

The peace of God

‘And let [allow, permit, authorise] the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.’ (Colossians 3:15–16.)

Are you finding the ‘peace of God that passes understanding’ a little elusive? Chances are that you are not allowing it to have priority over the pressing daily problems that beset us all.

Take some time out and dust your Bible off—chances are that it has been dormant awhile if the presence of that priceless peace of God seems to escape you! Review the promises to God’s people. It is up to each one of us to allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives and to **let** the Word of God dwell in our hearts.

Humility precedes honour

‘The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise. He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding. The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.’ (Proverbs 15:31–33.)

Being humble before the Lord and with each other is one of the secrets of being ready to meet the Lord when He returns and then living forever! Humility involves listening, learning and taking advice—and then comes honour. People who do not learn from the events in their life and will not take scriptural guidance are disregarding instruction and are open to problems occurring again and again. We are wise if we learn from experience and act on what we learn.

We are to be humble in our interactions with others and be eager servants of the Lord and of each other. Jesus said: ‘... whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.’ (Matthew 20:27–28.) If we are humble the Lord will raise us up. A truly humble attitude is foolproof, failsafe and infallible. *‘All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.’ (1 Peter 5:5–6.)*

We reap what we sow

‘... Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.’ (Galatians 6:7–9.)

If faith and righteousness seem ‘as big as the sky’ and quite beyond your ability to reach and appropriate, remember Moses. He chose to be of Israel, but when confronted with the enormous task of setting his people free, he was a reluctant hero. God recognised this and provided Aaron to support him through this challenging time. Together they confronted Pharaoh, and through persistence and faith, led the Israelites out of Egypt and eventually to the border of the Promised Land.

Walking by faith is setting the right priorities in life. Every day we choose to walk by faith as we make decisions and make righteous choices (judgements).

You cannot just make one decision for righteousness at the time of repentance; you make many decisions to live by faith — day by day and choice by choice.

When the rich young ruler approached Jesus and asked what he must do to inherit eternal life (Luke 18:18–28) he **chose** not to follow Jesus.

Faith doesn't count the consequences. Faith is putting yourself into God's hands and letting Him count the cost and consequences. Jesus said: *'The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.'* (Luke 18:27.)

Let us believe all that the prophets have spoken (Luke 24:25.)

After the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, Cleopas and his friends trudged along the dusty road to Emmaus. They discussed the events of the previous days and weeks, and, no doubt, wondered why events had happened the way they had and what the future held. (Luke 24:13–52.)

Jesus joined them, unrecognised, and asked them what they had been discussing and why they were sad. Among other events that seemed inexplicable at the time, they told him: *'But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.'* They thought that Jesus had not fulfilled the prophecies regarding this expected aspect of the ministry of the Messiah. Jesus began to expound the scriptures, particularly those concerning Himself. How inspiring it

would have been to have heard what Jesus said! No doubt He would have referred to the Garden of Eden and how the Seed of woman would bruise the serpent's head. There would probably have been reference to the everlasting, unconditional covenants with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as well as prophecies from Isaiah and the other prophets, concerning Himself. But these things would just have been reminders of the things these men already knew.

That the gospel age and the great illumination it would bring, and that this would be the result of the death and resurrection of the Messiah, would probably have featured in this unique conversation.

Among the timeless thoughts that Jesus must have shared with His disciples during that journey was that He had indeed accomplished the redemption of Israel, but that this would take time. He might have given them a glimpse of the future unfolding of the promises that have been faithfully occurring since that time: the establishment and growth of the Church, the preservation of national Israel against amazing odds, the conclusion of the 'seven times punishment' of Israel, and the setting of the stage for His eventual return, to name just a few.

I wonder if these men who walked with Jesus, not recognising who He was until after He left them, were among the 120 who received the Holy Spirit when the Church, that was to make the ultimate fulfillment of the Lord's everlasting and unconditional covenants possible, came into being? Or were they among the 3000 that were baptised and Spirit filled on that same day?

Before Jesus left them, He advised them to **believe all that the prophets had spoken.** After they had realised who He was, they were no doubt reassured that God's plan



was on track and would not falter. We can be similarly reassured.

How do we enter and stay in the Kingdom of God?

The disciples asked Jesus, *‘Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.’* (Matthew 18:1–4.)

Jesus pointed out to His disciples that they had missed the first and vital question: ‘How do you enter the Kingdom of God?’ He proceeded to tell them how they would be able to do this, and answered their original question at the same time!

First, it is necessary to be converted (turn from your ways to God’s ways). Prior to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, entry into God’s Kingdom was not possible. Second, become ‘as a little child’ in simplicity and humility and remain humble until the Lord returns.

Jesus was a servant to God’s Word; He did His Father’s bidding. Jesus was the Word of God made flesh; He told us what to do, and how to do it. Salvation is a moulding process, shaping us for the world to come. Jesus obeyed His Father and so must we. Obedience to the Word of God is an ongoing process: *‘Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.’* (1 Peter 5:6.)

The Lord commands us to be baptised by immersion in water. We do this because we have heard the Truth. How do we know that we

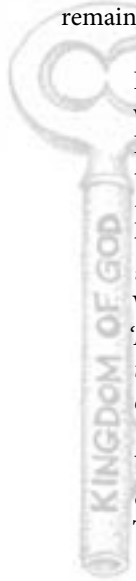
have heard the Truth? Because God fills us with the Holy Spirit, and as we speak in tongues, we communicate directly with Him.

Don’t try to fit Christ into your life—Christ is your life. (Colossians 3:4.)

Psalms for believers in trouble!

Troubles do not come from God. We live in a world subject to the curse of the Law and that’s just the way things are. Like the seasons come and go (and we know that when it is winter, spring is just around the corner), when troubles come, we recognise them for what they are and realise that they will pass. However, when problems beset us, and they will, God has told us what to do to come through them stronger, victorious and with a testimony, that if we pray, believe and trust Him, He will never let us down.

- *Psalm 18.* Remember who you are and remember the Lord. You are a child of God and He loves you. David called out to the Lord in his distress and God heard and answered him.
- *Psalm 46.* Never be afraid. There are twenty thousand problems in the world, but one glorious answer. God is present, He is able, and He is willing to help you.
- *Psalm 46.* Of course you feel bad. David’s heart was overwhelmed as he was subject to the pressures of the enemy—natural thinking. If disaster arrives at your front door the first thing that deserts you is common sense. Don’t feel bad because you don’t feel good about it. Turn to the Lord.
- *Psalm 46.* Take time out and don’t over react. Do what the Word of God says because that is what faith is. God has not forgotten you. He will not let you down.



Be still! The only way God can be exalted is because you are exalted.

- *Psalm 37*. This is not the end of your life! God has promised that you will not be utterly cast down.
- *Psalm 37*. Things are not as bad as they seem. God is going to help you. He is your strength in time of trouble.
- *Psalm 34*. Make this a spiritual battle. Pray and seek the Lord. The Lord is near to them that are broken-hearted. The Lord redeems the soul of His servants.
- *Psalm 91*. Pray, because God hears and will answer your prayer. He will be with you and will deliver you.
- *Psalm 31*. Be courageous and defiant in the face of adversity. Remember that courage and strength are different. Strength in this context is a spiritual process and quality. It is enhanced by praying daily and being in the fellowship. If you are courageous, bold, and defiant, God will give you the strength you need to see you through to a victorious testimony. God says to be of good courage and He will strengthen your heart.
- *Psalm 23*. God will take care of the details. God has a plan for your life and has laid out a table of blessing before you.
- *Psalm 103*. Remember all the good things God has done. He redeems, buys back, restores and rebuilds. He promised Joel: *'And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God,*

and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.' (Joel 2:25.)

- *Psalm 92*. You are going to be happy again!

What meaneth this?

Just imagine what it would have been like to be in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost following Jesus' resurrection and ascension. Jesus had told His followers to wait in Jerusalem until they received '*the promise of the Father*' and were '*... endued with power from on high.*' (Luke 24:49.)

During the weeks of waiting, no doubt they talked about the words of Jesus, and wondered what they meant and what this promised power would be like, but, when it happened, it was a time of profound Spiritual energy such as they could never have imagined. This was the beginning of The Church; it was the moment of salvation, new hope, new direction and new life. The experience was simple, powerful, and pivotal. How they must have talked together, Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Mary, and the others who received this incredible blessing! They were given wisdom, courage, and eloquence. They talked so much that there was a baptismal service for 3000 people on that very day.

As these men and women received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues they were able to be witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus with power and authority. They rejoiced in this moment of action, but continued steadfastly in what they had received. We have that same Power and it is just as dynamic as it was 2000 years ago. We can witness about the resurrection of Jesus with the same authority. We have had our Pentecost and can continue to have it. We expect people to receive the Holy Spirit. We can expect to be healed with similar

confidence. The Revival Centres grasped the fundamentals of the gospel and were not side-tracked by incidentals from the beginning. This we will continue to do.

Have you ever witnessed a miracle? You can — just talk about what God has done and continues to do as men and women simply believe in the power of the Holy Spirit and the simplicity of the words of Jesus.

God's desire for everybody who believes in Him is to treasure their 'Day of Pentecost'

The Acts of the Apostles is a record of Spiritual happenings in the lives of ordinary men and women — people just like us. So what is it that made the record of these remarkable events remembered for almost 2000 years?

- The Holy Spirit, manifested by speaking in tongues by those who received it, made the transforming difference.
- This was the continuation of God's plan for mankind.
- This was not a series of isolated, local events, but was the beginning of a new era that was to proceed against all odds until Jesus returns as *'Lord of lords, and King of kings'*.
- There were those who experienced an encounter with God, but this was not enough for inclusion in this exponentially growing movement, it was necessary for

these people to receive the Holy Spirit at which time they spoke in tongues.

- This dynamic, powerful experience could not be bought with money.
- Those who were Spirit filled were totally committed to preaching fearlessly in the name of Jesus Christ and attributing the miracles that occurred to Him alone.
- The religious establishment opposed God's promised presence and action among His people.
- Every miracle was linked with the need to repent, be baptised and receive the Holy Spirit to enjoy the benefits of being a Christian.

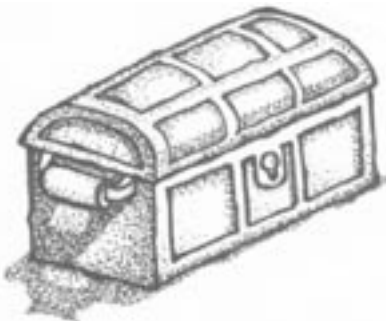
Christianity has continued unabated against all odds and is offered to all. The return of Jesus will be an event of unsurpassing joy to those who are Spirit filled and walk in the footsteps of the men and women of the Acts of the Apostles.

Jesus is coming again!

Throughout the Bible there are prophecies concerning specific events that were to happen, some sooner and some later. No doubt those to whom the events were foretold found it difficult to believe that they would happen as predicted.

For example, when Lot told his sons-in-law that Sodom and Gomorrah were to be destroyed (Genesis 19:14), they thought he was joking. They found the concept difficult to understand, but it happened. (Genesis 19:24.) Would we have believed it?

Seventy years before it happened, Jeremiah prophesied that Babylon, one of the greatest cities of the civilised earth at that time, was to be destroyed and would become a perpetual desolation. (Jeremiah 25:11.) Sure enough, it happened. (Daniel 5:30.) Would we have believed it?



Isaiah predicted the death of the Messiah (Isaiah 53) approximately 700 years before it actually happened. If we had been there at that time, would we have believed it?

These are prophecies that have been fulfilled, and, at the time, the people would have found them hard to believe and impossible to imagine. We know that they happened, right on time, and as foretold.

Jesus' Second Coming is a prediction that is just as hard to comprehend, but it will happen just as certainly as the preceding examples. (Acts 1:9.) As hard as we might try, we can't imagine how it will be when Jesus comes again. But, because we have God's Word, and we know it is infallible, no matter how hard it seems to visualise the Second Coming of Jesus, it will happen.

Now, we live at an amazing time in history. The gospel age is the time when we have the opportunity to prepare to be part of the First Resurrection, and eventually to rule and reign with Jesus Christ. This, as far as we can tell from the Bible, is a never to be repeated offer! We are saved by grace — if it weren't for Christ's sacrifice we would be bound by the Law and the consequences for disobedience. How blessed we are!

When will Jesus return? We have no idea; however, we know the Lord is not slack concerning His promises (2 Peter 3:9); He will do as He said no matter how hard it is for us to understand or visualise. These things are facts. They are written in the Bible.

The Lord wants the whole world to be saved (John 3:17), and even if it takes tens of thousands of years after He returns, it is going to happen.

The hardest thing to believe about it is that we can be there to see it and

be a part of it. We are often encouraged to keep our eyes on the prize.

To be part of the proceedings, now and into the everlasting future, is that prize.

Living our testimony

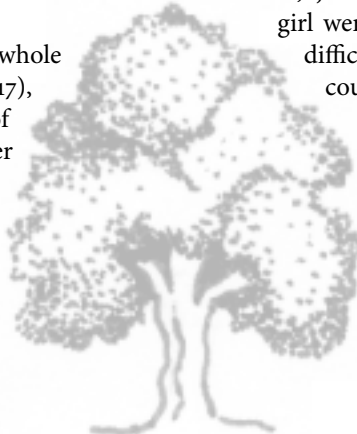
The Bible gives a number of examples of young men and women who upheld their testimony through crushing circumstances and lived to see the Lord God bless them as well as those to whom they witnessed by their deeds and actions.

Remember Daniel, one of a selection of the brightest and best Judahites who had been deported to Babylon and selected to serve King Nebuchadnezzar. Their faith forbade them to eat certain foods, particularly those which had been offered to idols. They refused the king's fare, jeopardising their lives and those of their Babylonian guardians. They elected to eat vegetables. The Lord blessed their faithful testimony, and they were healthier and fitter than other members of the court as a result.

Joseph was another: he was captured by foreigners, imprisoned for maintaining his testimony, and eventually became Prime Minister, second only to Pharaoh himself.

Naaman the Syrian developed leprosy, and a little Israelitish serving girl directed him to God's prophet, and Naaman was healed.

Daniel, Joseph, and the little serving girl were three teens who were in difficult circumstances in foreign countries. They 'purposed in their hearts' to serve their Lord, and came through with flying colours. These three young people were God's people first, and slaves and captives second.



God can only use people with this kind of determination. In New Testament times the apostle Peter likens Spirit-filled people to 'strangers and pilgrims'. We are appointed as God's spokespeople on planet Earth. We can persistently and faithfully maintain the standard that the Lord requires of us. Righteousness doesn't just happen! We decide to '*judge righteous judgement*', and every day we must make many decisions. Daniel, Joseph and the maid spoke when they had the opportunity and offered the Word of life. We can do no less.

'For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do for his good pleasure.' (Philippians 2:13.)

Keep refreshed, energized and rejuvenated by the Holy Spirit

Keep focused on being refreshed, energised, and rejuvenated by the Holy Spirit. Isaiah prophesied about the rest and refreshing that was to come with the '*stammering lips and other tongues*' that was to characterise receiving the Holy Spirit. (Isaiah 28:9-13.)

We should remember how excited we felt on the day that we received the Holy Spirit. On that day we were born again, and for the first time were able to see the Kingdom of God and to visualise our place in God's future. That day was the beginning of a journey of discovery that is full of possibilities. We can be confident and excited about what lies ahead while we enjoy the little (and big) things that happen every day as we believe God and see Him working in our life.

Foster a creative approach to the things of the Lord. An idle mind eventually will grow dim, but creativity activates new circuits in the brain. We

should not think about our Spirituality in a stale and stagnant manner, or our appreciation of what the Lord has done for us will diminish and our vision of the Kingdom of God will fade. However, if we daily read the Bible, pray, listen, enjoy, and build our vision as we experience the miracle working power of God, we will see spirituality flourish. We are not just waiting for the Lord's return. Every day we should be actively and creatively discovering more about our salvation, and being thrilled as our vision grows. If we minister to ourselves in this way, the Lord's blessing will spill over and encourage all to whom we speak.

We are in the Church to serve the Lord, and if we are excited about this, it is a joy and not a chore. The Lord knows us personally and is looking for opportunities to bless us. Remember that the two best days of our life are the day we received the Holy Spirit, and today because we are still Spirit filled and still enjoying the Lord's blessing.

Healing by the power of God

Jesus linked forgiveness of sin and miraculous healing of sickness when he healed the man '*sick of the palsy*' and confronted the scribes with this concept. *And, behold, they brought to him [Jesus] a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.'* (Matthew 9:2-8.)

When John the Baptist was in prison he sent two disciples to ask Jesus if He was the promised Messiah. Jesus' reply directed John's attention to the results of His ministry. *'The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the*



deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.' (Matthew 11:5.)

In His final instructions recorded in Mark 16:15–18, Jesus included laying hands on the sick and expecting their recovery. This was also closely linked with believing, baptism, and salvation as the result of receiving the Holy Spirit.

Healing miracles continued to be a vital aspect of the New Testament Church after the Day of Pentecost. (James 5:14.) It is quite clear that Jesus made miraculous healing continuously available to the Church by His sacrificial death. (Isaiah 53:5.) On the cross Jesus provided for forgiveness of sin and healing from sickness. He died so that we could be righteous and healed—physical and spiritual wholeness are promised.

The Old Testament way was, that sacrifice-by-sacrifice and year-by-year, Israel purchased their way back into blessing. Jesus' sacrificial shedding of blood was the final, perfect sacrifice. (Hebrews 9 and 10.)

We don't need to doubt that God will heal. Jesus died once, for all, and won the victory. There is no random selection process in the endowment of the gifts of God. We don't have to wonder if our prayer will be answered.

We can make the mistake of praying about the answer we want instead of telling God the problem, and then having childlike faith in God's ability to meet the need. If you have a healing need, simply trust God, realising that He has already taken the steps necessary to give you this gift. The secret is humble, childlike trust in God.

The biblical principle of giving

The apostle Paul teaches an important lesson about giving, receiving and contentment in his letter to the Philippians.

'Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that my abound to your account [when people give to the Church, they give to the Lord and the Lord blesses them as a result]. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.' (Philippians 4:11–19.)

The Philippians had sent Paul a gift with Epaphroditus. Paul said that he had lived on little but had also had much. There are references (e.g., Acts 20:33, Luke 10:7) that indicate that Paul worked and earned when he had the time and opportunity, but at this time he apparently needed help, and the gift that he received seems to have been quite substantial. Paul points out that the givers were giving to the Lord, and that the gift was credited to their account with God.

Paul likens the material giving to the Old Testament type of sacrifice that was pleasing to God. In the New Testament, the only other thing that is likened to this is the prayer of the saints. Paul was saying to the Philippians that, because

they supplied the gift contributing to his material needs at that time, the givers of the gift would be similarly blessed. They had not impoverished themselves by giving liberally.

Giving is another aspect of walking with the Lord. He not only supplies love, joy, and faith, but also material needs. Giving to the Church is a transaction with God, and He is no man's debtor.

Abraham, '... believed, even God, who quickened the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.' (Romans 4 :17.)

This is the essence of prophecy and underpins our individual walk in the Lord.

Consider Sarah, mother of Isaac; Rebekah, mother of Jacob; Rachel, mother of Joseph; Hannah, mother of Samuel; Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist; Mary, the mother of Jesus. The circumstances of each of these births were miraculous, defying human explanation. The miracle children born to these mothers were vehicles for the promulgation of God's message. There was no earthly explanation for their existence, and each had a God-given task to perform.

When we were filled with the Holy Spirit, each of us had a miraculous birth into the Kingdom of God. There is no earthly explanation for our being in this position. We are also miraculous children of God, born again to continue to promulgate the Word of God as we enjoy the promises of God now, with the assurance that we have been made ready to meet the Lord Jesus when He comes again.

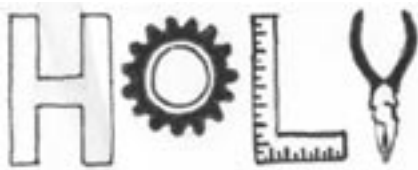
The operation of the Holy Spirit

When you are sitting in the meeting, remember that it is not just the preaching of the Gospel that makes the difference, it's the quality of the listening by the members of the congregation that counts!

What is the function and meaning of the Holy Spirit in our lives, the purpose of speaking in tongues, and the reason why we should pray in the Spirit every day?

When we speak in tongues we speak not to men but to God. The Holy Spirit within us prays when we speak in tongues. (1 Corinthians 14:1-5.) The apostle Paul wrote to the Roman Assembly: '*... the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities [weaknesses]: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he [the Holy Spirit] that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*' (Romans 8 :26-27.)

'*We know that in all things [in every situation whatever our need] God works for the good of those who love him.*' (Romans 8 :28 [NIV].) As we understand more about the way our minds work, we realise that we are imprinted with a set of values and standards, fears, frailties and inadequacies as well as deep unconscious needs. It is not always possible for us to understand what our deepest needs are. We don't know what we should pray for but the Holy Spirit does, and He works to put things right. The Holy Spirit is the Comforter and is our helper,



coach and mentor in life. He is the repairer of our mind and our soul.

When we pray in the Spirit, the Comforter within us searches our hearts and understands our needs and weaknesses. Because the Holy Spirit is making intercession for us, God responds by working for the good of those who love Him. Romans 8:28 is the answer to the prayer of verse 26.

As we pray, the Holy Spirit (the Comforter), surveys the damage, sets the priorities and identifies our deep-seated needs and hurts. He effects the repairs, and restores and renews our heart and mind. In this way, God works for our good. We need to make the opportunity for the Holy Spirit to minister to us by praying in the Spirit. As we pray we are being built up and strengthened because we are giving the Holy Spirit the scope and opportunity to intercede on our behalf. God repairs and restores as He works for our good. Pray every day and the Lord will bless you.

The five point action plan for times of trouble

We live in a world where there are many variables and we go through many situations. As Spirit-filled people, our strength is not in the knowledge that nothing will go wrong. Our strength is in knowing what to do when trouble comes.

- Remember who you are: you are a child of the living God, blessed of the Lord. God has promised that He won't let us down, and we will never be disappointed about the outcome of circumstances while we trust Him. (Psalms 37:23-40.)
- Don't trust in your own strength, trust in God. Don't try to present God with the solution to your problem—God's plan and timing will more than likely

differ from yours. Give God the right to sort things out His way and in His time. (Proverbs 3:5-6.) Remember that although our problems are natural, the solution is supernatural.

- Focus on what God can do. He can do more than we can think, dream or imagine. (Ephesians 3:20.)
- Stir up the Holy Spirit and pray fervently. We should be prayerful all the time so that we are ready to deal with trouble when it comes. When in difficulty, prayer is a safety procedure that saves us from becoming worried or upset about things that God already has under control. (Ephesians 6:10.) Remember, if you have troubles in your life, don't drop your weapon (the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God)! Pray, and expect God to give you the victory. (James 5:14.)
- Be steadfast and strong; never despair; always rejoice. Don't be ashamed of your problem, everyone has them! We are born again by the Spirit of God, and if we stand firm, we will be conquering, victorious children of God. No matter what our situation, we will never be ashamed. (2 Corinthians 4:1-5.)

'Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.' (Ephesians 6:10.)

God didn't hand the Promised Land to the Children of Israel on a silver platter! They had to go in and fight for it, possess it and maintain it. They only won battles when they obeyed God implicitly and fought them the way that God instructed. They retained what they had won only while they trusted God and kept His commandments. When they didn't they lost ground and blessing.

We have been made members of the Body of Christ—The Church—the viable,

directive component of Israel that is the vanguard that will move into the next age to restore that which was lost.

To retain this privileged position was never meant to be a picnic, it can be a battle. While we obey God and trust Him, we will win. This is our vision. *'Where there is no vision the people perish.'* (Proverbs 29:18.)

The standard has been set by those who have gone before us, and we must maintain this position.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians, *'Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.'* (Philippians 3:13-16.)

We look forward, not back, remembering that the bottom line is the First Resurrection.

'Happy is that people, whose God is the Lord.' (Psalm 144:15.)

Happiness is not an automatic result of good things that happen to us, it comes from being involved, busy, and challenged by the things that are important. God, who created all, is in charge of our circumstances! *'Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God: which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever.'* (Psalm 146:5-6.)

Happiness comes from an inner contentment. The apostle Paul wrote: *'I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.'* (Philippians 4:11.)

The writer to the Hebrews stated: *'let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He [the Lord] hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, so that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.'* (Hebrews 13:5-6.)

The Lord's people will experience problems and times of grief associated with feelings of 'momentary heaviness', and it is much easier to feel negative and miserable if things do not seem to be going so well, rather than being positive and cheerful. At times we are all guilty of feeling that no one else could be experiencing difficulties as great as those besetting us personally, but there are. However, if we help a brother or sister in their time of need, or talk to someone who has not received the Holy Spirit about what the Lord can do, this will put our personal situations into perspective. Remember also that prayer supplies the solutions to our problems, and having prayed, the answer will be there. Anticipate it, and remember to thank the Lord for his provision—whatever it might be—knowing that: *'... all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.'* (Romans 8:28.)

Count your blessings ... and it will surprise you what the Lord has done

- Look after each other, *'... be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.'* (Ephesians 4:32.)
- *'Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account,*



that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.’ (Hebrews 13:17.)

- Enjoy the meetings; *‘Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day [of Jesus’ return] approaching.’* (Hebrews 10:25.)
- Have a superlative prayer life, remembering always that prayer pleases God. *‘Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.’* (1 Thessalonians 5:17–18.)
- Remember that good health, and the well-being that goes with it, is God’s will for His people. To this end, we are advised that, *‘A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.’* (Proverbs 17:22.)
- If asked to do something, *‘... do it with all thy might.’* (Ecclesiastes 9:10.)
- Remember that we work out our salvation day by day, not at some time in the future.
- Be passionate about what we believe. The Bible is true and God has confirmed His promises to us by filling us with His Holy Spirit.

Do you see the day of Jesus’ return approaching?

Since 11 September 2001 there have been many acts of terrorism displayed on our television sets, often as they are happening, or very shortly thereafter.

How should we, as Spirit filled people, react? We know that the Lord Jesus Christ will return but we don’t know when, and we have no idea exactly what will precipitate

this event. However, we know it will happen suddenly, and we are reminded regularly, as we watch the news, about just how quickly things can happen that can change the world. We are encouraged to be ready, but also to continue with the business of living. We have been exhorted not to try to draw specific biblical conclusions from these current events, but rather to step up our enthusiastic commitment to the things of the Lord.

We have been encouraged not just to believe the Truth, but to love the Truth. It is easy just to cruise and become blasé about the things of the Lord and the fellowship of the saints. The writer to the Hebrews reminds us of the importance of our meetings: *‘And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.’* (Hebrews 10:24–25.) The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans (and to us), *‘... knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we [first] believed.’* (Romans 13:11.)

Jesus said: *‘in your patience possess ye your souls.’* (Luke 21:19.)

Share your testimony

Your personal testimony is unique and valuable. It’s not just what happened on the day you were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues for the first time and understood that the Word of God is true. It is the day by day realisation that the Lord is there, hears your prayers, and responds and interacts with you. The blessings in your life are answers to prayer; they are not figments of your imagination; you don’t have to exaggerate or sensationalise them — what the Lord does is simply spectacular.

As you read through the gospels and the Acts of the Apostles you are reading one testimony after another. Yours is just as important as any of these, and, as we have often been encouraged, the Book of Acts is an unfinished story. Members of the Church are adding to it daily.

Think about what the Lord has done for you and thank Him for these blessings. Sit down with an assembly member whom you have never met and ask them to share their testimony with you, and share yours with them. You will both be blessed and reassured that the Lord always keeps His promises. It is an easy further step to tell an unsaved relative, or neighbour about what the Lord is doing in His Church and ask them to a meeting.

When you invite someone to a meeting, it is the testimony of those present that makes the meeting happen. Without people, there is no meeting, no opportunity for encouragement from the Word of God, no messages through the voice gifts of the Holy Spirit, and no opportunity for someone to be baptised and receive the Holy Spirit. Your very presence in the meeting and willingness to pray, sing, listen and be used of the Lord to give a message in tongues, interpretation, or prophecy at the appropriate time is part of our collective testimony.

In the same way that the lame beggar was healed at the gate of the temple, we have been made whole (saved) by the power of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. This is a fact that cannot be gainsaid. Why keep it a secret?

There is no better time than right now to preach the good news.

Every person in the Church has a job to do

Jesus taught us what to do and how to do it, and unless we stick to His instructions,

we join the ranks of those who think they are obeying Him, but are really promoting their own ideas.

He told us to ‘put on His mind’ which means to think like He does and do as He did. His stated mandate was that he was anointed with the Holy Spirit (we are, so this is a good start) ‘... to preach the gospel to the poor ... to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.’ (Luke 4:18–19.)

The Gospel is simply the good news of the message of Mark 16:15–17. These were the last words of Jesus before He ascended to the Father, and sent the Holy Spirit to make this commission possible. He said: ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe ...’ Salvation incorporates the words recorded by Luke and the present benefits are defined by the Gifts and Fruit of the Holy Spirit. The most important blessing is that we become sons and daughters of the living God — forever.

This is the Gospel, it’s as simple as that!

All we have to do is invite people to a meeting, and the Lord will do the rest.

Preach the Word of God

The first of the Revival Centres International statements of belief is that we believe the Word of God to be infallible. So in this year of preaching the gospel, we are reminded that we are not proclaiming our word — we are preaching God’s Word.

In Genesis 1:1 we have a simple statement that immediately puts the Word of God into perspective: ‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.’ We are dealing with the God of the Universe, the

Creator of all that there is. If we were in a room with Him, we would undoubtedly do what He said. He is with us! When we are Spirit filled, the God of the Universe is not just with us, but in us. We do well to do what He says!

The Word of God comes with the choice to regard it or not. So preaching the Word is to offer the opportunity for salvation knowing that some will listen and some will not. The Old Testament cites many examples from which we can learn that obedience brings God's blessing, and that disregard results in God moving aside. Moses spoke the Word of God and Pharaoh disregarded it with devastating consequences. The Israelites obeyed and walked through the Red Sea to freedom.

Throughout the book of Acts, we read of how the disciples preached and testified, and God confirmed His Word as it was spoken faithfully.

Everyone has ideas, and we know that they often conflict, are not always reliable, and are here today and gone tomorrow. God's word is always reliable. The Word of God endures forever, and it is this Word that was preached to us and that we, in turn, proclaim to others. There is no better calling than to be doing what the Lord wants us to do.

'Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.' (1 Peter 1:22-23.)

'I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke,

exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.' (2 Timothy 4:1-2.)

Godliness + Contentment = Great Gain!

God chose the nation of Israel to be His special people. He delivered them from perilous situations again and again, not the least being the greatest escape story of all time—the Exodus. God led the Israelites through the Red Sea, even though Pharaoh, with the strength of Egypt intent on revenge, was hot on their heels. God went before them as a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. He summarily and miraculously dispatched Israel's enemies as the Red Sea closed over the chariots of Egypt. He gave them the Ten Commandments with a spectacular display of power over the elements. He provided them with manna, a food that was the perfect form of sustenance for their wilderness wanderings. Yet, despite all of this, these people were discontented. They were forever wanting what others had, thinking that it would be better than God's perfect provision.

Even when they settled in the Promised Land, with the Lord God Almighty as their King, with inspired Judges (appointed by God) to lead them to victory against their enemies and to arbitrate in their disputes, the Israel people were disgruntled. They wanted a man for a king and they chose Saul, which was a grave mistake. Instead of keeping their thinking and expectations at God's standard, they sank to the level of natural thinking and suffered the consequences. Saul went mad, was subject to jealous rages and did his best to kill David, the man that God chose to lead Israel. They never learned!

We are told that the Old Testament is there as an example to us. Do we covet

the belongings or success of others? Are we discontented with our job, house, or lifestyle? If so, we are no better than the Israelites! The Apostle Paul went through many trials, but was able to write: *'I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.'* (Philippians 4:11–13.) Because of this, he could instruct young Timothy *'... godliness with contentment is great gain.'* (1 Timothy 5:6.)

The wise writer of the Proverbs advises: *'All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast.'* (Proverbs 15:15.) These scriptures should be in large letters displayed on our refrigerators with a magnet (or in some equally prominent place) to remind us that we worship the God of the Universe who hears, answers and cares for His people.

What more could we want?

Godliness + Contentment = Great Gain

Leave out the contentment and the equation doesn't work.

Love your neighbour!

Jesus debated with experts who were determined to defeat Him but were doomed to failure. When He was questioned about the conditions for eternal life, Jesus directed the attention of His questioners to the Law. *'And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the Law? How readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as*

thyself.' Jesus replied: *'Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.'* (Luke 10:25–28.)

Whether or not we are caught up to meet the Lord in the air is entirely dependent on these conditions, and therefore it is necessary to understand them and make them our priority. The First Resurrection will be the climactic event in eternity. As far as we can tell from scripture, it will be a unique event, and to miss out would be the ultimate eternal folly. The first step is to receive the Holy Spirit, at which time we are given the capacity to meet these requirements of the Law. Without the Holy Spirit, it is impossible.

We are commanded to love the Lord first. This means that He is the focus of our life, and to love Him is to obey and serve Him unconditionally. The second condition, which is inextricably linked with the first, is to love our neighbour(s) as ourselves. This means that we want them also to have the opportunity to meet the Lord in the air and to live forever. Our neighbours are not just our Spirit filled friends. Our neighbours are humankind, lost in sin, with no hope for the future unless we fulfill the commission to preach the gospel that the Lord has given to each one of us.

The Lord wants to see the Revival Centres reviving people. Jesus knows our works, and we are in the Church to serve Him. There's no retirement programme. Each of us is a minister of the Gospel, and our game plan must be to: *'... fulfil the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we*

may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.’ (Colossians 1:25–28.)

Salvation is a free Gift — you cannot earn it

Jesus told the Samaritan woman, ‘... *the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*’ (John 4:23–24.)

On the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came to believers as an indwelling presence for the first time, it became possible to truly worship God. God’s people from that time are saved people who are identified by the Holy Spirit. Righteousness (right standing with God) is established through the receiving of the Holy Spirit alone. It is not possible to secure Spiritual status by natural means. Our testimony of health, joy, peace, and prosperity is secured by faith alone, not by works. We are Spiritual people with a Spiritual status in the Church.

However, Jesus’ mission was to save the world, not to condemn it (John 3:17), and this has to be the focus of Spirit-filled people. The biblical condemnation of the world is directed at the world system, not at individual people. The world system is self-opinionated and self-operating and claims no need for God. Our testimony to our unsaved colleagues and associates is that salvation brings untold benefits. Their perception of our approach to God and the associated benefits is what will arouse their interest. Jesus loved the people and had compassion on them because He saw them milling in confusion as ‘sheep without a shepherd’.

Spirit-filled people represent God’s values in the world and they have a job to do as

present day representatives of Jesus. It is to continue to uphold His mandate—to redeem Israel and save the world. This is God’s plan and it extends far into the future. This age, the Church age, is just the beginning. We don’t need to sell Revival Centres International, but to demonstrate that we have Christian virtue, a sound mind, hope, direction, and that peace that passes understanding that is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Share it!

How important is prayer?

Prayer is the dialogue that exists between God and His people, and is a very important aspect of our relationship with Him. We don’t worship a dumb God! In the Bible we are told how to pray and what prayer can achieve. God’s people have wonderful testimonies about their two-way relationship with God, and about answered prayer.

Perhaps one of the most important types of prayer is that of intercession. We read about this in Job, ‘*and the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.*’ (Job 42:10.) Intercession is when we put our own needs behind us and focus on the needs of others. We often find our needs met when we pray for the well-being of others—read Luke 11:5–8.

There are many great prayers of intercession recorded in the Scriptures. For instance, Abraham interceded for Lot (Genesis 18:16–33), Moses interceded for Israel (Numbers 14:19–20), Job prayed for his friends (Job 42:10), and Daniel prayed for Judah (Daniel 10:11). Jesus, the greatest intercessor, prayed for the Church (John 17.)

We read also that Paul ‘ceased not’ to pray for the Church. Each of these prayers was

positive and built-up and strengthened the relationship of God with His people. Paul used statements like *'hearts knit together in love'*, *'abound more and more in knowledge'*, *'be filled with and increasing in the knowledge of God'*, *'be strengthened with all might'*, *'in everything ye be enriched in him'*, *'to know the love of Christ'*. Recorded in Ephesians 1:15–23 and Colossians 1:9–20 are two great examples of intercessory prayers, in which Paul just can't help but praise the Lord as he meditates on these things.

'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.' (Hebrews 4:16.)

Our creation connection!

'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the word of life.' (1 John 1:1. NIV)

At the time of the origin (*genesis*) of all things, God said *'let there be ...'*, and in that split second, time began, the substance of the Universe (by definition there is only one) came into existence, and God's plan came into operation. After this manifestation of creative power, that continued over untold aeons, we are told that God saw that His work of creation was very good, rested from it, and began to reveal himself to mankind. The history that led to the birth of Jesus, the Word of God made flesh, is an integral part of doctrine, and no attempt is being made to explain it in these few words except to say that Jesus came to redeem Israel, and to save the world.

We can't begin to imagine the immense power of the Word of God in action as it was unleashed at the creation, yet the written Word of God tells us that we are

directly linked with it when we receive the Holy Spirit. Through the aeons of time as the Universe evolved according to the principles of mathematics and physics designed by God, the link has not been broken. This is the power that indwells us and will take us through into the next age and everlasting life.

The word of God can fix anything as long as it is in agreement with the laws fixed from the beginning of creation, but it must be married to faith and action. Although we are told that we have entered into God's rest when we receive the Holy Spirit, we are not called to do nothing, but rather to enjoy the job we have been given. We can't do anything to change God's plan, but our purpose is to go into the world and preach the gospel to every creature. These are the instructions of Jesus — the Word of God. The gospel isn't just about being good and obeying rules — we are told to appropriate the benefits and tell people about our connection with the Creator, and that they can enter into the Lord's 'rest' and enjoy these benefits too. (Psalms 103.)

'Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the son of God.' (1 John 5:5.)

A meaningful relationship with God is forever

The things God does are eternal and have eternal implications. Although God has a hand in what is natural — after all, He created all that there is — He is also all that is Spiritual.

In our natural mortal state there is apparently little value in having a relationship with God. As mortals, we are 'here today and gone tomorrow', and eventually forgotten. For a productive relationship with God we need to have everlasting potential — this happens when we are

born again. At the instant we are Spirit-filled, an everlasting relationship with God is possible. Salvation is forever, and this makes a relationship with God make sense.

The prophet Isaiah wrote: *'Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.'* (Isaiah 51:6.)

We are also told in the words of another Old Testament prophet that the Lord comes suddenly to His temple. (Malachi 3:1.) This miraculous event is not the result of prolonged instruction and study, nor can good works earn the privilege. God has always ordained the way in which He makes Himself known to His people, and it has never been according to their expectation. It has been in different ways throughout biblical history. The Old Testament records the continuing revelation of God to His people: Adam, the patriarchs, Israel, the judges, kings, priests and prophets, and at present, the Church. The Holy Spirit has been instrumental in this revelation and will continue in this capacity. From the day of Pentecost, until Jesus comes again, it has been through the personal infilling of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues (Acts 2: 4, 38–39), but after Jesus returns, although the revelation of God controlled by His Spirit and His Son will continue, it will once again be different. It began with communication with one man, and is to culminate at the end of time with a revelation to all mankind. *'And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.'* (1 Corinthians 15:28.)

The Holy Spirit has given us a vision and hope that is far beyond anything that the world can offer, with the added benefits of health, prosperity, happiness and peace right here and now. The apostle Paul wrote: *'For now we see through a glass, darkly.'* We can't see all, but we can see through. He also wrote: *'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the thing which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.'* (1 Corinthians 13:12 and 2:9–10.)

Sheep and shepherds

There will always be leaders and those who follow. The Bible pattern demonstrates this with the analogy of sheep and shepherds. In Jesus' time, shepherds were very much more involved with their flocks than they are today. They literally lived for those in their care, guarding them from predators, guiding them to food and water, and securing them in the sheepfold at night and in inclement weather. When lambs were born, the shepherd was there and named each one. The sheep knew the shepherd's voice, and the relationship was one of nurture and care for the flock so that it would flourish. The shepherds loved their sheep and this love was reciprocated.

What do we, in Revival Centres International, think about the sheep and shepherds analogy? We believe that Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd, and therefore the leader of RCI (and indeed anyone who is walking in the Spirit according to the Bible specifications). Any one of us who has the responsibility of caring for a group of people



in the Church is a shepherd, and is directly answerable to the Lord Himself. We believe this to be a privilege not to be taken lightly and not to be abused. No pastor, elder, or leader in the Church in any capacity works in isolation because the Bible states that there is wisdom in a multitude of counsellors. The task of leaders is to be inspirational, working with the power of the Holy Spirit and doing all that is possible to ensure that the people in their care meet the Lord as faithful servants when He returns. However, we must all understand that salvation is a personal responsibility and that no one will be caught up to meet the Lord because of the dedication or spirituality of any other person.

'The elders which are among you I exhort ... Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.' (1 Peter 5:1-4.)

Psalm 23 is a statement of provision and sanctuary; it is not bossy or authoritative, but reflects the Lord's promise that, even in the most devastating of circumstances, He is there as our Shepherd to see us through (both shepherds and sheep in the Church) if we trust Him.

So as we continue in our walk in the Lord may *'... the God of peace, that brought again from the dead*

our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.' (Hebrews 13:20-21.)

