyes – your physical eyes – gets you out of the woods, the literal woods. And the light in your mind, in your heart, connects you to life choices and relationships.

Now back to our opening line: You can only see what you see. Why is this 'obvious' line so important? Well, because sometimes in life we truly have not seen a path (or value, or revelation, or principle, or person), and we need more light to actually see it. And other times in life we *do* see a path (or value, or revelation...) and we choose *not* to take it. The real issue is what we do with the measure of light we have. If we allow true light to light our eyes, our hearts, and we move towards it, build in it, we receive more light, more direction. Light increases when we walk towards it.

'In your light we see light.' (Psalm 36:9)

1.

No one debates whether the ground beneath our feet is real.

Well, some people do, but only because they can, and words allow for it. Dostoevsky – in his *'Notes From the Underground'* – says that people will make choices simply because they can, not because the choices are rational per se.

Choice, humankind's personal will to act the way they want or don't want, is a powerful expression of being one's own god. So yes, people do debate whether the ground beneath is real, but not in truth; rather from some other motive, and usually, I would dare suggest, not to undermine the reality of the ground but the reality of some moral code that they do 'believe' but can't shake. So they question.

The reality of the ground beneath is much like the reality of revelation. It just is. We 'discover' it long after we've relied on it. We consider it long after we've built on its foundation.

The ground – and deep truth – is self-evident. That is not to say everyone sees it, but that its 'nature' precedes proof. We need it in order to question it. So that nihilist who stands in the auditorium and pontificates about nothingness, only had the luxury of such wisdom and opportunity *after* the auditorium had been built on somethingness. The same is true of

questioning 'light' or love or joy or forgiveness, or any other spiritual truth. After one is sated to the full, and their soul overflows with experience and their life with terms and conditions built on spirit, only then does he/she question the existence and value of the spirit.

I have friends who don't believe in God. But they believe in much. They have to. Here's how I know: they are faithful to their spouses. There is no grounds for this without an authority of morals. Nothing in nature or even evolutionary or societal philosophy is at work here. There is a deep-seated belief and, shall we say, 'fear of God', that inspires this. Otherwise, everything about nature and societal and evolutionary philosophy would promote not even polygamy, but secret and constant lying and cheating in the marriage. That is the only 'natural' thing to do. That is the law of nature, so to speak. So why faithfulness? Because it is a self-evident truth that God has *'written on hearts'*.

What about people, you say, that do cheat on their partner? Same truth applies. This is why they feel cut to core, deeply false, and even 'judged' or 'condemned' for doing this. If they did not believe in the spirit compulsion and leading of the moral code to be true and faithful, they would not feel bad at all. They would not have 'committed' to the relationship in the first place. And they would not feel the need to keep it a secret from people.

Pornography? We just know it is wrong, and that is why it is in the dark, or only shared with others in our lives who have agreed to the lie.

(If you have fallen into the sin of adultery or pornography, please understand there is a 'blood that speaks a better word than the blood of murder'. There is a covering and a forgiveness and a 'new heart and spirit' available to you! Please see this footnote before reading on.)¹

This chapter, this section, is about the nature of 'revelation', not about condemnation. But we are so desensitized to 'revelation' that sometimes we have to look into the deep and dark of our hearts to see where it all begins.

Spiritual revelation is about God 'revealing' something true to us, that we 'see' because he showed it, and opened our eyes to it. Can't be proven, but can be shared.

'God, who made light shine out of darkness, made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.' (2 Corinthians 4:6)

The Christian message – that Jesus is God in the flesh, died and rose again, ascended to

¹ God calls every person to repentance and faith in Jesus, for the forgiveness of sins. You are not alone! Please see the *FIRST STEPS* tab at: www.1peter1three.weebly.com

heaven and will come back again – is revelation. It makes sense, has powerful ‘proofs’ around the story and history and witnesses, but is essentially a spirit truth. It can be denied. For this reason when Jesus walked the earth, and did miracles in the sight of people, even the reports of the Gospel speak of many denying his message, his words. Some believed, some did not, and it was a decision deeper or beyond just what they saw. Jesus called for ‘belief’, not just mental assent of what he was doing. He called for belief of what could only be believed not seen – i.e. his identity.

Jesus said his own words were ‘*spirit and life*’. And the apostle Paul speaks of ‘*spirit-taught words*’ that we use. He also speaks of a wisdom and reality we reference – that of Christ – that is different to the ‘*basic principles of this world*.’¹

I want to defer to you, two observations:

First, God is just. God claims throughout the whole Bible (*that is, over the course of 1500 years of writing, 66 ‘books’ and 40 different authors*), that he will judge all mankind justly and eternally. God does perpetuate a history of calling people who see his truth, to share his truth with other people, to preach, teach, share his message. But God also holds every person responsible ultimately for their own acknowledgement of God. See these two

¹ John 6:63; 1 Corinthians 2:13-14; Colossians 2:8

compelling passages:

'If the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people and the sword comes and takes someone's life, that person's life will be taken because of their sin, but I will hold the watchman accountable for their blood.'

(Ezekiel 33:6)

'All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law... When people who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves... They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts...' (Romans 2:12-16)

Secondly, God has given everyone revelation about the true God – enough to ready their hearts to see and recognize Jesus Christ.

This point is critical. This is why I have confidence to share Jesus with people who may never have heard about him before. Because Scriptures teach us that creation itself speaks of the true God to a person's spirit, to their very soul, and that same speech, as it were, of creation, that reveals the true God, speaks the name of Jesus Christ. When I testify to Jesus Christ, it is my confidence that his name and his gospel – vindicated by his Spirit to the hearer – will resonate with their soul, like a pure sound, a sweet song. It will ring true.

'Your word is sweeter than honey to my lips.'
(Psalm 119:103)

Scripture tells us that Creation itself – held up by God's living word¹ – points to the true God. So much so, that no man has an excuse to not believe in God in a true and deep way. Scripture also tells us that God created all mankind – in every age that he/she has existed – with the purpose of seeking, reaching out for, and knowing God. So with these revelations of God, and the moving purposes of God in the spirit of a man, I have confidence to share the name and the gospel of Jesus Christ. And if a person is a true believer in God, and truly responding to the prompting of their spirit to seek God, I believe they will hear, see and know that my gospel of Christ is truth.

'Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.'
(Romans 1:20)²

'God made the whole world and everything in it... God did this so that [all nations] would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him...' (Acts 17:24-27)

So to summarize point 1 and point 2 above in

¹ Hebrews 1:3; John 1:3

² See Romans 1:18-32, and Psalm 19:1-2

very simple terms:

We are called to share Jesus with people. There is a deep significance in our sharing this 'mission' with the Holy Spirit.¹ This is the will of God. We are watchmen, called to warn people, to protect and save people. However, all people throughout all history, will stand before God and be judged justly, whether they have heard the message of Christ, or only believed on the God of creation and followed his laws written on their hearts. One way or the other, none will perish unjustly. None will perish simply because of disadvantage.

There is a 'dichotomy' here, almost a seeming contradiction. Why the urgency on us as followers of Jesus to share his name and story with people, if none will perish unjustly?

Yes, if you find yourself in this space of tension, you are in a good space. Here you surrender your own broken understanding – broken from the very seed of Adam and Eve seeking knowledge (Gen 3:5) – and you 'base' true understanding on Christ. If you do this here and now – rather than speculate on 'sovereignty' philosophies, etc. – you will find yourself in that Spirit-filled, biblical space where we both testify to Jesus with urgency (*because our testifying matters, it advances the Kingdom, it is the command of Christ and has cost many believers their lives*) and we sleep at night because we

¹ John 15:26-27

know God is just. This is how Jesus lived.

‘See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world, rather than on Christ.’ (Colossians 2:8)

‘We take captive thoughts and make them subject to Christ.’ (2 Corinthians 10:5)¹

¹ There is truth that is ‘in accordance with the gospel’. See Gal 2:14 and 1 Tim 1:8-11.

2. Tunneling

England and France built a 31-mile tunnel under the sea to join the two countries. It is called the 'Channel Tunnel', or the 'Chunnel'. For six years the two sides tunneled towards each other deep underground, and then December 1st, 1990 (which I remember seeing on TV), the two sides broke through. They shook hands, laughed, exchanged flags.

God is at work in a person's life from different angles, on different levels. I remember in my own life when I came to actually 'feel' the conviction of God on my soul, there had already been different things going on to lead me, and prepare me, for that moment, and the decision I made in that moment.

For example, in the preceding months I was becoming more burdened by my own sin, and more aware of the disloyal people in my circles of sinful living. They weren't there for me, and I wasn't there for them. We just had no floor under our feet, no rock foundation, no truth. I was feeling this more and more.

Also I was experiencing kind Christian people in my life. They were there. They were dependable. They actually cared about me, the true me, my soul. I could feel this. I could feel the difference of God's people towards me, and my 'friends'.

So when the Lord weighed on my spirit with a

call to be true to him, there was breakthrough, as it were, of two sides of a tunnel. God had been digging from one end, God's people from another, and they connected in the middle. Breakthrough. Relief. Light. Release.

Now, many people who sacrificed and were hurt by me, and many prayers, well these had all been part of the dark, damp tunnel-digging over the months and years. I'm sure that many people – my parents especially – felt often that their love and sacrifices were lost, were wasted efforts. But no, God's word and his Spirit never come back empty.¹ It was tunneling.

'Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them.'

(Psalm 126:5-6)

Now one other thing that I observed from the video of the tunnel breakthrough in 1990, was that the moment of 'connect', the light breaking through the 31 mile-long project over six years, happened when one small rock was removed. The small rock that brought all ends together, was no bigger than any of the rocks along the way. It was not a 'bigger' or more significant rock. It simply was the one in between two significant ends of the tunnel.

¹ Isaiah 55:10-11

Sometimes we think that the small rocks we dig out, we move, along the spiritual path and life of an individual, are not meaningful, are getting us nowhere. But they are as significant an effort – a prayer, a testimony, an action – as that very last effort that brings light flooding through. And no ‘rock’ is more meaningful than the other. If tunneling had not happened over the years to bring different ends together, that rock of breakthrough, so to speak, would not have been a rock of breakthrough. There would be no tunnel or opening on the other side. Every rock along the way is as meaningful as the very last rock removed.

Look what Jesus said to the disciples, who were very much in a harvest season of souls, ‘reaping’, removing the ‘last rock’, so to speak, as people’s eyes were opened to Christ:

‘I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.’

(John 4:38)

For this reason, as Christians with a mission to build God’s eternal kingdom, we must not lose heart. Every faith-action, prayer, song, gift, secret obedience... lays bricks of gold in that eternal kingdom. One day we will ‘*see our work for what it is*’¹ and walk on streets of gold that our faith has paved. It is true. In a sense, God’s

¹ 1 Corinthians 3:13

word made and sustains this earth. And *our* 'word', our faith, builds and constructs heaven. Heaven, not only 'as' real but more real than earth, is built by our faith here and now.

'Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.' (Galatians 6:9)

So the vision I'm really trying to capture in my own life, and 'cast' here, is that in Jesus we 'tunnel', so to speak. Our efforts don't stand alone, and they are not linear in the lives of people. Jesus told us to testify, and that his own Spirit would also be testifying. The fabric of the spirit world is complex, and much is happening all the time – in our own lives, and in the lives of those we are trying to reach.

Jesus taught us to pray, but we are also told that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us, and Jesus himself prays for us. So much is going on! So we tunnel away – in our own obedience, faith and encouragement, and in our reach and investment to other people.¹

At some point, my friend, all tunnels of Christ will connect, and his living water will rush through them all, filling the earth.

'The knowledge of the glory of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.'

¹ John 15:26-27; Romans 8:26,34

(Habakkuk 2:14)

3.

Jesus said that we his followers were salt and light in this world. (Matthew 5:13-16)

A few thoughts on this...

Salt, when used, dissolves, disappears, into that which it is salting. When used, you can't really find it again. Its impact is everywhere – through the whole dish - but the salt itself can't be found anywhere.

I think of Paul saying that he was being poured out like a drink offering.¹ In a sense that's a messy image, a splattering and spilling. When I spill a drink – especially if it is sugared or flavored – I think I've cleaned it up but no, days later I'm finding or stepping on sticky dots on the floor, on the counter. As a Christian, as a witness and follower of Jesus, the impact of our 'salt' and 'light' is more of a 'pouring out', not a stacking high. The world system stacks and charts its achievements. Not so the believer. Christ's kingdom is not like that of the Gentiles. We pour out, pour into, and then on '*that Day*' our work will be shown for what it is.²

Over the years as a Christian, since being a young lad, I've heard people speak on the passage of 'salt and light'. Usually it is focused on the impact of salt and light – i.e. flavors,

¹ 2 Timothy 4:6

² 1 Corinthians 3:13

stands out – but not on the ‘nature’ of salt and light. As noted above, when salt is used, it disappears. You can’t see it. And when light shines, it lights other things for other people, it doesn’t draw focus on itself. We rarely look at the sun, and can’t really. But by the sun we look at other things. The sun – the light – beams into people’s lives, and dispels darkness – and dark deeds – in street corners. Light is not about itself, but about others.

So even when Jesus says let your light shine before men that they might see your good deeds... (vs.16) He’s not saying we should be showy about our good actions. In fact, in the next chapter, three times he encourages people to do their good deeds ‘in secret’, and actually condemns people who do what they do in order to be seen by others.¹

No, Jesus is saying that the reality of our lives should be ‘light’, and our deeds and actions should reflect this. Our lives should – practically, in every way – be true to our faith. In other words, I believe, Jesus was saying, ‘Let your lives actually be good in actions, not just words, so that you do impact people!’

There can be a bit of a futile feeling when people meet you, ‘experience’ you, and go away thinking highly of you. If people’s only ‘take-away’ from you, is you, well, that’s where it

¹ Matthew 6:4,6,18

stays. But if people encounter you, and take away a prize about themselves, about God, well now you have truly 'salted' them, 'enlightened' them. God has become more, and you have become less.¹

When I die I don't want to be missed. Truly. Rather I want my giving, my testimony, my encouragement, to be absorbed by people, be part of them like salt is absorbed in food. I want the light I was to not reflect back on me, but to leave people seeing truth – away from me – about themselves, about God's love for them, about Jesus Christ. I want to be fully poured out and gone, when I go! I don't want to be missed, I want to be fully absorbed.

¹ John 3:30

4.

‘Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards... But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.’

(1 Corinthians 1:26-27)

When God called me to faith at the age of sixteen, he first called me ‘out’ of a sinful lifestyle. He took away my name, so to speak, the one I had built on sin. He took away my activities – places I had gone, things I had done. It was a type of crucifixion, and it lasted a few months. I felt lost to myself, and to my place in the world. I was alone with God here.

Then God called me ‘into’ a new name, and into new activities, new responsibilities. This was a type of resurrection. I remember so well when I began to feel that new life, new light, fall on my path, fall on my soul. A new name was forming as I walked in truth, a new reputation, step by step. And new purposes in my life were taking root, as I understood the call to advancing the kingdom of God. So a new name, and a new mission in life.

Recently I’ve been reflecting on this new name and new purpose in life, that God gives a person in Jesus Christ. I still have friends from my high school days, over thirty years ago, and the only

real difference in my life from now and then, is the identity Christ gave me, and the eternal mission in life that Christ gave me. Since those days my whole life has taken shape based on this. I still have the same 'look' as I did when not following the Lord, the same personality, the same tendencies and even struggles, but Christ clothed me with a new name, and he directed me with new purpose. That is the only real difference between the past me, and the present me.

I say this because it is humbling to me when I stand back and look at it, and think about it. I'm so deeply grateful. Christ gave me a new name and a path. I accepted the name, and walked the path, continue to walk the path. Without this identity and map, I would be truly lost – lost in my own self, and lost in my way.

'By the grace of God, I am what I am.'

(1 Corinthians 15:10)

'Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.' (1 Peter 2:10)

5.

I walk around sometimes in jeans, tee-shirts or even sweatpants, that have some streaks of paint on them. No, I have not been painting that day, but the clothes are still good and were close to hand.

One thing I do find satisfying about painting a room or a wall, is that eventually, no matter how messy the process, or fragmented the patches of paint, it all comes together in one seamless color or coating. The one color eventually covers everything evenly.

Our ministry as believers is messy, in streaks and splashes, in spills and seemingly random fragments. Jesus often described the process of building his kingdom like this. He said we were salt and light – which are pervasive but hard to quantify, impossible to ‘stack’. Jesus likened the advance of the kingdom to a mustard seed – small, insignificant, but eventually high, strong, supporting. Jesus likened the kingdom to yeast that slowly but surely works through everything, and to a treasure in a field that only one man saw, buried, but invested in completely.

The process of building the kingdom is truly like ‘building’. Have you seen building sites in the middle of big projects? They are very messy and appear disorganized. But one day you come back and see a coherent, beautiful structure. We’re told our work will come together like this

one day. Every fragment, every 'streak' of paint, every brush stroke, so to speak, will be part of the complete, beautiful new earth, new heaven.¹

'Their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light...'

(1 Corinthians 3:13)

¹ Mt 5:13-14; Mt 13:31-33,44; Rev 21:1-5

6.

‘Jesus said: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”
(Matthew 13:31-32)

When I first started following Jesus at the age of sixteen, I felt as if I was holding nothing *but* the revelation of Jesus.

His revelation – that he was true, that he was Lord – stopped me in my tracks. Everything had to change - my thoughts, words, actions, friend groups. It was as if God had planted a seed of revelation in my soul, and that ‘seed’ was all that I had.

I didn’t know who my real friends were anymore, I didn’t even know what my real personality was anymore. But I knew Jesus. I knew he was true. He was all I had.

I had no Christian friends at this point, and I had very little understanding of the Bible. I had no reputation as a person of character, of faith. All I had was Christ. And honestly, it was more that I had become a seed, than that I had been given a seed. I had become a seed, and fallen to the ground, into the soil. It was dark, lonely, and a type of dying to self, dying with Christ.

Today I was in the woods, and it is the Fall right now, November in North Carolina, USA. Leaves are falling and almost raining when there is a gentle breeze. A full-grown tree is a strong and present reality. It has stature, beauty, uniqueness, a place in the world. But a seed, well, that is invisible, vulnerable, hidden, even lost under leaves and in the soil.

When I first began following Jesus, all I had was Christ, my faith was new, my story had, in a sense, just begun. I was a seed.

When we minister Jesus to people we need to know and believe that this seed, though it may appear vulnerable or even like it is less important than, say, some practical help, well, it is the **'power of God for salvation.'** (Romans 1:16) When a person sees and believes on Jesus, everything has changed. New power is in them. A new 'garden plant', large and strong, will be their growth, their fruit, their legacy. We won't see immediate impact, but the investment is eternal, the change immeasurable. The gospel is God's 'power' for saving individuals, relationships, villages and nations. I lose sight of this.

Jesus said, **'The kingdom of heaven is within you.'** (Luke 17:21) Jesus told the Pharisees that the kingdom of heaven would not be something they observed, nor something they could point out, but that the 'kingdom is within you.'

When we plant the seed of Christ with an individual, we plant the kingdom, we plant a tree, we plant power and future and provision and reach.

Recently I had a powerful reminder of the difference between material blessing and spiritual blessing. I offered a poor man a verse card and five dollars. Typically this man would beg, but when I offered him money with this piece of Scripture, he read the Scripture and then offered me back the money. He said, **'These verses are enough for me!'** I tried to insist, but he insisted more. He was sincere. He said over and over that the Scriptures I had given him were all he really needed.

I drove home that day in silence, pondering this encounter. I realized that my confidence in the gospel and faith – **'worth more than gold'** (1 Peter 1:7) – had watered down, and I was more confident in offering this man money. The money, I believed deep down, would seem more to him. But no. The money seemed more to me. To him, the Scriptures were worth more. I felt God reminding me gently that his gospel is worth far more than any material provision. When I give a person the true gospel, true faith, I don't give them material provision, but rather I give them the God of *all* provision, all creation. And this God goes with that person, from that point on and forevermore.

I end this section reflecting very briefly on this

other parable about seeds that Jesus told:

“This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.” (Mark 4:26-29)

When we give the gospel to a person, we give them the very seed of all power, all forgiveness, new identity and eternal future. This seed – whether they sleep or get up (and whether we stay or go) – ‘grows, though we do not know how.’

And so, as Paul admonished Timothy, ***‘do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord.’*** (2 Timothy 1:8)

Jesus himself said that it was ***‘good news to the poor’***¹ – because it is to bring them into the courts and the favor of the eternal Provider, and to tell of the favor that he has towards those who are ***‘poor in the eyes of the world.’*** (James 2:5)

Peter said this gospel was something that he would tell again to those who already knew it,

¹ Luke 4:18

and that he would remind them of it till the day he died. (2 Peter 1:12-13) Why? Because it is the message of '**God with us**' each and every day, new mercies and new missions.¹

A dear Christian brother once said to me,
'Christians need to hear the gospel as much as non-Christians need to hear the gospel.'

The gospel message, when spoken in faith and by the Holy Spirit, is fresh, powerful, and worth more than gold, every time.

¹ Matthew 1:23; Lamentations 3:23

7.

When I was a kid I loved the scene of the 'underwater city' in the 1969 movie, *'Captain Nemo and the Underwater City'*. I honestly can't remember the plot or outcome of that movie, and need to watch it again. But that scene of a 'perfect world' being revealed down in the depths always stayed with me.

I was thinking recently about our work on earth as Christians. Our faith work. We're told in Scripture, in so many places, to 'not give up', to 'not grow weary'.¹ One powerful passage in 1 Corinthians writes:

'By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.'

(1 Corinthians 3:10-13)

¹ Galatians 6:9; 1 Corinthians 15:58

The 'Day' – Judgement Day, the Last Day – will reveal our work, will show it for what it really is.

I recently imagined life as if it were lived on a boat. And every now and then someone on the boat would take a brick, a solid, valuable brick, and dive off the boat, and swim down underwater to place the brick, to lay the brick, somewhere unseen. Even the diver would not see exactly where he was laying it, nor how it fit into a bigger structure being built. Waters were murky, the seabed dark and deep.

But one day all the waters subsided, drained down, ran off the building tops and streets, and the city built beneath was revealed. Everyone's feet settled on roads they had paved over the years, bricks they had laid, sacrifices they had made. All their work was shown for what it truly was.

'Here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.'
(Hebrews 13:14)

8.

‘Jesus said to them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about... My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.” (John 4:32,34)

Over coffee one day I was speaking with a precious brother in the Lord about the challenge of sharing the gospel with people. The challenges for him were notable, as he was working as a missionary in Kyrgyzstan, Central Asia. As we considered the challenges, we also found ourselves considering afresh the promises of the gospel, a message unequalled in history - *God with us, in the flesh, taking on our sin, dying our death, giving us now and forevermore forgiveness of sin, eternal life, power in the Spirit, power to change.* At one point my friend said, ***‘Why would we not want to share this message?’***

There is a joy in sharing Christ that is a type of ‘food’, a type of oxygen. Jesus himself said it in the verse above – John 4:32,34.

The gospel message can be offensive to people, and indeed is built on a crucifixion. However, the *glory* of the gospel, the power it carries, outweighs its risk. And it is important to see and hold clear in our vision, that we cannot rescue people in darkness, without venturing into the darkness to find them. The rewards of the gospel

– souls and salvations¹ – are found in the battlefield, in the trenches, along the hedges and the highways. We don't seek danger in our testimony and our mission field, we seek souls. But if the souls are in a place of danger, we ask Jesus to lead us, the Holy Spirit to fill us, to protect us, and we go to them. This is where salvation happens, and not a word *'falls to the ground'* in this place.²

Now it is important to 'heed the lead' of Christ. We cannot all do what needs to be done, that is why Christ called us to 'pray for workers.'³ We might see a need, and Jesus leads us to it. Or we might see a need, and our role, the 'lead of Christ' to us, is to pray for workers in that field. Heed the lead. Pray. Listen to counsel, listen to the Holy Spirit.

'Jesus said: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than

¹ 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

² 1 Samuel 3:19; Isaiah 55:10-11; Luke 14:15-24

³ Proverbs 15:22; Matthew 9:38

over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.' (Luke 15:3-7)

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