

TRUE SPIRITUALITY

The letters to Timothy were written by Paul at a crucial and critical time in history. It was a time of crisis as far as God's people and the church were concerned. Paul had a great fear concerning the wellbeing of the Church. This can be clearly seen in his writings to the churches. For instance, he wrote to the Corinthian church and said in 2 Corinthians 11: 2, 3 "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." The Apostle Paul feared for the Church, deep down in his heart and in his own spirit. He expressed the fear in different ways and levels to the churches in all his writings. This anxiety and apprehension for the people of God was a reality in his life. O Timothy, guard and keep the deposit entrusted (to you)! Turn away from irreverent babble and godless chatter, with the vain and empty and worldly phrases, and the subtleties and contradictions in what is falsely called knowledge and spiritual illumination. (*1 Timothy 6:20 Amplified Bible*)

(For) by making such profession some have erred — missed the mark — as regards the faith. Grace (divine favor and blessing) be with you all! Amen— so be it. (*1 Timothy 6: 21 Amplified Bible*)

And the (instructions) which you have heard from me, along with many witnesses, transmit and entrust (as a deposit) to reliable and faithful men who will be competent and qualified to teach others also. (*2 Timothy 2:1 Amplified Bible.*)

But as for you, continue to hold to the things that you learned and of which you are convinced, knowing from whom you learned (them). (*2 Timothy 3:14 Amplified Bible*)

Hold fast and follow the pattern of wholesome and sound teaching which you have heard from me, in (all) the faith and love which are (for us) in Christ Jesus. (*2 Timothy 1:13 Amplified Bible*)

Guard and keep (with the greatest care) the precious and excellently adapted (Truth) which has been entrusted (to you), by the (help of the) Holy Spirit Who makes His home in us. (*2 Timothy 1:14 Amplified Bible.*)

It is well to remember that the church at Corinth was divided and fell apart soon after Paul died. Later on the same thing happened to other churches also towards the end of the first century. This showed clearly that Paul's fears were justified. Paul's apprehensions had already begun to be manifested when he began to write to Timothy. Paul understood clearly that it was a time of crisis because the churches had already begun to deteriorate while he was still alive, in the first century. By the second century the Church had deteriorated further and the fears of Paul were more than justified.

If the Church in Paul's time was in danger of falling apart, the danger to the Church today is certainly much greater. We today as Christians live in the full development of that which Paul feared. In the present day Christianity we can see a perspective backsliding in the Church, which Paul feared so greatly. This is the reason why we all need to have a single heart towards all that the Spirit has to say. Often we only like to hear what we find palatable and digestible. If we feed our children with the things they like, they will not be able to grow into healthy children. The cry of the true child of God should be for things that are not according to his taste and liking, but according to God's ordained purpose. Let us have a hearing ear to hear what God wants to say to His Church in the present time.

Beloved, we need to be very careful and sensitive, making sure that we do not decline into any kind of fallacy or apostasy. This can happen if we are not careful. We should also make sure that we do not also decline into merely a system, a ritual, a habit, a custom, something organized and institutional or something which is familiar. If we opt for outward appearances, organized efforts and systems of men, we shall miss whatever the Lord has for us. This calls for a high degree of sensitivity on everyone's part and not just on the part of the leaders. Often we get into a lackadaisical, spiritless, indifferent and languid attitude towards spiritual things, unconsciously. This attitude always prompts us to move out of the essential nature of spiritual life within. Then we gravitate towards something that is unprofitable, needless

and earthly. For example, let us examine our attitude towards gathering together in church on Sunday. Many of us go to church because it is a Sunday. There is a deep registration within us of the common practice of meeting on Sunday in church. Though we say that the church is not a building nor a 'thing', yet on Sunday morning we say quite involuntarily, "I must get to the church on time" or "Please meet me at the church." This is because we still have an impression somewhere in our minds that church is a place (though we know it is primarily not a place but the Body of Christ, a Person and a people). Even if we have a revelation of the church, yet this is how many of us think. Unless we are individually sensitive to these issues, we stand in a place of grave danger and jeopardy of missing the tree for the woods! Beloved, all that we do in church can just be an order and a system of activities. This is what we seriously need to guard against. We could be satisfied with some good singing, an occasional touch of the Lord, a momentary sense of holiness and other things that are just a form, an order and a system and not what is essential and real. The prospective feature of Paul's letter to Timothy is, it takes us back to the beginnings, to the foundations and to the essentials. They direct us to the originals. These verses quoted above, tell us the same thing — to guard, to keep the deposit entrusted to us, to hold fast to those things. The Apostle reminds Timothy of some of the things that took place in Timothy's life. He brings to remembrance the essentials, the foundations and beginnings of God in these letters. Here we see Paul's method of tackling every trace of lack of spiritual ardour and enthusiasm.

In the book of Revelation chapters two and three, we find that in the churches the testimony had lost its power and its influence in the world. In the time in which we are living, it is no different. The Church has lost its endowment and it is no longer able to bring people to believe the purposes of God. What is the remedy? The Church needs to recover the essential and basic realities that it had experienced in the beginning, at the time of its birth. There needs to be a recovery and a reinforcement of true spirituality in the Church, which is the essential and fundamental reality.

Spirituality is a tremendous power as far as God is concerned. What is spirituality? For many people spirituality means, giving one self to gatherings, to soul winning, to the study of the scriptures etc. Such an individual we call a spiritual person. But that is not true as far as God is concerned. The Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." In other words that which is born of the Spirit is spiritual. The Spirit of God not only births it, but the Spirit also sustains it. Our life needs to be wholly spiritual. In other words, it should be birthed, sustained and consummated by the Spirit of God. The Lord wants to reinforce the fundamental and essential reality in our lives. If we remain in a place of sensitivity, we shall realise what the church needs today. God needs spiritual men and women for preserving and carrying on of His testimony in the earth. *The Lord needs re-enforced spirituality in the midst of His people.* Saints of God, if we have any sense of the real need in the Church today, the real need amongst God's people today and in ourselves, (because of things as they are, as they have become or as they are threatened to be), our hearts should beat as that of the Apostle Paul! We should have the same concerns that

ruled and governed his life. This man just poured his heart out to young Timothy in these letters. There is something of a yearning, if not a breaking of heart in his expression, '*Oh Timothy*'.

One can see a strong yearning and a longing for Timothy in the heart of the Apostle. In his expression, "O Timothy" Paul conveys the great yearning and desire of his heart for the disciple who was to take up the ministry of the Word in Ephesus. There is a cry that emanates from the depths of the Apostle Paul, "O Timothy". This cry bursts forth from him as a result of his concern for the spiritual condition of the Church and for God's people. *He yearned for a reinforcement of the initial, essential and fundamental realities in the Church.* When we give into the workings of the Spirit of God we will be brought into the same place. Even if we are not called to be like Paul, we all need to have the same concern for the Church. Are you concerned about spiritual things? Are you concerned about the way that things have taken its form? Are you concerned about the declension, the departure, the diversion, the dropping down, the differences that have come about since the beginning? Are you concerned about spiritual things in your own life? If you are concerned about the work of the Spirit in the midst of His people then you will also be concerned about your spiritual life. Are you concerned about your spiritual deterioration, the entrance of spiritual apathy into your life, and the withdrawing of your spiritual interests? When we come face to face with difficult situations in our lives, we often make resolutions that do not glorify God nor are helpful for the advancement of our spiritual condition. Are you aware of your true spiritual state? Are you concerned about its decline? The Spirit of the Lord would like each one of us to know the state of our inward condition and then, to be concerned about our growth in the weak areas of our lives.

The concern for our spiritual condition must be more than just a deep sighing and groaning over it. Sometimes we lament and moan about our spiritual condition and even pity ourselves but this will not help us. Groaning and lamenting within will alone not suffice. *There must arise within us an intelligent concern of the Spirit in the full and clear realization of what the solution is but the re-enforcement of spirituality in God's people and ourselves.* We need to use spiritual intelligence to ascertain our true condition. This will bring deliverance. If we allow the Spirit of God to work within us to show us our true inward state, we will acquire a genuine concern for our lives. We need to know where the problem lies in our lives. It is not enough to merely wish your life would be different. There needs to be a growing concern for one's poor spiritual state as seen by the Spirit. We need to long for a spiritual reinforcement by the Spirit. If there is such a cry and a longing within us, we shall surely experience spiritual liberation. Beloved, there is only one way to a spiritual recovery. *A spiritual condition that has deteriorated can only be restored in God's way.* We must come to a place where we are convicted, where we experience the working of the Spirit and are drawn to a place of applying spiritual intelligence to our condition. God will never fail us if we are deeply concerned and are sensitive to His word and Spirit. God will bring us to a place where we shall experience liberation. But, if you have decided to take things into your own hands and do something to improve your life instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to deal with you,

then the Lord will not be able to help you. Sometimes, people take it for granted that as individuals they are more concerned about their spiritual life than anyone else. When I ask believers whether they are concerned about their lives, I am often told, "Do you think I am not concerned about my spiritual life?" It is difficult to answer such people, but the truth is that their concern is not deep enough. One's concern for true spiritual life must be more than just a prayer and a groan within. We ought to have a strong drive within that would lead us to apply spiritual intelligence to determine our true state of being. It must bring us to a place of greater sensitivity to the Spirit, causing us to be more open to the workings of the Spirit of God. Then alone can there be a reinforcement of the fundamental and initial realities in our lives. Are you concerned enough about your spiritual condition? Are you willing to be totally open to the Spirit and the ministries of God?

The Apostle Paul reminds Timothy, very fearfully of certain things which lay right at the root of his own life and his service to the Lord. For example, he says in *1 Timothy 1:18*, "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;" (K.J.V). Paul refers here to the anointing for life and ministry - the great principle, truth and foundation of his life and work. He says, "Remember where thou began in your life. It all began with an anointing in your life. That is the foundation and root for your service unto the Lord." Again in *1 Timothy 6: 20* he writes, "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babbling's, and oppositions of science falsely so called: (K.J.V)" Here also Paul refers to something that happened early in Timothy's life. He warns Timothy to guard and hold on to it. In *2 Timothy 1:6* he writes, "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. (K.J.V)" The Amplified Bible says, "That is why I would remind you to stir up (rekindle the embers of, fan the flame of, and keep burning) the (gracious) gift of God, (the inner fire) that is in you by means of the laying on of my hands (with those of the elders at your ordination)". Another translation says, "Keep constantly blazing the gift of God which is in you".

In all these expressions, Paul is calling up the past, calling up the foundations, calling up on what has been, Paul brings out some things that had taken place or happened in the early stages of Timothy's life. He desired to take Timothy back to the very beginnings. This is the reason for Paul to recall the past to Timothy. In other words, he says to Timothy, "This has to be reinforced within you, Timothy. You have to consolidate the foundations that have been laid in the past. You got to be confirmed in the face of the present tendencies and perils, the present course of things. In the face of the present negative situations, and the course of things, these things have to be once again confirmed and reinforced in your life. You need to be re-established in the things in which you had a beginning."

Beloved, *the only way for spiritual restoration is to recover the fundamental and initial realities.* What does that mean? It relates to the need for a pure work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. It simply says that everything at the beginning came by the Spirit and everything was by the anointing. The

Apostle Paul cautions Timothy and says, “ you stand where you are because of that original anointing. That work the Holy Spirit did in you and with you. Your ministry and service so far has been because of the Holy Spirit.” The tendency and the threat today, is to depart from that basis. Thus another basis of things may come in which is not essentially spiritual but something else. Restoration had to be wholly by the Spirit and the Spirit alone. The only way for total recovery is to reclaim and regain these fundamental and basic realities.

Every time deterioration and decline takes place, God’s method of recovery is not by bringing out certain truths from the Bible, but by bringing about a fresh and new revelation of the Son. An unveiling and a representation of the Son. This is very important. *God’s recovery is always through the unveiling of the Son.*

The letters of Paul to Timothy were written much before the Gospel of John was written. Nevertheless, we tend to think that they were written later, because in the Bible they follow after the Gospels. The letters to Timothy were Paul’s last letters. The Church was already beginning to decline when Paul wrote to Timothy. Even the brothers in leadership in different churches did not display a high quality of the life of Christ. That is why Paul thought it necessary to tell Timothy what qualifications were required for bishops and deacons. The Church was already on the downward path spiritually.

Many extraneous things had entered the Church. The Apostle John wrote John’s Gospel, the three letters of John and the book of Revelation, much after the letters that Paul had written to Timothy. I do not know if you have grasped this. If you go by chronology, you have to place the gospel of John right at the end! Do you see what it implies! The gospel of John was *written when this other kind of Christianity had almost become full grown, the other kind of Christianity that is not spiritual but natural.* When John wrote the Gospel, the churches in Asia Minor were well on the way to spiritual decline. This is the precise reason why John felt the need to write to the churches again. The so-called fourth gospel (of John) was written to answer to the need for restoration. The Spirit of God burdened John to write it when the Church had back-slided and lost much of the anointing. The weakened and crippled Church had already made an entrance upon the scene. We should read the Gospel of John with this background. This will give us a clearer understanding of the burden of the Spirit at that time. One cannot really reckon the burden of John and understand his message without knowing this setting and framework. There is a tremendous call for spirituality, which emerges from the pages in John’s writings, because the burden of the Spirit at that time was to recover the churches from declension.

While the first three Gospels begin with the Christ at Bethlehem the Gospel of John, alone, begins with eternity. Everything here is special, heavenly and eternal in significance, not of earth and of time at all. There was so much that was natural, of the earth and of time in the Church that to recover the spirituality it was necessary to once again bring Jesus Christ into focus. This is the reason for John to have written a gospel of spirituality! Everything in the church is spiritual and heavenly. The Gospel of John shows that everything is of eternal significance. It was written when the Church had left her first love and lost her first position. When Christianity adapted a

different complexion from the original one it lost its place in God. The burden in this Gospel is to protect Christ the heavenly Man and bring true spirituality once again to the Church and God's people. Let us see this in some greater detail by considering this familiar verse. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. (John 3: 6, 7 (K.J.V))

Most of us are accustomed to this text, yet only a few, know the depths of this verse. Though we use this verse in bringing others to salvation, yet there is an underlying mystery, power and potency in it that we often miss or take for granted. We often think we know this portion of the Scripture well, yet its deeper truth and reality eludes us. We do not know it as we ought to, even though we may have been born again and received a measure of His life experientially.

This gospel was written *when the Church had left her first love, her first position, when Christianity had taken on an altogether different complexion from what it had been at the beginning.* And this chapter three is the *enunciation of a fundamental principle of the Christian life.* Jesus told Nicodemus that he had to be born from above. He told him not to marvel at this because it was something he could not know and understand humanly for it was something of the Spirit. Beloved, it is to be a work of the Spirit. This is something mysterious and enigmatic to many. Many feel that they knew this chapter. Every evangelist turns to this chapter. We think we know these verses and know what it implies. Many may be even wearied with the name Nicodemus. And yet, I do not exaggerate, please believe me, I speak the truth when I say that I come back to that Gospel of John, after having known it, read it, studied it, spoken of it for several years, I come to that place and conviction that I have not really grasped it. I was broken and dealt with in my inner man by the Spirit of God. The Apostle John says "*that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*" and you find a period or a full stop. And that means, 'that's it'! What is born of the Spirit is spirit and there is nothing more to that matter. This scripture surely humbles a man. We have to acknowledge our incapacity I feel that the Church, God's people have not grasped this precious Word and principle. It is impossible for the present situation amongst Christians and in Christianity to exist, if the third chapter of John is really understood in the Spirit. Beloved, there is a risk here, touching those things which you think, you know. We need a revelation and understanding by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God should initiate and work in our lives. Today, everything has moved out of the realm of the Spirit. It is no more the person of Christ, God's people have moved into themes, things and doctrines instead of coming to the Person. There are numerous themes and subjects in the Bible like the kingdom of God, sanctification, eternal life, victorious life, overcoming life, the second coming of Christ etc. These are but a few subjects, truths as they are called which have been taken up, developed out of the Scriptures and have become things which people are very much occupied with. So certain people have taken up themselves around the teachings on sanctification. They are the sanctificationists. Thus it becomes an '*ist*' or '*ism*'. Others hive off and they are bound by the hedge of the Second Adventism, the Lord's coming,

prophecy and all that. So we get many groups like that in the present times in which we are living.

Beloved, what is the Kingdom of God? If you get right into the gospel, you will find that the Kingdom of God is nothing else but Christ. No one can know the Kingdom of God without first knowing Christ. Therefore if you are living in Christ, you are in the kingdom of God! (“the kingdom of God is within you.” *Luke 17:21*). As you give in to the Holy Spirit you will learn Christ and come to understand what the kingdom is in every detail. The kingdom is not something in the first place. The kingdom when it becomes something universal, it will be the expression and the manifestation of Christ. That is all. You come to the kingdom in and through Christ and the same is true in everything else.

What is sanctification? It is not a doctrine, it is not an ‘it’ as many people have made it to be. Sanctification is a Person. It is Christ. ‘He is made unto us sanctification’ (*I Corinthians 1:30*). If you are in Christ and if the Holy Spirit is teaching you Christ, then you are brought into a knowledge of sanctification and if that is not true in you, you may have a theory and a doctrine of sanctification. Many people, unfortunately, miss the Man for the doctrine. They consider sanctification to be a doctrine rather than realising that He is our sanctification, as the Word says. They convert the Person into a subject or a thing. This is the danger that we can succumb to also. Beloved, the Holy Spirit is not teaching us ‘things’ or doctrines. The teaching of sanctification and other such doctrines as a ‘thing’ has brought many Christians into difficulties and confusion. Men have turned it all into a ‘thing’ instead of keeping Christ as the centre of all things.

What is the Second Coming of the Lord? “When he shall come to be glorified *in his* saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.” (*2 Thessalonians 1:10*). This talks of the life of the Lord coming into His fullness in a people inwardly but many preachers, who talk of the Second Coming, are caught up only with the outward things. They are only interested in what is going to happen in Jerusalem, in the temple, and in countries like Iraq and Iran. Yes, there will be a manifestation of the signs of the times, but they will happen within and among God’s people first. *Beloved, Adventism is the consummation of something that has been going on in an inward way.* How then do I best know that the coming of the Lord draws nigh? *Not best of all by prophetic signs but by what is going on within the heart of the Lord’s people.* The best of the ‘signs of the time’ is what the Holy Spirit is doing in His own people. When the millennium was about to begin, somebody wrote and asked me what the spiritual interpretation of the year 2000 was. This was the subject that seemed to be uppermost in the thoughts of believers in those days! This clearly shows that spirituality has been reduced to some ‘things’, some subjects and some unusual events. We all need a deliverance from such ‘things’, themes and subjects. Even a person in ministry can be sidetracked and miss the Man! I thank God that I am experiencing a deliverance and a liberation within from the pull of such things. Over the past few years, the Lord has released me from the pull of themes and subjects and extraneous ‘things’. My cry, therefore, has been to experience the reality of the Son in every sphere of my life. The Holy Spirit would like to do such a work in all of us. In every activity, be it fasting, prayer,

Bible study or worship, our centre must be Him and Him alone. I am reminded of a preacher who was called to preach at a retreat centre. He arrived early and sat on the platform behind the pulpit, waiting for his turn to preach. He heard all that the earlier preacher, had to say concerning the Second Coming of the Lord, of the prophecies and the signs of the times. He observed how enthusiastically the people were listening and noting every detail, although all that the preacher had to say was something external and objective. The preacher took his time to talk about Palestine, about prophecies, the building of a temple by the antichrist and the signs of the times. He showed several charts that fascinated the audience and held them captive to every word he uttered. Finally the preacher ended his message. And the people were waiting for more and their notebooks were ready. The man of God, who had been waiting for his turn to speak, came to the pulpit. The Lord reminded him of the Scripture in 1 John 3:3 — “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. He began his address to the congregation by saying, “If your hope rests upon the coming of the Lord, then as the Scripture says, you should purify yourself as He is pure.” Upon hearing this, the people began to gradually close their notebooks and put away their pens! He saw the interest of the hearers waning down. The people had no desire to hear about the Man, they were enthusiastic about ‘things’. When he ended his message the people were quick to move out of the hall and were glad that it was over! Beloved, this is the kind of spirituality we have amongst Christians today!

It is the Lord and the Holy Spirit who would bring us back to Himself and it is not after all coming back to nonessentials, to elementary, but to come back to Christ. It is coming on to the only basis upon which the Holy Spirit can really accomplish God’s will. If we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives, He will show us what true spirituality is and what is just counterfeit.

Beloved, we need to be honest about our own spiritual condition. Are you interested only in spiritual ‘things’, ‘themes’, ‘truths’ etc.? God is a God of recovery. He will recover provided we have a deep desire and concern for Him. Is there a deep longing deep within you? Do you miss the presence of the Lord? Do you experience the absence of the Lord, though He is present in our midst? How terrible it is to miss Him when He is here! However, that is the reality in many lives. Unless we are honest we cannot be truly spiritual, for spirituality is, first of all, a reality. This spirituality has tremendous power because it is wholly of the Spirit. What is born of the Spirit is spiritual!