

# HE MAKES ALL THINGS NEW

Volume 29

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Greetings in the name of our risen Lord, Jesus Christ. A couple weeks ago we celebrated the most important event in the history of the world – the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Mary and I, on our way to Georgia to spend a few days with my children and grandchildren, stopped at a church in Greenville, SC to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. What a celebration it was! The church had a large choir with a full orchestra. The music was heavenly. How glorious the service was, as we worshipped and felt the presence of the risen Jesus. The pastor topped it all off with a very good message. Mary and I left excited and energized! We had celebrated Easter, Resurrection Sunday, in the presence of the resurrected Jesus.

A few days later we're back at home, back to the stressed filled jobs, back to the delays and detours from all the road work, back to the daily grind of life. Easter had left as quickly as it had come. I am so thankful that what Mary and I experienced on Easter Sunday is not relegated to one simple day on the calendar. We are made to experience the transforming power of the risen Jesus in our daily existence.

The writer of Hebrews shows us how it's possible to experience the power of the resurrection in everyday life. He does this in the form of a prayer. *Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever.* Amen. Hebrews 13:20-21 (RSV)

There are two things the author is praying for in this prayer – that those he is praying for will be equipped and transformed so they can do the Father's will and be pleasing in His sight. I am praying for you today, dear reader, that God will equip and transform you in such a way that others will wonder why you are the way you are. Then when they ask why, you can tell them, "Because He is Risen."

Howard Isom

## FURNACE FUELS FAITHFULNESS

We, the Church, say we dislike how the world looks up to many before God, but we all believe we could do a few things better than whomever we have placed on a pedestal in a church, nation, or family. I want to look at a few accounts of lives of mortals that God chose to dwell with and use. I'm writing about men found in the Bible who were great heroes but messed up. I want us to see ourselves in these men, but more, notice God's deeper delight and character and plan in His moving and working in their lives. We see that their mistakes were never the end of their lives, as ours are not. All our reactions to our own sin are not always productive or right, but God is

truly good and proves it with His presence and plans which we didn't really mess up and He never stopped moving. We are the same and have the same faith that these men had because we have the good, ancient God Who, despite our fear of our weaknesses and our pride, comes close as a gentle voice and as a Warrior on our behalf.

2 Samuel 24 & 1 Chronicles 21- It seems David's comfy spot was in turmoil, battle, and hiding from man. He knew how to cling to God and praise Him when there was no water or food in the wilderness (2 Samuel 23:15, 17:29; Psalm 63:1). He had strength, for he, at times may have been the only one of his 600 loyal men to understand God's timing (1 Samuel 26:6-11). David became worldly wealthy, which is not a bad thing, but there is some secret to contentment when in prosperity (Philippians 4:12). In 2 Samuel 24, corresponding with 1 Chronicles 21, David, as king, takes a census to boast of great military strength. It seems so out of character for him, who trusted in God while in the desert. He was prosperous in world's standards now, and it's amazing how he didn't boast and rely on riches most of his life. Instead, we see a man who desired to give riches to God's house and make a name for Him with all his talents most of his life. David may have been more advanced in years at the time of his census and felt left out of military excursions and even creating victories for God. How to live in peace can be difficult.

David quickly realized it was never the experience or situation he needed to draw near to, but the God over all and in all, who gives us graces where we are called (Ephesians 4:1-7). David unselfishly and humbly welcomed Adonai's prophets and council and judgment, understanding he was safest in God's hands, even in judgment, for "His mercies are very great (1 Chronicles 21:13)." Some kings became angry and jealous of prophets, but David understood God's creation of roles and praised God in whatever position he held.

Where God ended His judgment on David for this prideful sin is where the House of the Lord would be established, and David then concentrated on providing materials for the Temple, though he knew it was not his place to build this holy Place. What trust and contentment were provided to him as he learned to be present where he was in God's place in history. He understood the king's position is to serve and delight in the Almighty, and peace, shalom, is oneness with his God.

1 Kings 19 - Elijah was involved in a very famous event on Mt. Carmel, in which Elijah prayed simply to the living God and fire poured from heaven to minister to those serving other gods of the true living God and to give boldness to the Lord's prophets who were in hiding (1 Kings 18-19). After expending much strength Elijah became afraid of the wicked ruler's judgment upon him

and he fled into the wilderness. We say, "How foolish! Look at what the Lord just did!" Do we scrutinize ourselves when we do the exact same thing? Do we even look to Psalms filled with reminders of what the Lord has done (Psalm 77:11)? Or do we look to the past few minutes in our own lives when the Lord was fully faithful? Elijah cried to the Lord, "I am no better than my fathers." Don't we all know this feeling? We did something great, though silver wings of strength carried us and healed us (Psalm 68:13; Isaiah 40:31; Malachi 4:2), and then we become tired and fade like those around us who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13). But even Elijah's ability to be a prophet was a grace (Ephesians 3:8). It was good for Elijah to rest and rise and eat as the Lord told him to, for God was not finished with His holy vessel. After resting, Elijah still could not return from where he fled. He kept walking. And God provided this solitary journey and sustained him. The Spirit led Elijah to move forward to a holy mountain.

Many of us could be way better about moving forward even when we reason it can't be right. I fled. It's my fault. My guilt. My burden. But the same Spirit who led Elijah *forward* is the same Spirit who rescued my soul and mind from every burden (Psalm 68:19), and this Spirit who raised Christ Jesus from the dead *dwells* in my mortal body (Romans 8:11), and He lives to intercede for me (Hebrews 7:25; Psalm 16:10-11)!

Elijah got to speak with God and pour himself out, his thoughts and desires, and pick up God's thoughts and desires. God doesn't seem angry, but kind. And here, Elijah didn't need to be afraid or despair at God's power, but he repented and rested (Isaiah 30:15) where he was. Yes, I would've loved to have seen what would have happened at Jezreel, but *here* we are, wandering with the Lord's sustenance. God assured Elijah and us that evil would depart, and the gentle blowing and quiet voice is present. O Joy! And God didn't send Elijah straight home, but he was used to anoint kings and pick up a new prophet along the way! Lord, have me expect Your goodness! Thank You for the Sinai Spirit! Not about my fault, or running, or even my return, but His Presence! Just Jesus. (Psalm 46:10; Romans 2:4; Exodus 19:18; 2 Corinthians 3:12-18)

2 Chronicles 17-19 & 1 Kings 22:1-45 - A bold king of Judah, Jehoshaphat, "sought the God of his father, followed His commandments, and did not act as Israel did (2 Chronicles 17:4)." Jehoshaphat removed idols, the "high places", in his land in order for people to pay more attention to the true Lord. Though every nation surrounding Judah loved their idols, Jehoshaphat, with the dwelling Spirit, started the trend in his land to delight in Adonai's laws, and he understood the only way to peace is to obey the Lord, for He is good. Jehoshaphat appointed spiritual officials to educate the Judean people of God's desires. Much larger surrounding nations kept a sense of fear concerning Judah, for She was protected by the Lord

solely because She loved Her God and lived peaceably. Sounds like success to me.

Jehoshaphat eventually accumulated wealth and prestige and foolishly united Judah with Israel, under the rule of Israel's most wicked king, Ahab. I wonder if Jehoshaphat thought he could influence Ahab. If perhaps zeal for the Lord, but lack of obedience led him to what would be a spiritually dark place. Just my speculation. Jehoshaphat allied himself with Ahab in battle, which displeased the Lord, but as the custom was, Ahab consulted his many prophets who predicted victory in war to please their king, but Jehoshaphat was more familiar with servants of the most high God, therefore he asked for a prophet of Adonai in order to inquire of him concerning the soon-to-be battle. When Ahab reluctantly allowed Micaiah, God's chosen prophet, to speak, he knew Micaiah would predict destruction upon his troops, though they were words of warning from the Lord, full of conviction of the Holy Spirit, which I feel certain Jehoshaphat recognized. Why didn't Jehoshaphat heed Micaiah's sure prophecy, which was meant for protection, but choose to fight beside Ahab, king of wickedness? He knew to inquire of the Lord, but God wants doers of His Word (James 1:22-25) in order for His people to not be deceived and deluded. I wonder how he felt when the prophet was arrested. Did he feel regret or longing remembering the days he radically trusted God??

In battle, Jehoshaphat was pursued closely by the enemy, and he knew he had done wrongly. Instead of crying to the Lord as Elijah did, declaring that he deserved to die, Jehoshaphat cried to the Lord for *salvation*! He wanted life and sought the Lord, though he was *in the midst* of disobedience. And God did deliver him! He wanted to! It was miraculous, and Jehoshaphat knew it. In the midst of his glory, Jehoshaphat was crying for his own life, but before, seeking God's glory and might, he was defended and peaceful.

When a prophet sent by God met Jehoshaphat as he returned home where he should have been, Jehoshaphat welcomed the rebuke towards his unfaithfulness from this messenger after he made it home safely, and the king of Judah humbled himself before the Lord and was glad. Judah had fallen away from God after some time, so Jehoshaphat heeded this wake-up call and decided to begin reform again. He trusted in his living God, and with repentance and rest (Isaiah 30:15) he appointed godly leaders again over the land, reminding them that the Lord is with their every decision, so they may live peaceably. He seemed careful and excited, serving with love and fear. He was forgiven and wholehearted (Colossians 3:23-24). He decided as long as he was in charge, the nation would be God's people, to understand the Lord and draw near to Him. He understood our lives depend on repentance and being one with the King. And what a good and strategic time to repent. Surrounded by evil, Judah was protected and peaceful. What a time to praise! They used the time to

concentrate on higher things and honoring and helping those called to authoritative positions "...be ready in season and out of season." Jehoshaphat had to be intimate with his Lord to be so humble and comfy in his desire to see all the people be lifted up in the way God had planned for each one. Even more now with the Holy Spirit in us, the fulfilled promise and sacrifice empowering and securing us, we are so free to call to Jesus when we're nowhere near good enough. Don't wait to be good, but cry out chosen in His love and fellowship. "When I look at myself, I don't see how I can be saved. When I look at Christ, I don't see how I can be lost." -Martin Luther

Gratia Ford

## GOD'S DELIGHT

In Gratia's article above, she asks us to see ourselves in the Bible characters she is writing about. But even more than seeing ourselves in these characters, she encourages us to notice God's deeper delight, character, and plan in His moving and working in their lives.

Alan Redpath writes in the forward of his book, The Making of a Man of God, "The Bible never flatters its heroes. It tells us the truth about each one of them in order that, against the background of human breakdown and failure, we may magnify the grace of God and recognize that it is the delight of the Spirit of God to work upon the platform of human impossibilities. As we consider the record of Bible characters, how often we find ourselves looking into a mirror. We are humiliated by the reminder of how many times we have failed. Great has been our stubbornness but greater still has been His faithfulness. The conversion of a soul is the miracle of a moment; the manufacture of a saint is the task of a lifetime. It is the matchless marvel of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to take a life from the dunghill and set it among princes and cause a man who has sunk into the depths to cry to God, *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right Spirit within me.*"

As I read Gratia's article and what Alan Redpath had to say, I thought about Philippians 2:13 which reads *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure* (KJV). Some other translations put it like this; *For it is [not your strength, but it is] God who is effectively at work in you, both to will and to work [that is, strengthening, energizing, and creating in you the longing and the ability to fulfill your purpose] for His good pleasure* (Amplified Bible). *For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him* (NLT).

What an amazing truth, that God, the creator of the universe, is at work in us, creating in us, developing, and equipping us so that we can work out the salvation, (as Paul states in verse 12) that God has worked in us.

Let's look at the "who" in this verse. Verse 13 begins, "for it is God." That's the "who". God the Father. He is the one who is working in our lives. He uses God the Holy Spirit and the word of God to help us. But God the Father

is the author, the source, and the supplier of our sanctification. John MacArthur writes, "... as wonderful as it is to have talents humanly, as great as it is to be a part of the body of Christ and to have angelic assistance, that's not going to do it. It isn't that we are dependent on human pastors and teachers who have taught us the Word of God, and fed us like sheep, and led us as shepherds. As wonderful as that is, as blessed as it is to have those kinds of people ministering to us, the key to our spiritual progress is that God is the one at work in us. I'm grateful that there are other believers working on us. I'm grateful that there are angels working for us. I am grateful for pastors and teachers who are working, as it were, to shape us. But the thrill of all thrills is that it is God who is the one at work in us. God Himself is working out our sanctification."

So, what is God doing? *For it is God who is at work.* That's what God is doing: God is at work. This word for "work" is *energeo* – energy. God is energetic. God is full of energy. God is always energetically working in our lives. He is never inactive. He is always active. He is always involved. He is always engaged. Mary is always trying to help me with my grammar so that I can be a better speaker and a better writer. Like God, she has a long way and a lot of work to do in me. She tries to help me understand that the words we use matter and the tense we use our verbs in matters. For example, look at this verb for work. It is in the present tense. That's important and what it means is God is working every moment of every day in our Christian life. God didn't just start a work in us and then walk off to let us fend for ourselves. As one writer puts it, "God the Father has not walked off the project, He will complete what He begins." In fact, that's what Paul says in Philippians 1:6, *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.* God never takes a day off. I can stop and say Hallelujah right here!

Another author says, "God is constantly, ever and always at work in your Christian life and many times it will not feel like God is at work in your life, and at times you may even feel like, "God, where are You? God, You seem a long way away." Nevertheless, God is always on duty, God is always at work, he is constantly relentlessly at work in our lives to bring about our spiritual maturity. In fact, in John 15:1, Jesus said, *I am the true vine and My Father is the vinedresser*, and we are to abide in the Lord Jesus Christ who is the vine, but by this metaphor God the Father is our vinedresser who is continually lifting us up to greater exposure to the sun, who is continually pruning us and removing those things from our lives that are pulling us away from spiritual growth and maturity. God is ever and always at work in our Christian lives. He began it when he called us into the kingdom, when he regenerated us; but that wasn't the end, that was really just the beginning. God is intimately acquainted with everything that is going on in our lives from the inside out. He is like the potter who is shaping us and molding us into

the image of Christ. He is like the farmer who is cultivating the soil of our heart so that the word of God will spring forth and grow more fervently. God is upholding us, and he is sustaining us, and he is encouraging us, and he is convicting us, and he is challenging us, and he is comforting us. He is granting repentance. He is enlarging our faith. He is removing what is ungodly and he is fostering that which is Christ-like. God has to be doing this or we would never grow one iota in our spiritual lives. God is at work in our life. And he is in our life for good. And he is in our life to bring about a desired result.”

How this must have encouraged the Philippians to know that they were not on their own. Everything God has called them to do and holds them responsible to do, God will enable them to bring it to pass. It encourages me as well.

So where is God working? Our scripture verse says *in you*. God is at work in every true Christian. So, if you are a true Christian, he is at work in you. If you are not a Christian today, O how we plead that you will trust Christ as your personal saviour and allow Him to start this transforming work in you. Now note the word "in." This could not be any more personal. The idea is that God is at work inside of you. Steve Lawson writes “This is not something superficial that just lies on the external perimeter of our lives. God is at work in us in the very depths of our soul. God could not be any more on the inside of our lives than where he presently has set up shop to work. He is at work in our minds. He is at work in our hearts. He is at work in our desires. He is at work in our affections. He is at work in our wills. That is a comprehensive scope of the working of God inside of us. There's no closet. There's no back room that is off-limits to God working inside of us. There's no hidden compartment in our life that is off-limits for God to work. God is at work from the front door to the back door, from the main floor to the top floor, to the basement. God is at work from the roof all the way down to the foundation. God is at work in every single milli-inch in our lives.”

So how is God at work in us? Paul continues "both to will and to work." The idea here is God's will is moving our will and God's working in us is moving us to work. God is the cause; we are the effect. We need God to be at work to will and influence our will if we are to pursue what is right, and when he says "will" here, it takes in the desires, the affections, the ambitions that we would have. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his sermon on Philippians 2:13 writes, "Every good desire, every Christian thought, every Christian aspiration which I have is something that has been produced in me by God. God controls my willing. It is God who energizes my desires and my hopes and my aspirations and my thoughts. God stimulates it all." He goes on to say, "These desires for a fuller and better and more perfect Christian life are not self-generated. They are not self-produced. When you have a desire to do something good or a desire to pray, it is God who is

energizing it in your will. God is bringing his great purpose to pass in our Christian life and by controlling our will, our desires, our thoughts and our aspirations God persuades our will and gives us holy desires."

Legalism says, "It's all me." The Bible's view is, "It originates in God." Now Paul goes on to say, *and to work*. Not only is God's will influencing my will, but God's work is influencing my work. He says, *to will and to work*. There's nothing passive here. If we are to grow as a Christian, there must be hard work that is going on. Now this work is God causing us to work. It refers to our work in sanctification. All working out of salvation on our part is the effect of God working in us. God's work is the cause, our work is the effect. God's work is the root, our work is the fruit. God is a working God and we're a piece of work, and we are the arena of his work. We are the construction site of his work, and God every day is at work bringing us along in holiness.

John MacArthur writes, “As God is working, he is giving us a holy discontent of those things that we need to let go, those things that are holding us back, those things that are polluting our spiritual lives. God is giving us a holy discontent and at the same time he is also giving us holy aspirations for that which we must have to grow. He is increasing our aspirations, our holy aspirations for the word of God, for prayer, for Christian fellowship, for meditation on the word of God, for corporate worship, for private worship, for fellowship with other believers and to carry out ministry. That is God at work in our soul, increasing our holy aspirations while at the same time giving us holy dissatisfaction with those things that are off-limits or hold us back from our spiritual lives. That is God at work.”

Let's look at the why. Note the last four words of verse 13 – *for His good pleasure*. Here is why God is at work. Here is why God is working so that we will work out our salvation *for His good pleasure*. Lawson writes, “God does this because God wants to do this. God does this because God loves holiness and because God hates sin. God does this because God loves conformity to his Son Jesus Christ, and God hates the spirit of this world. God does this work in us in sanctification for his good pleasure. It brings great pleasure to God to see us grow like flowers that are rooted and grounded in his grace. It brings great pleasure to God to see the image, His image restored in us. It brings great pleasure to God to see the image of his Son brought to bear in our lives. It brings great pleasure to God. Do you know what? It should bring great pleasure to us as well. All that God does he does for his own pleasure and so God is at work in us not begrudgingly, but with greatest pleasure to bring about the desired result. God works in us so that we will be working out our salvation because it pleases Him.”

Gratia Ford and Alan Redpath both talk about God's delight in working in us. In Psalm 18 David talks about how God had worked in his life. In verse 19 he writes, *He*

*brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me (KJV).*

What a glorious thought and truth that God would delight in us. He delights in you dear reader. I'm so thankful that He is not begrudgingly working in me but takes great pleasure and delight in bringing me to the place He desires in my life.

Lawson says that this truth should bring great pleasure to us as well. Does it? Or does our often lukewarm approach to Christian living say otherwise?

Howard Isom

## **GOD AT WORK**

Excerpts from text message we recently received from one of our incarcerated readers.

I give thanks to God for placing me here and for directing my path. While at one facility, I had asked Dad to help me pray for Christian fellowship, or just brothers in Christ I could lean on around the camp. Fellowship was a missing piece for me; and one I neglected most of my life, but as I asked God, he provided! I was moved to another facility which has one of the best, if not the best, group of men who are passionate about learning, being disciplined and used for God's purpose! I have never felt more a part of something (apart from my family and our ministry). I am so excited to see what God has in store here, and beyond and I offer myself willingly to his service. So much more I could share, but I'll leave you with this testimony... A couple days after arriving here at this facility, I was invited to a Bible study in the dorm, by a guy (whom I'd already developed a "hypocrite" opinion of). Nevertheless, I joined the Bible study and got a lot out of it. I kept showing up every evening, until, eventually, it was just "the hypocrite" and I.

Long story short, God really started churning at my heart and soul during service Sunday morning, and by 5 o'clock Bible study the brother and I were sitting here crying together; confirming to one another what God had been saying to us individually! It was like nothing I've ever experienced Howard! Undeniably from God!! Just continue to pray for me man, and for this brother, and our congregation here at this facility.

My prayers lately have been for an awakening of the (too long suppressed), Holy Spirit in my life! Trust, God has been giving the increase as I step toward him and away from the things of this world!! I knew/know that the Holy Spirit was a missing link in my life and is a necessary element for living my life in obedience to God. A fresh conviction has awakened in me, and with guidance from the Holy Spirit I am starving the flesh in those areas of life the enemy has been ruler of for far too long! I'm growing stronger and stronger man. I know God is at work in my life and on this camp.

More directly, I am praying for spiritual discernment, and that the authority of God's Word/authority in the Holy Spirit, would rise in me more and more. I want that boldness as a man of God to be in me, that I might 1.

Know when the enemy is afoot, and when the enemy is using the Word or other things of God to creep in, and 2. to rebuke the enemy where he stands!! Ask me a couple months/years ago and I would have bet you I could discern between the voice/word/work of God and that of Satan, but now, since rededicating my life to God, the enemy has never been more deceptive. From that Sunday morning on, the enemy has been SO angry, and has targeted me with thoughts of indecision, unbelief, low self-worth, etc... I am on to his tactics though! :-) For I have overcome by the blood of the lamb and the words of my testimony! Amen. I could share all day brother, but I'll close for now.

Thank you for your continued prayers. You are ever in mine! I recently received a digital copy of the newsletter and I thank God for your ministry.

Jordan, Currently Incarcerated

We are now offering the Newsletter via email. If you prefer to receive it by email rather than regular mail, please send your name and email address to [mercy@hemakesallthingsnewministry.com](mailto:mercy@hemakesallthingsnewministry.com)

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