



Strength
for the
Journey

CHIP BROGDEN

Strength For The Journey

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Strength For The Journey is a collection of letters written by Chip Brogden over the course of several years. These personal letters were written to encourage individual brothers and sisters. Although not originally written with the intention of making them public, they are offered here for your encouragement because we believe the entire Body of Christ could benefit from what is said.

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Concerning Christ

I am pleased to hear that you are growing increasingly dissatisfied with religion. This is the first step towards apprehending Christ as All in All.

~

It's always best to focus on Christ, then everything not of Him will be revealed for what it is.

~

The turning point in my life came when I stopped searching for a way, method, technique, prayer, or ritual for "victory". Christ revealed Himself to me as Victory. Having Him, I have no need of a method. For me to look to a method or technique for victory would be the same as me trying to enter into a room in which I am already seated.

It does not take "time", it only takes Christ. In short, you do not have to seek victory as an IT, for Victor as a "HIM" belongs to you already. When you enter into His overcoming you will learn that there is no "occult" power, since all power in heaven and in earth is given to Christ. There is only the appearance of power, hence, the element of deception is necessary. If we perceive it as a real power, then we empower it. If we perceive it as no power at all, it loses its power over us. Thus, the real key is to have our eyes opened.

~

I am curious to know if you put God first for the next 21 days, what happens on the 22nd day, and the days following? Will He be second place then?

Seek first the Kingdom, and all these "things" will be added to you. This is daily, forever. It is an inward thing. There is

only so much you can do to regulate yourself outwardly. It must be an inward submission, or it will not last. It is always better to focus on apprehending Christ as All in All, not on giving up this thing or that thing. He must increase, and I must decrease. If He increases then other things have no place. When this is done then everything finds its proper place. And if some things must go, it will not matter to the soul which has Christ as Everything.

~

There was a time when I would have been keenly interested in theological matters, but I have found great freedom and liberty by zealously clinging to "the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus" and found it necessary to give up theology years ago.

~

The thing I recommend is this: do not look for a method to do anything with your spirit. For Paul says, "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which I will, I know not." You clearly desire the things of God, to the point of frustration and trying to do it. This is not the Lord's way. "Thanks be to God [it is done] through our Lord Jesus Christ... there is therefore now no condemnation."

~

Trust in the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ to overcome in your stead. Many believers have more faith and assurance in the Law of Sin and Death than they do in the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ. This New Law is bigger. Yield yourself to it, and it will do what you cannot do. It doesn't matter if "what you cannot do" is get rid of a demon, overcome a habit, or live a holy life. It is always about Him, and it is never about you.

It's easy to become focused on all that is wrong. I challenge you to become an expert in all that is right, the things which pertain to the Lord Jesus. If we present Him, in all His fullness, the error of all that is contrary will be evident enough.

~

Without telling you specifically what to do, which I don't think is my place, this is my advice: press deeper in Christ, ask for greater insight into the Person of Jesus, and don't worry too much about what earthly men are saying and doing.

~

I really think it is time for you to ignore what anyone would say in response to these questions and seek out the answers between yourself and the Lord. Otherwise you will just grow more confused as people seek to give you their

opinion. Most of these questions are only an issue because we have made the lesser things more important than the One Thing.

~

Imagine your marriage being governed by rules and regulations instead of relationship. How long would it last? So it is with the Lord.

~

There is a Bridegroom, so there must be a Bride. Though we are one, we are not both. There is a Head, so there must be a Body. Though we are one, we are not both. Even so, the two shall be one! It's not so easy to describe, which is why I suppose Paul says it's a mystery. Only let us live up to the Light we have received thus far.

~

We have to know Jesus for ourselves, as He really is, and not as He has been explained to us. If we will come to Christ as little children, and frankly confess that we do not know the way, or the method, He will absolutely make Himself known to us. Whether this happens all at once, or whether it happens progressively, we cannot say. Whether you will feel anything or not, we do not know. But you will know it. And if you are faithful to the least bit of Light, more Light will be given.

~

Man makes unnecessary questions into issues when there really is no issue. God will not answer these questions: the Book of Job proves this. He will simply reveal His Son to us. Once we see HIM, either our questions will be answered, or we will stop asking so many questions. This is PRECISELY where Job ended up after asking all his questions. "I heard

about You... but now I SEE You... and I repent and shut my mouth, because I have said too much already."

We will find satisfaction and rest in Jesus. So the answer is not in a satisfactory response to all these questions, but in Christ. He is our Wisdom. True wisdom is seeing things from God's perspective. We have to get to a place in God to where we can SEE as He sees, and as long as we are bound to an earthly perspective we cannot have heaven's vision. You are correct: we place too much emphasis on our physical well-being, what we can see and feel, and not enough on the invisible, eternal things. We have to have our vision adjusted. This earth, and our life on it, is a veritable speck of dust in the context of eternity. How small we are, and how vast He is! How can the clay pot question the One Who made it? May the Lord reveal Himself to us.

~

Our fellowship together should be based upon our union with Christ. The key is not how, when, or where we are meeting together, but whether or not we are walking in the Light. And if we are, then we will have fellowship with Him and with one another. If we are all focused on Christ, then we should be like-minded. If we are otherwise minded, it will be reflected in the way we treat one another.

Concerning The Church

The greatest enemy of Truth is that which we deem "good" in our own eyes. So when I say there is some good to be found there it is not an endorsement, but a statement of fact. It is a good thing that people are clothed and fed and encouraged, but man's "good" is not necessarily indicative of God's Highest. My point is that we must be willing to forsake what is believed to be good, holy, moral, and proper in favor of Christ.

~

I wish preachers would focus more on living out of the Victory which is ours in Christ and less on the details of "how" and "when" and "where" it was accomplished.

~

Jesus is building His Church - this encourages me when I feel like it's all up to me to do it.

~

When you start explaining things out of the Bible for one reason or another it's easy to rationalize whatever you think it says. We need revelation here, not opinion.

The Spirit will lead you into all Truth, and if there is a red-flag from Him then you do not need my opinion. Trust in the Life, and avoid anything which does not give your spirit rest.

~

Our greatest mistake lies in spiritualizing what should be taken literally and literalizing what should be taken spiritually.

~

We cannot build a church. Jesus is building His Church, and it is a spiritual house of living stones. Entering into THAT structure and learning how to cooperate with Him is infinitely more important than any meeting we can hold or building we can construct.

~

Jesus is building His Church as a spiritual house of living stones. It is pointless to look for another structure, building, organization, or meeting place. None of these things can satisfy.

~

Let go of your expectations and you can be at peace and at rest in most any church service, because your peace and

your rest are based on a spiritual reality that others have no clue about, therefore they can do nothing to add to it or take away from it. If the church is dead you should expect nothing from it. Look instead to the individual lights within the church (and there are always some). Perhaps you are where you are in order to learn to love others where they are, and see them as Christ sees them. If so, then bloom where you are planted, and if the Lord wants you someplace else, leave it to Him. He can convince the most stubborn of people.

~

It is not a matter of where or how (if?) we meet. We put too much emphasis on the meeting, as if God's whole purpose for us is to have meetings. My denominational friends are as guilty of this as my house church friends. The Kingdom of God is not about our meetings; it is about our being changed into His Image. I have seldom seen a meeting that truly

meets the Lord's need.

~

If we come together, let's have an intention, a purpose, an understanding of what we're there for. I've been in places where the people took pride in the fact that they had "no agenda", and it was evident that they also had no fruit to speak of. We are not a club, or a support group. There is a higher calling for us than even "fellowship". What, after all, is our fellowship based on? Is it not based on Christ? Yet in most of our fellowship Christ seems to be one of the bystanders, not the guest of honor.

~

The one who touts his authority has no authority. Moses was meek. The men you mention are puffed up in their own imaginations. Whatever authority they have is human, and

is not from God. Follow the Spirit; He is not leading you astray. Trust in what He is leading you to see, and don't try to defend it, make excuses for it, or try and make others see it. The same Lord who showed this to you will show you what to do with it.

~

The pastor has no more of Jesus than you or anyone else does. It is not what you know, but Who you know, and what you do with Who you know.

~

We build church buildings more elaborate than anything we would live in ourselves, but the Church that Jesus is building puts all others to shame.

~

"Forsaking not the assembling" of ourselves together does not mean attend a church service once or twice or three times a week. It is more of a statement about unity. In other words, when we do attend church services in our respective denominations we have separated the Lord's Body into pieces; hence, we are no longer "assembling together", we are assembling separately.

If we are one with the Head, we are one with the Body, even if we are NOT gathered together; if we are not one with the Head, we are not one with the Body, even if we ARE gathered together.

~

Many a ministry and church have had to close because the work of the Lord became more important than the Lord of the work.

~

It is true that most services are seemingly based upon the Presence, but I suggest that it is not really the Presence that they seek as much as it is the FEELING that "Presence" evokes upon their emotion. Hence, they are not offering the "spirit-and-truth" worship that the Father seeks. It is primarily done to satisfy the people, to uplift them, to minister to them, etc. But no thought is given to serving the Lord.

While we are not opposed to uplifting and edifying one another, we maintain that the Lord must receive His portion first, and our needs must be subservient to His Need, His Desire for us. Too often we ask the Lord to do something for our own benefit when we have done little if anything to align ourselves with His Heart and Mind.

~

There are three failures in modern evangelism. The first is few are willing to be sent. The second is few are willing to support the ones who are willing. The third is the ones who go do not bring the correct message.

~

How conveniently we set aside God's commandment for our tradition! A good example is Joshua 1:8 which is oft quoted as "This Book of the Law shall not depart from out of your mouth but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, for then you will make your way prosperous and you will have good success," implying that confessing God's Word is what makes us prosperous and successful. When we actually look up the reference we find that there is a part not quoted, "meditate therein day and night **THAT YOU MAY BE CAREFUL TO OBSERVE AND TO DO ALL THAT IS WRITTEN THEREIN**, and then you will make your way

prosperous and you will have good success." So the key is obedience, not confession.

~

Since Jesus said only a few are saved, but many today claim to be saved, something is wrong either with what Jesus said or with what we are claiming. I believe it is correct to err on the side of humanity and believe that Jesus meant exactly what He said. So we need to examine ourselves.

~

I am not so much questioning if someone can lose their salvation as I am questioning the validity of them having received it to begin with.

~

When you don't fit in anywhere it is best to remove yourself from everything for awhile and get lost in Jesus. Then you are submitted to Him, and what others say does not matter. What you fit into is Him, and His Body, which is much larger than any local church or fellowship.

In order for Christ to increase in us we must be decreased, and it takes being despised and rejected and misunderstood by others to be sufficiently broken. The Lord wants to know if you love Him for Him or if you can only follow Him as long as others understand and accept you. You already know the answer to your questions, so walk in what you know, and the Life will never mislead you.

~

The spiritual man judges all things, but is judged of no one. We test the mind with questions, but we may discern the spirit without a word.

~

I would question the use of "worship leaders" in any New Testament context. It would seem that those who worship in Spirit and Truth would not need someone to lead them.

~

If God has told you to be at this church, then pray for the leadership. If He has not told you to be at this church, leave immediately. Live according to the Truth that you know.

"Full time ministry" should not be a goal of yours. That is according to man's understanding of things, and you are struggling against the very by-product of "full-time" ministry in your church. Instead, let Christ be your heart's desire, and you will be content with wherever and however He desires to use or not use you.

~

Jesus wants 100%, not 10%. And giving to the local religious institution is not the same thing as giving to the Lord anyway.

Concerning Discipleship

It is Jesus Who says that the disciple will never be greater than the teacher, and that is what I say as well. It is borne out in my experience that I cannot lead someone where I have not gone myself, and I cannot follow someone any further than they themselves have gone. When we reach this point we must decide to move forward apart from our teachers or remain where we are beneath them.

The entire teaching gift (indeed, all the ministry functions) have been misconstrued as the impartation of Truth by a select few to the rest of the Body. If this is our idea then we are limiting ourselves or those who look to us for leadership. God's intention for the ministry functions is to bring us all into the EPIGNOSIS of Christ, and this cannot be imparted. It is as much an error to seek Truth from a teacher as it is for the teacher to assume he or she can impart it. It is time to rethink our roles seriously.

David said, "Your Word [Christ] has made me more excellent than my teachers." When Christ is our Teacher then we will quickly outgrow the best of men.

~

I cannot fill a glass with water when it is already full.

~

When in doubt, remain where you are. We cannot change people, but we can pray for them to be illuminated. Meanwhile, we can learn to how to live out of another realm, to feed on Christ, and to drink of Him, in spite of where we are physically or geographically.

~

Discipleship is a solitary path, and the Church is nothing

more than solitary disciples following the same Teacher down the same Path. Occasionally the solitary disciples come together, but their coming together is the result, not the condition, of their discipleship. I was musing this point last Sunday in the midst of the pathetic attempts to pump up the congregation with what was called "leading praise and worship" and realized the reason why people can't worship: since they do not worship during the week as solitary disciples, they cannot worship on Sunday as a Body. How pointless it is to try and "get" people to a place of "worship" when they neither worship, nor pray, nor fast in secret as a disciple. It's like expecting fruit from a tree that has no roots. We have made the meeting the primary thing, when the prayer closet is really the acid test. The point: as the individual disciples go, so goes the Church. People have it backwards, thinking the Church creates the disciples, when really the disciples are what constitute the Church.

~

Obedience is sufficient, and if you have been asked to draw aside and have done so, you will receive additional Light when you need it. The one who has will be given more.

~

Often people believe I am Watchman Nee's disciple, but nothing could be further from the truth. I belong to Jesus, and He revealed Himself to me. Now I can truly AMEN what Nee, Tozer, and T. Austin-Sparks say because I see the same thing, and we share the same Source. I can nod, smile, and say, "Yes, that is what I have seen. That is the Truth." But I do not need these men to explain it to me, for I have seen for myself. The vessel is nothing: the treasure within is what matters.

Concerning Ministry

I am nothing but a styrofoam cup, after drinking the water you simply crush it and throw it away. The cup is nothing, it is what the cup contains that is important.

~

How I came to where I am is a long story. The important thing is that the Lord saw fit to reveal His Son in me. It is a true saying that one cannot be fully used of God until he has been fully rejected by men.

~

Anyone claiming to have a ministry or a gift should be serving the Body with that gift, not requiring the Body to serve them because of their gift.

~

Most ministry is not supported by the Lord because it is man's work, not the Lord's work.

~

I'm not sure that there is a method I could give you on how to seek the Lord, or what to do. I'm not sure what kind of experience you are looking for.

The Lord says things such as, "Seek, and you will find"; "You will seek Me and find Me when you have searched for Me with all your heart"; "Seek the Lord while He may be found." In all these things it is apparent that the Lord desires you to seek Him as much, if not more, than you do. So the best advice I can give is to relax, believe that He is there, and do not trust in your feelings to the contrary.

~

The elements of seeking God and ministering to Him include prayer, fasting, song, solitude, silence, worship, and Scripture. The Lord will meet you in any one of these, or in all of them. But do not expect Him to reveal Himself to you the way He does to Watchman Nee or Madame Guyon. He loves you where you are, as you are, and treats each of His children individually.

I hope this helps somewhat. I encourage you to continue, but resolve to love Him and worship Him whether He appears to be present or not. Such devotion will not go unanswered.

~

You have to plant a lot of seed these days to obtain any fruit. Keep planting every day.

~

Like you, I spent a number of years (16) pursuing a ministry and a vision of what I thought the Lord was wanting me to do. This is a problem that "preachers" have, that is, pursuing something "for" God instead of God Himself. What I have learned is that God does not want what I can do for Him. It does not matter to Him that I know how to preach or teach or write. What matters to Him is that I have set my heart on loving Him. Ministry can be the biggest distraction from God that you will ever have. I don't mean real Spirit-led, God-inspired ministry which He wants to develop in us and through us, but I mean the religious ministry of works, churches, preaching, Sunday morning programs, etc.

What the Lord continually brings us back to is: what is more important? Me, or Ministry? It is all too easy to think of God and Ministry as the same thing, and I assure you it is not. You can have a Ministry and not know God at all. Ministry in this way falls into the flesh, takes a life of its own, and is the reason why preacher's kids rebel, marriages end in

divorce, and churches get split. After we were kicked out of our last church, I discovered that it had a long and infamous history of destroying pastors. I predicted that the next pastor would not last long either. I found out recently that he resigned because of a nervous breakdown. So nothing there has changed.

This is the sort of thing the Lord is bringing you and me out of. Anything the Lord uses has to die before it can live. You have to stop thinking of your calling and your ministry. Think about your Lord, and what He wants you to do will follow suit. But the longer you have been at it, the more things you will have to die to. We find that we are continually having to "give up" on "ministry" and just love God, fellowship with Him, and let Him show us what to do, when to do it, or if to do it.

When we look back over everything we did in the name of "ministry" we realize that although it was based on the

wrong things, it laid the foundation for what the Lord is doing in us now. If we did not have the experience of pastoring a church (and failing) and running a ministry (and failing) and getting on the staff of another church (and getting kicked out) and seeing all our friends and associates either turn their back on us or lie about us... then we could not speak with authority and power today. Our "failures" became the means through which God was able to reveal His Son to us and show us what true ministry is. We will never go back to the other! I would rather have God in the desert and do "nothing" than be without Him in the "church" working myself to death!

In many ways I am still used to being "the preacher" and the Lord is constantly getting me out of the old and into Him. When we no longer play the game then the people who used to play with us will not want to play with us anymore. That's reality. When we are living out of Him it is an entirely different ballgame than when we pretty much did what we

thought needed to be done and asked Him to bless it. Oh no! He wants to be in charge, and He will not allow us to do anything like we were accustomed to doing. We still fight it and resist it, but that only delays things. Better to live surrendered and just let Him have His way.

Then you look around at all the preachers on T.V. and wonder why they have such an easy time of it, why those big churches are growing, etc. Don't do it! That is not the path the Lord has appointed for us. They are building Towers of Babel (confusion), so don't envy them or emulate them in any way. We are true pioneers, and we are looking towards something most people cannot see.

Since the Lord is bringing many of us along the exact same path as yourself, I have no doubt that He is working in your life to accomplish what He wants, but it will be on His schedule. You probably do need those "secular" jobs, as you call them. It will take a long time for you to learn not to be a

preacher and just be a disciple. Oh yes! He will use you, but not as you are. He will use you as He is increased and you are decreased. Are you ready to quit, to give up, to forget all about ministry? Good! That's exactly what you need to do. Let CHRIST be your vision. Bury everything else in the ground and wait for God to raise it up. That is where the blessing is.

When you know Him as Everything, when you are single-minded in the pursuit of HIM, not for the sake of a sermon or a ministry but for His sake, then you will have something to say and perhaps something to do, but it will not matter, because having HIM you are content.

I do not say these things easily. We are tested with this every day, and we have given up a million times. But the Lord keeps bringing us back around to what is important, and that's basically what I'm trying to communicate to you. Forget about "the ministry", go back to your first love, and

whatever ministry the Lord wants you to do, He will bring it about all by Himself without you having to make anything happen.

~

You will be stripped of all your religious devotional activity until the Lord teaches you how to just love Him. Especially for a preacher or teacher who is used to studying and praying so he or she can "get" the message for Sunday morning. Now that you have put that behind you, the Lord wishes to know if you are singing, praying, and studying the Word for His sake or for your sake.

You have a brand new Bible and a brand new Lord. Forget everything you have learned and begin with Genesis 1:1 until you get to Revelation 22:21. Then do it again. Take out a notebook and begin keeping a journal of everything you learn - you have plenty of time! In the desert you have to learn how to find water from the Rock. You probably feel

less "in tune" with God because you were probably not that "in tune" with Him to begin with. That may be a shock to you, but again, when the Lord leads you into the wilderness and calls you apart unto Himself, everything is exposed. The greatest temptation during this period of time is to "do" something, to get back into a church "just" to fellowship or sit on the back row. Or even to "do" something spiritual to restore that "feeling" of spirituality. Based on what you are telling me I think that would be a mistake. Commit to the Lord and allow Him to see this through with you until His purpose is achieved. It may take one, two, three years - more if you fight against it. There is a more thorough death for you to experience and you are only just beginning to experience it. Hence the emptiness and the void you feel. IT WAS THERE ALL THE TIME, it was just disguised beneath a lot of busy church work.

I will be glad to pray for God's purpose for you and even help you as needed, but the purpose of this season is to

wean you from man altogether - from ministering to people and from being ministered to by people. The object is to bring you down to the status of a widow, with no earthly help, totally reliant upon God for support. It may not look this way to you, but from my vantage point, being able to see what you cannot see, I am very excited for you.

~

Everyone coming into a gathering brings their own paradigm, expectation, and personal history with them. We desperately need to leave our own ground and come onto the Lord's ground. I can't recall ever attending a meeting for prayer in which we just ministered to the Lord. There is always some "need" that we feel obliged to bring to the Lord's attention, or someone invariably feels compelled to "share" or "speak a word" of prophecy over someone. The Lord's need is not met. As a whole, we just don't know how to minister to the Lord without asking for something in

return. We can't just come together to worship Him without some ulterior motive.

~

I have prayed this morning for God's Purpose to be accomplished in you. There is more to the situation than what you are telling me, but more information is really not needed in order for me to pray. You have made your request to God for the sake of the Kingdom, so be aware that the Kingdom of God suffers violence. It may be that your "ministry" may have to be sacrificed in order for God's Purpose to be fulfilled. I am not saying it must be, only that it may be, and it is important for you to be willing, should God ask for it, to give it back to Him. Some evil is unnecessarily afflicted upon us because we are not careful to allow our steps to be ordered by the Lord; thus, God permits contrary winds to show us we are sailing in the wrong direction.

I am not saying you are. I am saying that it is important that you be able to say, "Whether to proceed or not proceed with this, I do not know; but above all, I want Your Kingdom and Your Will to be done in this; so order my steps accordingly." When you are thus aligned with God you are invincible to the stratagems of the enemy. Yes, it will require a further decreasing of yourself so that Christ may have all the more increase and preeminence, which is why I say there is the possibility that He will lead you to lay down your ministry for a season. This is difficult when we are being fruitful. But He reserves the right start, to stop, and to redirect your efforts.

~

It is best to bring people up into the heavenlies by pointing them to CHRIST as All in All, and not spend much time debating things on an earthly level. For that reason, most of what is written today I am not interested in.

~

Salvation is more than just praying a little prayer. It is the revelation of Christ. Let me put it this way. Repentance is a result, not a cause. Repentance always follows revelation, but never precedes it.

If ever once in their life someone sees the Lord Jesus by revelation then they will be unable to do anything short of repent. So the object is to present them with a Living Man, not a system of salvation. When they see the Man then they will change, but until then they cannot. They can get religious and change their ways, but that's not real repentance.

Concerning The Narrow Path

It is amazing to hear from so many people who write to tell me they are alone. If all of us "lonely people" were put in one room it would be very crowded.

We are lonely, but we are never alone. We chose a Path which is very narrow, and at times it is impossible for more than one person to travel this Path side by side. Occasionally we can walk together as "two or three". I have learned more in solitude than I have in a crowd, and I believe you can say the same. There is much to be learned in the desert.

~

The way of Christ means my way has to go, not only my bad ways, but my good ways, and to come to the end of my own righteousness under the Law, in favor of the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus.

~

Be encouraged to know that you are not alone, although the Lord does lead us in a solitary way. Do not exclude yourself from others on purpose, but do not become overly concerned if they exclude you. In whatever place you find yourself, be content and allow the Lord to teach you the what you need to know. Some lessons are learned alone, some are learned with others, and we have to be able to receive both.

~

All that you have lost is actually a gain, for when we lose our life we find our Life - Christ increases as we decrease. This is why I can say that your most fruitful years are ahead of you. Enjoy them.

~

The path is a narrow way which becomes more and more narrow the farther along one progresses. Some cannot follow it through to the end, where Christ is All in All. Continue to ask the questions and challenge conventional wisdom. But more importantly, pray for revelation into the Son. Having seen Him, everything else is revealed for what it is. This is what you are learning.

~

We, too, sometimes feel like we are going around in circles. You have to get into the center of the circle and stand still.

~

Praise the Lord that you see what others cannot see. I believe once you begin to be stripped of religion you go through a weaning process in which you question

everything, nothing seems to make sense to you, and you make sense to no one else. This only reinforces what you already know to be true.

Eventually, when the Truth is established and confirmed in you, you no longer need to question, you simply know, and you will chuckle half the time and cry the other half as you observe the vanity of men.

You are coming to know the Lord as your portion, as opposed to the church as your spiritual pick-me-up. This is true growth, though it is not in the best interest of THE PROGRAM that you outgrow it. Like a baby which must eventually learn to walk and eat solid food, so you must outgrow THE PROGRAM.

And you are correct, cutting-edge programs soon become dull and lifeless because, as you point out, it is man who originates; thus, it is man who must perpetuate, keep it

going, keep it growing, keep up appearances, etc.

Be prepared, of course, because the longer you remain where you are without going along with the program, the more pressure is building to thrust you out. This is the reality.

Let us walk in the Spirit, and learn to feed upon Living Bread and Living Water. He will sustain us when everything else fails.

As for the authority of those who claim to be something, you know as well as I that anyone who has to claim their authority over someone else has no genuine authority. For the authority which comes from above is loving, patient, humble, serving, and giving with no expectation of receiving.

I hope your focus becomes even more narrow, to the extent

that Christ is All in All. This is the path of blessing.

~

Don't worry about trying to find Scripture verses to answer back to people. You don't have to justify yourself to anyone. Just smile and say that Jesus is all the covering you need.

There are untold thousands and maybe millions of brothers and sisters just like you who are learning to go to the Rock directly and not through a system or a religious leader. You are definitely not alone, so don't be discouraged. In time, the peaceable fruit of the Spirit will be evidence enough that the Lord is your True Source.

~

You can expect that the Lord will continue to decrease you and bring you to the end of yourself so that He may be All in

All. Use this time in the desert to learn how to minister to the Lord and meet His need first. It will take many seasons of God's dealings with you in order for you to unlearn what you have been taught and learn of Him.

~

It's never easier to wait, to listen, to learn, but that is the path all of us eventually must take, and the sooner we submit to it, the better. The main purpose of the desert is to reduce us to Christ as All in All. We carry a lot of baggage, a lot of Self, into the desert with us. At the end of 40 years in the desert, Moses said, "I can't do it." That is the fruit of the desert. There we learn to follow the fire and the cloud, to drink from the Spiritual Rock, and to depend upon the Lord for daily bread. That is the desert, and you learn to love it, and prefer it, to civilization and the comforts of Egypt.

~

The Lord doesn't really leave us, but He does withdraw the sense of His Presence so that we are seemingly alone. He also permits us to go our own way, and invariably it serves to make us sick of ourselves. In the end we are decreased and humbled, while He is increased. It happens again and again.

~

It sounds as if the Lord was doing a great work of decreasing you in order to increase Himself in you. It is easy to think we really have a handle on the Lord until He moves in on us and we realize that we did not choose HIM, He chose US.

Increasingly I am made aware that I do not belong to myself, but there is Someone much larger than I who has me in a very straight and narrow way. Often such revelation comes

about through incidents such as you describe. To be sure there will be more of them. But God's End is always a pure vessel, and I suspect you can already see the fruit of His dealings with you.

~

I am very excited to read your letter because your frustration is evident, and I believe until we are frustrated we cannot enter into rest. It is only after we have failed hundreds and thousands of times that we learn WE cannot do it. Too many never reach that point, and the more they fail the harder they try. Once we are convinced that we cannot, then we can become convinced that God can. So take comfort that you are heading in the right direction, towards the end of yourself.

~

I believe the Lord will finish what He has begun in you. Hang on to the Truth, no matter what. Don't lower your standards - raise them! And trust that the Lord will place you where He wants you - even if it means that, for a time, you should just seek Him in a lonely place all by yourself. Sometimes that is necessary. But you are not alone, even there. Many stand with you.

~

We cannot judge the heart of the one who claims to follow Christ, but we can indeed judge the fruit. And "growing in grace and in the full-knowledge of Christ" is one of the results of those who have truly entered the Gate. I'm not saying you must attain it to be converted (if that were the case even Paul would be lost), but IF you are on the narrow Path, you must, at a minimum, be moving towards it.

~

I recommend that you continue to follow Christ, just as you have begun, and not be too concerned with where or when or if to meet. Just go deeper into Him and everything will pan out. It is often true that there must be a time when it is just you and Jesus. This is necessary for you to get out of the habit of listening to and following man. It is to get you out of yourself and your needs for "fellowship". So embrace this time of solitude, and when it has accomplished its purpose, it will be revealed to you where you need to go from there.

~

If we want the depths of Christ we must be prepared for a lonely walk. On the other hand, there are many engaged in the pursuit of Christ, and though we may not see each other physically, we are all in the same path.

Concerning The Overcomer

I believe it has to begin with seeing ourselves as dead in Christ already. In Him we are crucified, dead, buried, resurrected, ascended, and seated in the heavenlies. When we know this to be the truth it is easier to "reckon" ourselves as dead to sin and alive to God. Then we simply allow Him to increase, and we will naturally be decreased. So the outworking of the truth comes from daily applying it to ourselves as an accomplished fact, and leaving the results to God.

~

It is not your job to "get it". The work of the Holy Spirit is to show you these things, to show you how to surrender, to show you how to enter into the fullness of Christ, etc. He will lead you into all Truth. When I first learned to ride a bicycle I fell down a lot. The harder I tried to keep my

balance, the more difficult it was to do so. Many Christians find themselves in the same situation. One day something "clicked" on the inside, and then I was able to ride. Whereas before it took effort to keep my balance, now it takes effort to lose my balance. What a wonderful reversal! It is almost impossible for me to make myself fall off the bicycle. Something shifted on the inside of me, and I spontaneously began to ride. I cannot explain it, but neither can I argue with it. So it is with Christ.

~

Here is the crux of the matter. If we are faithful with five talents of gold, or with three talents of gold, He will give us more. But if we take the one talent of gold and bury it in the ground, we will lose what little we had to begin with. To whom much is given, much is required. Many Christians do not have the life in the Lord they desire for one reason: they want the revelation and the power, but they are not willing

to pay the price for such revelation. This is something that you have to determine for yourself, and consider carefully. Am I willing to pay the price? It is a free gift, but it is very costly. Am I willing to count the cost? If you are not willing, or if you are afraid, can you at least come to God as you are and tell Him you are willing for Him to make you willing? In many situations I have to take this approach with God: "I cannot handle this; this is beyond me; I am not willing to do this thing which is required; but Lord, I am willing to be made willing." If this is our honest heart before God then it is acceptable to Him. Even Jesus prayed in this way, saying, "If there is another way for this to be accomplished, let this cup pass from me... nevertheless, not what I want, but what you want." Then He willingly drank the cup.

~

You see, it is never a question of your ability, but of His! He cannot fail, so I trust Him to live in my stead and in my

place. As I trust in His Life for the daily necessities, His character begins to replace my character, until I become quite unlike what I used to be. Some people may not like me now, but they should have seen what I was like before the Lord began to be formed in me! This is spiritual growth. Growth is not how much knowledge we accumulate or how many times we attend church or how many sermons we have heard. Growth is "less of me, and more of Him".

~

Eventually the Lord brought me to a place when all of my books proved useless, and reduced me through many circumstances to nothing but Him and the Word. I basically threw away most of my books because nothing seemed to work. As I was sitting in the backyard one afternoon reading from Ephesians the Lord revealed His Son in me. I can show you the spot where it happened. It was as if I had walked out of a room and into another room, closing the door

behind me. All I thought I knew I realized I did not know, and all I did not know I now knew. I saw what before had been invisible. It was the grace of God, because other than throwing away half of my books and feeling more or less defeated I was not particularly fasting or seeking God in any special way for divine Light, even though I was hungry for Reality. I knew in spite of all the "ministry" I had done that something was missing. My life was anything but normal, and I was fighting with the devil all day and all night, looking for victory off in the distance, striving and sweating and working. My yoke was anything but easy, and my burden was anything but light. It was indeed MY yoke and MY burden, not His.

I cannot describe it or explain it, but neither can I argue with it. It happened. As I yielded to it, it took root and began to reproduce. It took several more years for this to work itself out yet further in my experience, to know this death of the cross as a reality and not a theory. With every death came

more Life. Eventually I found a vocabulary to express what the Lord had revealed to me, and all I can say is that the Lord was faithful to increase the revelation as I was faithful to live according to what Light I had. That's not to say I have walked blamelessly since, but it is a work in progress. It has cost me everything, naturally speaking, but I have gained millions of times over what I have lost. There is no other way but this way.

~

We don't know where we are going or what we are doing either. It teaches you to depend upon the Lord for everything, so be careful not to try and make something happen. When ambition has died then the Lord has gained something for Himself, and that is the most important thing.

~

What I am does not matter. What matters is Who He is. If our vision is turned inward upon ourselves then we will be constantly defeated and disappointed. On the other hand, humility is refusing to look at one's self at all. It is a steady outward look towards Christ. I am changed, not by trying to change, but by looking away from myself and to Christ. When love for Him is the most important thing, other loves will fade before it, just as the fog fades away before the brightness of the morning sun.

~

You've got to learn to laugh in the middle of it. Don't let them rob you of your joy, and when they see it is having no effect on you, they will eventually stop. Or they will say something and you will be moved to respond in such a way that it literally shuts their mouths.

~

As long as we live in the world we will be hurt by other people. I don't know of any way to avoid it. People are mean! And the truth is that calling yourself a Christian doesn't make you Christlike.

The real issue is what are we going to do about it. Are we going to get angry, bitter, hurt, upset, defensive? I have learned the only way to respond is to see it as an opportunity to see Christ formed in you. We must have opportunities to turn the other cheek, go the extra mile, give away our shirt, love our enemies. Otherwise we are living in a hedge and we can't truly know God or come to a place of weakness in ourselves. When we are pushed beyond the limits of endurance then His Strength is made manifest.

~

When you have reached the end of yourself then CHRIST

moves in to do what you cannot do on your own. You cannot be like Jesus. God's end for you is not for you to imitate Jesus, but for you to be replaced by Jesus. "It is no longer I that live, but CHRIST that lives in me." We will always fail, but He cannot fail.

~

You start by stopping. In other words, when we give up, when we cease doing, then the Lord Himself will make His Strength perfect through our weakness. In Him you are complete, the recipient of so much grace, that there is nothing else for you to do but rejoice in Him and just keep on looking to Jesus.

~

The Lord is constantly telling us to come up into the heavenlies (Revelation 4:1), to get our mind off of earthly

things and onto heavenly things (Colossians 3:1,2). We know that all things will be shaken and tested. We also know that this world is passing away and that the Lord will have to create a new heavens and a new earth.

Since we know all these things, why should we have any fear at all, or any concern, or worry, about the future? It does not change the fact that the Lord is building His Church and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it. Everything else outside of Him is doomed already.

So yes, you should be preparing, but not on some earthly level! Prepare your heart by refusing to walk according to the earthly, the natural, the carnal, the flesh-and-blood, the temporal, the seen-and-felt world. Go ahead and decorate your house, work, live, do what you have to do here, just understand this is only a temporary thing at most. The hearts of men may fail them for fear, but yours should be nothing but joy unspeakable, because your life is not bound

up with what happens to this world or this country.

You can live according to what is seen, or what is unseen. Choose to live out of the invisible! Be a light in the midst of so much darkness. Oh yes, everything will be shaken and judged, but you can laugh in the face of it.

~

There are two aspects of this Life, and I think the trouble here is you have only acknowledged the first aspect, and not the second. The first is, "I cannot" and the second is "I will not". Let me explain.

The first step is to realize that you cannot. Unfortunately many Christians never come to this knowledge. They still think they can, so they wear themselves out with good works trying to imitate Jesus. The Holy Spirit must allow them to be defeated time and time again until they learn that

they cannot. You have already learned this lesson.

But there is a second step, and that is, once I can confess that I cannot, I must learn to say, "I will not." Now the problem with you is just here. You know you cannot, you know it must be Christ and not you, yet you are still trying to do something, and when you do not see a result, you begin to look for something else you need to do.

You must be able to say, "I cannot - therefore, I will not. It is Christ Who works in me, both to will and to do of His good pleasure. I know with me it is impossible, but with God all things are possible. Since this is the truth, then I will stop trying to do what I cannot do. Instead, I cast myself on the Lord. I can do nothing, so I will do nothing. From henceforth it is the Lord Himself Who will live through me." Then forget about it.

Yes, Paul did say that he strived, but read the whole verse.

He labors and strives according to Christ's power which works in him mightily, not in his own strength. This Power only moves in and takes over when we refuse to act on our own.

I don't see much difference between the place you see me in and the place you see yourself in, except on this one point. You know you cannot, and I know you cannot. I know that I cannot, and you know that I cannot. So we are clear in this regard. We both know we cannot. But I can state with equal confidence, "I will not!" and you are still trying. With me it is an accomplished fact, and with you it is something yet to be done. But brother, if you cannot, then you cannot. So determine that you will not.

What happens is that when you cease to do, He begins to do. If you really believe you cannot do it, then you should stop trying to do it. Let the Lord do what you cannot do - this is growth in grace. The more you cannot, the more you should

will not; and the more you will not, the more He will.

I learned to sail in less than two minutes. My teacher showed me how to operate the sail and the rudder. He said there is no way to tip over. If I don't know what to do, just let go of everything and throw my hands up into the air. He demonstrated this by pulling the sail very tight against the wind, and when we were about to tip over, he let go of the rope and threw up his hands. The rope went slack, the sail became limp, the boat righted itself, and the wind had no power over us. This is what it means to let go and let God.

Another illustration may be helpful. When you go to watch a football game you do not become involved in the game itself. The team is on the field to represent their fans and secure the victory for them. So when the team wins, those in the stands cheer and rejoice. They'll say, "We won! We won!" Yet they never did a thing. Had they gone down onto the field to help, not only would they have been sorely defeated,

but the players would have sent them away, saying, "You do not belong down here. Go back to your seat and let us win this game for you."

Likewise, Christ does not need you to help Him secure the victory. He already secured it Himself by working on our behalf. We are merely the recipients and beneficiaries of an accomplished fact. When He won, we all won. His victory is our victory. So there is nothing left for us to do, since He has done it all. If we try to go down on the field now and "do" something we are being silly. In the first place, there is nothing left to do, and in the second place, we can't do it anyway. Since I cannot do anything, I will not do anything. He has done everything, and will do everything. All I need to do is rejoice and thank God that is done!

You cannot look at your feelings because victory has nothing to do with you, it has everything to do with Him. If I feel bad today then Jesus still won the victory. His victory is not

dependent upon how I feel. If I were trying to overcome in my own power, then yes my feelings would be very important, but since it is Him and not me, how I feel or what I see is irrelevant. You are simply resting upon a victory which has been handed to you. The only way to be defeated is to think it all depends on you. A man who thinks he hasn't won will do all kinds of things to get the victory, but all of it is pointless and in vain if he has, in fact, already won.

The greatest fear people have is that if they don't do anything then they will certainly be defeated. They reason that they prayed, fasted, and worked so hard only to be defeated again, so if they stop altogether then they will be totally routed. Not so! If they will cease to do, then God Himself will begin to do what they have already admitted that they cannot do. The battle is the Lord's. Since the battle is the Lord's, it is not my battle at all. I need only look on with interest at how the Lord will work all this out. Moreover, He cannot be defeated, so I already know the

outcome. Relax brother, and let Jesus demonstrate His preeminence in your life. Give yourself over to Him once and for all, and then don't get in His way. Rejoice in your weakness, and rejoice that you cannot, and that you will not! For now the power of Christ will be manifest in you.

~

I am not suggesting that you should not pray or read the Bible. I am suggesting that if you really know the truth of Galatians 2:20, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me", then you will stop doing and allow Him to do instead. The spiritual life, as you say, is not the sum total of all your reading, praying and attending church. If it were then you would certainly be fulfilled and satisfied. But the spiritual life is not a lot of activity. It is about Jesus! The spiritual life is, "Not I, but Christ." It is about Jesus doing in you and through you what you have finally determined that you cannot, and thus will not, do for yourself anymore.

You have done this at least once. How were you saved? Was it by grace? What does that mean? It means that one day you recognized that your good works would never save you, but only faith in the Son of God to do something you could not do, that is, save you from sin. Once you saw that His work is complete, did you continue to work? I hope not! Instead, you bowed down and said, "Lord, I cannot save myself. I accept your finished work. I trust in You for my salvation. Henceforth, I will do nothing to save myself, for now I see that I cannot do it." You see, first you know you cannot, then you determine that you will not.

You live the Christian life the same way you entered it - by trusting in the Lord Jesus to do something for you that you know you cannot do yourself. If you are trusting in Him to live His Life through you, then you have to let go. You cannot claim to be saved by grace and continue working for your salvation. That would be a contradiction. Similarly, you cannot claim on the one hand that "I know I cannot do

anything" and then claim on the other hand that there is something you must do. Just as your salvation is an accomplished fact, so your overcoming is an accomplished fact, so long as you do nothing but accept it as an accomplished fact. It is not your works, but the motivation and power behind your works that makes the difference.

Concerning The Prophetic

Some important people learned of a holy man who lived out in the desert with some other brothers. Curious, they set out to find him. Somehow word got back to the holy man that some important people were coming to find him, and that he should prepare himself. "Indeed I will," he said, and disguising himself in a tunic he fled away to hide.

Unfortunately he happened to run into the very people who were seeking him, and they asked him, "Can you tell us the way to the holy man's cottage who lives out here in the desert?"

The holy man replied, "That man is a fool and a heretic! What do you want with him?" Then he went his way. The group finally located the place where the brothers dwelt together and told them about the man they met on the way, and the things he said. Then they realized that it was the one

that they were seeking, but his humility was such that he would not be seen of them. Encouraged, they realized he was indeed a holy man, and returned from the desert rejoicing.

~

To speak the truth in the midst of universal deception is a prophetic act.

~

I like the way Hebrews begins. Seems to imply that God is not speaking through prophets anymore, just JESUS. How refreshing!

~

God isn't restoring the five-fold ministry, it has never left.

But people don't see it because they're looking in the wrong place and looking for the wrong thing. For example, the "Apostle" you wrote me about. If THAT'S what the restoration is supposed to produce, then we are better off not having a restoration.

~

If the full-knowledge of Christ is the REASON God gave us apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers - and if people who call themselves these things are NOT bringing us towards this full-knowledge of Christ, then they CAN'T really be what they claim.

~

If there is any significance to your dream, the Lord will reveal it to you in due season. If there is no significance to it, it doesn't matter what my opinion is.

~

One moment of seeing is worth more than a thousand years of teaching.

~

I see Him becoming larger and larger. At one time I thought I was getting close to the end of it, that I had just about seen all there is to see of Him, but how stupidly naive I was. There is no end to it, even though I know I can see farther than most, it is so comparatively small to all He is. I am constantly looking for language to express the inexpressible, and some things I just cannot express. Thank God for a gift of tongues in which to praise Him in the Spirit and have Him supply the words. And you mentioned the key to it all - chastening, discipline, stretching forth your hands to be led where you yourself would never go on your own. Everyone wants apostolic revelation, but hardly anyone wants apostolic persecution.

~

One would not want to be caught in a blizzard wearing a pair of shorts, or to be in a heat wave wearing a coat and hat. We need discernment to know the times and the seasons.

~

I suggest that you drop the title of "Prophet" and learn how to "just" be a brother.

About The Author

Chip Brogden was born and raised in eastern North Carolina. He became a follower of Jesus when he was eight years old and began preaching at the age of thirteen. He was a pastor and music minister for many years before a series of encounters with "the REAL Jesus" drew him out of the organized church.

Chip is a prolific writer and teacher, authoring more than seventy articles and essays. These writings are freely distributed around the world via Watchman.Net, the website he founded in 1997. His teachings are meant to be an encouragement to Christians of all backgrounds and affiliations who are seeking the Lord Jesus in simplicity, particularly those who are "in the wilderness".

Chip has been married to his wife Karla for fourteen years. They live with their two children, Beth and Brittney, in North Carolina.

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