

A Powerful Cord

Iverna Tompkins

As transcribed by Jane Vaughn

Have you ever looked at the number three as it is discovered in the Scriptures? Numbers are very important in the Bible, revealing many different truths. There are a lot of “threes” from which we could learn much. Three is the number of the Trinity – signifying Their unity and agreement. Certainly we’ve noticed this: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – the Triune God. The God that we know and serve is not three gods, but one God. He is God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit – three Persons in One. You can’t break through that unity! That’s a strong steadfast – unwavering, unflinching, firm, solid, steady, stable and secure! Three-in-One is a very strong statement about Who our God is.

Also, I’m rather confident you have noticed throughout Jesus’ ministry, there was a *three-fold cord*. It went something like this: Jesus taught those who had a desire to move into the Kingdom; He preached to those who were unconverted; and He healed all who were sick. In every Gospel record – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – we see that *three-fold cord* in the ministry of Jesus.

First John 5:7 says, “*For there are three that bear record in heaven: the Father, the Word, [which is the Son - cf. Jn. 1:1-3;14], and the Holy Ghost. And these three are one.*” Verse 8 continues: “*And there are three that bear witness in the earth: they are the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one.*”

We know the truth of those verses. But have you seen that *positional truth* deals with the position that we have in Christ, that is translated to practical truth when we appropriate or apply it to our living levels. In other words – the intangible positional truth becomes a strong reality when we make it relevant in our understanding of life. Essentially, there’s a three-fold cord operating.

The Resurrection of Christ – that was the third day. Further, His resurrection is a fact of sacred history; it is sound theology; and it is a fact of spiritual experience: “*Christ in you*” – **now** – “*the hope of glory*” (Col.1:27).

Look at this one. Our share in Christ’s Rapture is three-fold. His position of strength is “*where Christ sitteth on the right hand*” (Col.3:1); His position of satisfaction is “*set your affection on things above and not on things on the earth*” (Col.3:2); His position of security – “*He is hid with Christ in God*” (Col.3:3).

Our share in Christ’s Return is three-fold. We are to share in the life of Christ now. Colossians 3, verse 4 says, “*When Christ, who is our life...*” He is “our life” right now – our very existence is *in Him*. The verse goes on showing that we share in His lordship – the lordship of Christ – “*When He... shall appear, then shall [we] also appear with Him in glory*” (Col.3:4). And Paul also reveals that we are to share in His eternity – “*So shall we ever be with the Lord*” (1Thes.4:17c).

Now, I’ve rapidly run through these examples of various kinds of threes to show you the importance of “3” in the Word of God because I want us to turn to a specific psalm – Psalm 31 – to see the significance of three. Rather than entertain you with a sermon, I want to walk through this psalm with you, one step at a time. Too often we merely look for a sermon format when we study a given passage: a story, the background or history of it, and then an application of the truth discovered (there’s three again! ☺). This time, I want to walk with you through the verses and show you another three-fold cord. So, that’s the title of this message: “A Powerful Cord – the cord of three” (cf. Eccl.4:12).

If you take one strand of a twisted cord and separate it from the other two – alone, by itself, there’s more weakness than strength. A single strand can be broken easily. Twist two strands together and the resultant cord is stronger. But when you wrap a third one, adding another strand, there is much greater strength in the combination (can we say: “in the unity?”).

Maybe – just maybe – that’s what Jesus meant when He said, “If any two of you shall gather together in My Name, I’ll make it three – I’ll be there in the midst of them. *‘If any two of you shall agree as touching anything’* – P.S. *‘in My Name’* – I’ll show up! ☺ And that’ll make it three.” (Mt.18:19,20).

God wants us to see something important in this whole concept of threes. I believe the truth He is revealing is this: that our individual weakness in walking with the Lord is because usually we only do it one strand at a time. For example: there are times when we *really* praise. We wake up in the morning just singing His praises. And we praise Him all day long. Things are just so good!

Then there are times when we *really* have faith. Oh, yes, we like to *feel* faith. There are times when you just – FEEL it! We love that! “Alright – name it! Bless God! I believe it!” And you’re just full of faith – until the next morning. ☺

But then there are other times when we *really* pray. We just beseech the throne of grace (Heb.4:16). And we’re even bold about our approach.

But what we need to learn is that it takes those three things – woven together consistently – to be strong enough to hold us when things of life get a little “sticky.” **Faith – Prayer – Praise** (with Worship, which you really cannot separate from sincere, heartfelt Praise).

I think it is interesting to watch as we read through the psalms. The majority of them were written by David and we’ve all studied or at least heard stories about him. He is such a favorite of ours because he’s so honest. So, studying the life of David is a choice many of us have undertaken. In such a study, we discover David didn’t have a “cushy” life! He went through a lot of different kinds of experiences.

He really wasn’t a great wonderful *Christian* or exemplary believer or a model of perfection as we would speak of that today. In fact, because his sins were not the silent kind that could be hidden or easily disguised, many churches would have thrown him out at the first one revealed! ☺ His sins were just blatant – right out in the open! The thing that makes you love David is that **he prayed the same way he sinned**. Think on that... you’ll see it.

Ah, ha! You did get it, didn’t you? Right out in the open, nothing withheld in crying out before God – just as he so openly sinned. If you don’t see this reality when we read his psalms, you are missing some important things. Come on, tell the truth. Have you ever read one of David’s psalms – to yourself – and passed over some of it because you felt you just shouldn’t say that – to God? Some of the things David says. . . You know what I’m talking about. When he seems to just shout it out: “Where are You, God? I’ve been calling on You night and day!” ☺ You can totally feel his exasperation!

Then some of us try to hide all that: “Oh, I just skip over *those* verses and... I would never say *that* to God.” No, you’d want to though, but settle for just thinking it! ☺ Then I can just imagine His response to that ploy – that hypocrisy: “Right. That’s why you don’t hear from Me. ☺ Because you’re not honest enough to press in for an answer.”

David begins this particular psalm by saying, “*In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust.*” There’s his faith. And your faith is to be right there too. No matter what happens – no matter if God does what you tell Him to (in-Jesus’-Name, of course – and we call that “praying”☺) or, no matter if He prolongs sending an answer... no matter what the situations of life... always we can say, “*In Thee do I put my trust!*”

When you’re going through a personal trial and someone else close to you isn’t – they are most disgusting to be around. Don’t you find that to be true? ☺ That’s because they think they have every answer you ever needed and begin to sound so super-spiritual: “Well, you just have to learn to trust God.” Or, “Well, I’m surprised you let *this* thing get you down. I mean, He’s God, isn’t He? Is God different from yesterday?” And your honest reply is: “Yeah, a little! It *feels* like it anyway.” ☺

We need to learn that **our faith is not in jeopardy because of our honesty!**

It's so easy to pray what we think He wants to hear – those lofty, holy sounding prayers: “Blessed, Holy, Ancient of Days – we beseech Thy throne this night, in the Name of Thine only Begotten Son...” And that's all true – and yes, we do come to Him. But I think, sometimes He looks down toward us and wonders in total amazement: “What? Who are you? Who are you really?” ☺ We need simply to be honest in our prayers and say, “Father, it's been a rotten day! (in Jesus' Name).” ☺ You see – faith says, “*In Thee do I trust!*”

I exercise my faith in prayer – all the time! I trust Him – all the time! No matter what my day may bring. That truth doesn't mean I always *feel* victorious. It just means I am victorious – because I am in Him and He is in me and He's the One who said I am an overcomer! (1Jn.5:4,5; Rom.8:37; 1Jn.2:13,14). [Actually, I prefer “*feel*.” but I don't get to vote! ☺]

So, when I'm around Christians who are *feeling* their faith or they're *feeling* their victories, I have a tendency to – fake it! ☺ When they come and flaunt: “How ya doin', brother? Ohhhh, bless God!! He's good. Isn't He good?” We think we have to be there too: “Oh, yeah, that's what I was about to say! ‘He's good!’” ☺

It is no wonder that prayer is difficult for so many people. It's because they don't understand they can be real with God! That's why the Bible says, “*Pour out your heart before Him*” (Ps.62:8). You see, David says, “*I put my trust in You – now, Lord, don't let me ever be ashamed!*” (Ps.31:1)

He's not talking about, “Don't let *me* be ashamed – for the bad things *I do*.” He's talking more about this: “I've told everyone I put my trust in You. Don't mess with it now! ☺ I want it to be revealed – to be apparent – to be obvious. I want people to see that You do take care of me – that You're with me – that You're faithful to Your Word! I want to be a living witness to that faithfulness.” But don't fake it, my Friend! You might be able to fool the people standing nearby, but God knows the difference.

“*Bow down Thine ear to me;*” (he's praying) “*Deliver me speedily. Be thou my strong rock, for an house of defense to save me. For Thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore, for Thy Name's sake, lead me, and guide me*” (vv2,3). For Thy Name's sake.

He's praying honestly and sincerely: “People know I'm a believer, God. People know I trust in You. People know I declare: ‘You are my supply! You are my Healer! You are my God! You are the One I adore!’ Now, Lord, don't let me down – in front of them! For *Your* Name's sake!’” Not for my pride's sake. There's a very fine line here – or, the other side of the coin, if you will. The truth is, we don't often recognize or acknowledge our honest motivation – in prayer. “Lord, I told everyone this and so I want it proved.”

A few weeks ago, I was sitting here in the service on a given Wednesday night and Pastor was praying for some specific people at the altar. Then he said to the general audience: “If you have a physical illness or a disease or a problem, just stand.” So I stood. For a couple of years, I've had a very severe and painful situation with my knee. So I obediently stood, recognizing the pastor's directive as from God. Now Pastor was praying for another lady at the altar. He wasn't even looking back into the congregation, but as he prayed for her, he paused and spoke these words: “Sister Iverna, the Lord is healing that knee right now.” It was like a fiery arrow whizzing directly at me! And I said, “YEA--YUSSSS! I receive that Word!” ☺

That was Wednesday. The following Sunday morning – now I haven't seen him do this before or since – but in that Sunday morning service, Pastor said, “If anyone has a testimony of what the Lord has done...” Well, I wasn't totally without pain from Wednesday to Sunday, but it was a whole lot better than it had been. So the Lord said to me, “You go up there, Iverna, and testify.”

Now, here was my first thought (since I am a woman of faith and power ☺): I said to the Lord, “What if it doesn’t really get well?” Now think that one through. ☺ But God repeated His command: “Go – and testify.” So, I came to the front to testify. If you were here that morning, you heard me say, “I’ve had less pain since Wednesday than I have had in two years and I’m thanking the Lord for that healing.”

It lasted for two more days – less pain. And then suddenly I was inflicted with more severe pain than I had had before. This new pain went all the way down my leg from the lower part of my back. This was the kind of pain that I hadn’t had in all the two years before this time... and it lasted with that severity for several days... many days.

Now – what are you going to do with that? Is God the Healer or not? “Yeah – well, the reason you were hit with such pain was because you were *doubting* when you said, ‘Lord, what if it doesn’t work?’” (cf. Jas.1:6). Oh, Bologna! I don’t manipulate God with the *strands* of whether I say it right or not.

He is Jehovah Rapha! He is my Healer! And when I hurt, that doesn’t change the fact: He is my Healer! I will still testify that there’s a divine healing taking place! In fact, I was glad for the tense of the verb Pastor used: “The Lord is healing that knee!” Not: “it is healed.” He declared, “God is healing that knee.” And of *that* I am certain!

The story is, every day since has its own adventure. Some days are worse than others and some days are better. But every day I say, “You’re healing me, Lord. Oh, thank You that You are presently healing me!” I don’t make it happen “magically” because I speak it. I speak it because – I believe – I know – I trust – it’s happening. And I’m truly weary of the superstition that is coming from Christians – that they think that they can make a thing happen by the *power of the tongue*.

Wait now. I’m not speaking against the *fact* that there is power in the tongue – but it works mostly in the negative (Pr.6:2; Jas.3). You start a little something negative or critical with your tongue, or ask just the right questions with just the right tone of voice, and that thing will spread like wild fire. That’s *creative* power alright.

But when God says to me in His Word, and then He speaks through His servant to me and affirms: “*I am the Lord that healeth thee*” (Ex.15:26), I can declare that truth unashamedly. But, when you say to me, “How are you feeling, Iverna?” I need to say, “Honestly, not as well as I’d like.” Can you hear the fine line of distinction there? I am declaring with confidence what God says is the Truth about any given situation yet I am also being candid (honest and transparent) about the current condition without being discouraged over the seemingly slow progress being made toward full healing.

Do you understand why I’m saying all of this? It’s because the world today is laughing at the church! Unfortunately, we’ve been taught *superstition* in the name of faith. It is important that we believe the Word of God, confess His Word, and so on. But it is equally important that we are honest and real and open! And that begins by being truthful with God. “Lord, You said You’re healing me – I do not doubt that! But, I would like very much to *experience* – it! ☺ I want a total release here, Lord. A physical manifestation of the healing.”

Why do we need to do that? Because if you don’t ask – what does the Word say? “*You have – not ...*” (Jas.4:3) “*because you ask not.*” Oh, well, why would He ever say that? Let me help you here. God tells us that because, if I’m claiming: “I have it!-I have it!-I have it! *I have it!* I have *it!* It’s mine! I have it! I’m healed!” He just says, “Fine. Leave her alone.” ☺

Did you read the New Testament parable of the widow that just drove the judge nuts? (It’s worded a little different than that in the King James. ☺). I’m referring to the *importunate woman* (Lk.18:1-8). She just kept coming back and coming back! Making the same request – for justice. Persistence in making her

request known. That's what I'm doing as I pray about the healing. I'm just there "*making my request known unto Him*" (Phil.4:6).

You see, I know about the Greek present tense verbs in Matthew 7. The Greek is different from our own present tense. It honestly means to "*Ask and keep on asking...seek and keep on seeking...Knock and keep on knocking...*" (v.7). Jesus continues the instruction in verse 8: "*For everyone that asketh*" ("and keeps on asking" as indicated by the use of the Greek verb tense) *receiveth...*"

Jesus illustrates the truth – even though the parable in Luke 18 actually contrasts our heavenly Father with an unjust judge (Lk.18:6). The judge in the story says, "Oh, her again." ☺ "YES! Here I am – again! 'In the Name of Jesus, I claim my healing.' You promised! And I want – total healing!"

You have a right to pray! I've prayed for my children – my grandchildren! I pray that way for them, claiming the promises of God on their behalf! Every day of my life – I pray the Word of God that fits their situations and mine! But – don't lie about it. So, when someone inquires, "Well, how is this?" and "How is...?" or "How is that?" I sincerely report, "It's not good just yet, but it's going to get better."

David prayed the same way. He said, "*Now, Lord, don't let me down. I'm declaring Your Word!*" And then he continues in Psalm 31, verse 4, "*Pull me out of the net that they have laid privly for me, for Thou art my strength.*"

Who are these "they?" You know, our first thought is to try to identify who the people are. Jack or Jane or Helen or Bob. "*They* have laid a net – a snare – secretly, they're trying to trip – me – up."

That's our big problem too – in the church. We're not smart enough to know we don't "*wrestle against flesh and blood*" (Eph.6:12). It's not Jack or Jane or any other person! It is the spirit of the enemy that used Jack or Jane or Paul or Harry. The enemy used those people to trip me up and if I try to deal with the people, I will be tripped! And I will trip them in the process.

But if I recognize a fact: that "Judy would never do that on her own, some spirit has prompted her. I break the power of that thing, in Jesus' Name! I loose her from that!" Then – I get victory for her and for me as well! Hello. Because, you see, we can't love one another if we're blaming one another for every little thing that happens. The people around us, the ones that seem to be are not the enemy – the Enemy is our adversary! (cf. 1Pet.5:8,9).

The only thing that is going to make us winners – "us" being the Church – the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ – I mean, *real winners* – not just: "Okay, we put in a balcony – we can get another thousand people in this building." I'm talking about WINNING – really winning. Winning for Christ – saving the lost – furthering the Kingdom of God – increasing His rule and reign – throughout the world!

I'm talking about the *nations*. All the nations need the powerful truth of God! Jesus said, "*I am... the truth!*" (Jn.14:6). The church says, "We'll protect Your Name – by lying!" Now, Church, we need to think long and hard about that last statement. We wonder why the world says, "I don't want any part of 'religion.'" The rest of their unspoken thought is: "When you can be as real with me as David was with His God, then I can trust you." Or maybe it's: "Don't be so pious with your preachings and then live on a different level."

I'm sure some of you are absolutely startled by my frank honesty. But there are others of you who are nodding in agreement thinking, "Oh, yes. I needed someone to say that." We have to face the truth, my friends. We have to do something drastic about our *public witness to the world!*

David tells God the truth all the time! He says, "Lord, they're trying to trip me up! You're the only One that can save me from this – persecution – or, this disaster – or, this chase." Oh, Church, we have to learn to deal with the spirit behind the attacks – the evil spirit – the evil motivation. We have to come to know

that **God is for us** and the enemy of our souls is behind the attacks, the assaults that come our way. We must see that he will use any person he can find as an instrument against us. But! And here's where our hope lies: "*Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world*" (1Jn.4:4).

Our Pastor preaches a positive message repeating that same thing over and over and over again: "We're stronger than the enemy! We're greater than... We have the '*mind of Christ*' (Phil.2:5). We have the '*power of God*' (Mk.16:15f)." But if you take on the battle apart from Christ, you are nothing! You are no match for the devil – by yourself! "*I can do all things*," Paul said – "through Christ – *which strengthens me*" (Phil.4:13). It's "*which strengthens me*" not "*who*." **It strengthens me to do all things through Christ.**

There's so much in the Bible about the Lord helping us – you know that. But, do you also know that it is impossible to be helped (even by God) if you're inactive? We wail, or whine: "Help me, Lord!" And His reply is, "Okay, start moving." "I can't *move*." (We sound so pitiful!) "I'm immobilized – by this and that.... This depression or this frustration." And I can hear Him forcefully reply to that with great authority in His voice! "You are not! ☺ You are not immobilized by it! You're only immobilized by your *fear* of it! Now, put one foot forward – STEP – then put the other foot out there – STEP – and repeat that process. That's called 'walking'!" And when we start to move, He helps us!

We even use this feeble little voice: "Oh, I've been praying the Lord will just give me a job. Oh, I tell ya...." And the only response is: "How many places have you applied?" "Well, you know," (still so pathetically!) "I just *feel* the Lord'll just - *bring* it to me." "You feel wrong! ☺ Get your body out of bed. Get your eyes on the want-ads – put your name in here and don't be 'too good' to do any job." You don't have to start out as Supervisor. ☺ Sweep the parking lot! It'll put food on your table! And then the Lord **will help** you – "*promotion cometh not from the north or the south or... but from the Lord!*" (Ps.75:6)

I'm trying to give you some practical Christianity – from "Mama." We must start living the way the Lord instructs us to live. And as we start to do a thing... That's something I love about our pastor – he starts things! I mean, he stands up here and declares "This is what we're gonna do." And then he starts them – and the Staff finis... ☺ No. I'm just teasing!

But, we're either motivated to begin moving – or we faint. "*If we – faint – not*" (Gal.6:9). You see, it isn't going to be good enough any more simply to say, "I go to church Wednesdays and Sundays – and you know, it's... well, sometimes life is better than others." That simply isn't good enough today.

What's going to have to happen is that every single one of us **fall in love with Jesus** – and then with one another. Then we begin to do what He said to do in His Word – to live how He said we should live – to relate with one another as He said to relate.

Many years ago we used to sing a song: "I love you with the love of the Lord. Yes, I love you with the love of the Lord..." We don't even bother to sing it anymore – let alone for it to approximate truth! The words go on: "I can see in you, the beauty of my King, and I love you with the love of the Lord." Truth is, we love – *some*.

But can you see where the cords are? The strands? Here's one flapping over here... and there's another flopping over there. We have a prayer warrior over here: "Oh, she's such a prayer warrior." And we're being honest about that designation. "Oh, he's such a praying man." And that's the truth – he is a praying man! "And there's this wonderful praiser – oh, he *praises* so beautifully!" Or "*She* praises!" All these strands are out there flapping in the breeze! And not one is really very strong overall. The pray-er is strong in prayer. The praisers are strong in praise. The faith people are strong in – thinking (Pr.23:7). ☺

I double-dare you – do you remember that challenge from when you were a kid? Well I *dare* you to bring all the strands together! Then, I'm not just a praiser – I'm a praying praiser. And I can't pray without

faith, so I bring that strand of faith into the blend, and connect with that strand of prayer. Do you know what's amazing to me? I rarely make the decision of which I'm going to do (or be) – or when! Because it's the Holy Spirit Who knows what is needed and He chooses! He leads me and I follow that divine lead. He directs me every time.

Many a day, I've begun my morning time with Him beseeching His throne of grace (Heb.4:16), because I've felt a heaviness or a burden or a prayer-concern or whatever you want to label that discernment. I may start something like this, just sort of "normal": "Oh, God, I come to You in Jesus' Name. Father, I pray that I may please You this day...." But soon, Holy Spirit rises up from within and I hear my own voice in *::TONGUES::* And then it isn't long until I'm hearing a triumphant song of praise for the release – "Hallelujah! Oh, bless Your Holy Name, Lord! There's no God like you!" Then suddenly more *::TONGUES::* It isn't one or the other! It's all! It's the 3-strands together! Beseeching – and warfare prayer – and jubilant victorious praise-filled singing! Can you see it? The intertwining of all the strands together. He wants to make us strong!

David says, *"I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy; for You've considered my trouble; and You've known my soul in adversities, And you have not shut me up into the hand of my enemy..."* (Ps.31:7,8).

I don't care what your situation may be... Well, I do care – about you – but I don't care what your specific circumstances may be in any one moment. Specifics are not what matters. I don't care what your particular situation is – **God will not leave you in the hand of your enemies – very long!** He will not! Verse 8 says so! Yes, thank God for that! Because you are a divine Ambassador; you are His Representative on earth – and He plans to lift the weights, the heaviness, the burdens – for *His* Name's sake and for *His* glory – not for ours!

When someone knows I'm going through a really heavy time and I'm – you know – I'm just wearing it! I might as well carry a sign. ☺ "How are you, Sister Iverna?" "Well, praise God. You know...." And what I'm wanting from them is admiration: "Isn't she strong! Isn't she brave! Look at her – she's walking. She's talking. She's moving."

But you see – that's not for *His* name's sake. That's for MY name's sake! Oh, how we use our voices to communicate all sorts of things – like for drawing sympathy... We can sound so plaintive, so melancholic, so mournful: "Do you see how wonderful I am? I've had things tough, you know." Don't you see it? We need to see through all that. "I'm here though! ☺ God bless you – one and all!" ☺

Now, I hope you're laughing because you're identifying, but I don't want the humor to prevent the truth from penetrating. We have to come back, like David, to a place of: "Lord, it's Your Name that's at stake. It's **Your** Name. *Your* reputation. Everyone around here knows that it's Your banner that's over me, and that it is Love. I mean, the thing is worn all over me! So, it really is Your Name at stake in this, Lord!"

If you start talking to someone outside of your family against someone in your family – that person will mark you. God will forgive you, yes – if you're smart enough to confess it and repent and not do it again. ☺ But the world doesn't forgive so readily. If you will, you can read their thoughts: "Don't tell me there's love in that place. I was just talking with her and she told me – the sins of everyone in her church! Have you heard this one? Those church people are so negative and... They're just a real mess!"

Now, you stop and think about it – just how true that little story is. It's true because we don't love one another as we should. We just tolerate a bunch!

I have four brothers. Do you think we ever fought? (Guess who won... ☺) But we learned to fight among ourselves and within the home. When we stepped outside the doors of the family home – we protected the family. We didn't so much lie as we just didn't talk.

If we don't learn that in the church, we are never... I'm so very sorry about this truth: I don't care how much we pray and beseech for revival and beg God and make promises to Him – if He doesn't see us loving one another, caring about and for one another, doing for one another, upholding one another – we are not going to know Revival!

He is looking for hearts that long after Him – “*As the deer pants for the waterbrooks, so my soul longeth for You*” (Ps.42:1). He's looking for lives that are different from the rest of the world. He's looking for people who have been *changed* by the presence and power of His indwelling Spirit – whose minds do not reflect the thinking processes of the world (Rom.12:2), but ones that follow His ways and focus on what He says is the Truth (Phil.4:8).

In a couple of the past Revivals that I know of – God actually blessed “dirty vessels” – people whose lives were not totally set in His order. He blessed people who were not walking in the fullness of His Word – but people who dared to cry out anyway: “Lord, please! We need a fresh move of God!” And in His divine mercy, He poured out His Spirit on many *unclean vessels*. Can you believe that? Do you even remember those days? Days not so long ago. Didn't you wonder at the time?

But that's why what we did with the Revivals (through unclean vessels) was *not* to move into harvest. Not really. We moved it into “Brag-ville!” You could hear this boastful voice from various places – “In our church... da-di-da-di-da-da...” “*We've done this*” and “*We've done that.*” So, that's why we had to say of them: “Well, the Revival's *over.*”

That Revival came as a **cleansing stream** – and the people refused the cleansing action. The actions and attitudes of the people – leaders and others – brought God's desire for a sovereign move to a close because it was not fulfilling *His* purposes. Hello.

This next move of God, I believe with all my heart – is going to come to **prepare people** – not *perfect* people. We're “perfected” people (Eph.4:12; Heb.10:14). There's a big difference. Perfected people are a people who know their God and who are quick to repent (cf.Dan.11:32; Ps.46:10).

I believe there are only two ways for me to respond to the Bible when I'm reading it. I either rejoice over what I'm reading that encourages or instructs or affirms me – or I must repent because I realize I have fallen far short (Rom.3:23). And I do these both, simultaneously. I can read along and say, “Oh, hallelujah! – Glory to God! Thank You, Lord!” And then immediately it's: “Oh uh, sorry about that, Lord. Please forgive me. Help me change.” ☺ Do you agree that's alright? Of course it is. I must respond appropriately to His Word – whatever He is ministering at that moment. Affirmation or conviction.

That's what David did. One minute he was jumping around and dancing and bringing the Ark back to Jerusalem (2Sam.6:14-16), rejoicing and singing, “There is no God like You!” And the next minute, we find him shouting and demanding: “Where are You, God? Here I am, down here, representing You – and I've been calling on Your Name! Don't leave me in this pit!” (cf. Ps.31:9-18).

Then in the very next verse in the Psalm we're studying you read that he says, “*Oh, how great is Thy goodness!*” (Ps.31:19) Or, look at it in Psalm 40: “*And the Lord saw my dilemma and he lifted me up out of the miry clay and set my feet on a solid rock*” (vs.2).

You see – we try to *pretend* we are in our glorified bodies! But we surely don't look like it! ☺ This old frame is pfsst! Dust! The first wind that comes along – POOF! That's why you can go to bed at night in victory, sleep soundly, and wake up already defeated. Oh, tell the truth! The last thing you think of before you go to sleep can be: “Oh, I love You, Lord! You're so awesome!” Then you wake up the very next morning, snarling: “What kind of a day is this?”

I suppose there are a few saints that never have that kind of experience. ☺ But if you do, you have to think, “Where did I go last night? My pillow indicates I was right here in my own bed!” It’s just the old flesh, darlin’. You went to sleep “spirit” and woke up “flesh.” You just have to get stirred again – and re-filled with the Holy Ghost! You have reset your gauges on zero and start all over again. And that is okay. Don’t beat yourself for it. It’s okay. It’s okay to start over every day. In fact, every day is a new beginning with God. That’s why His mercies are renewed – DAILY! (Lam.3:22,23). Because you use up your portion every day – Iverna. ☺

It’s like getting to the bottom of the stewpot. Everything you made is gone – all you prepared – it’s empty. “Boy, I’ve used up the whole thing!” Every day is a new day with new situations and a need for a fresh filling up by His Holy Spirit. When I awaken each morning, it’s: “Oh, Lord, help me to please You. Help me to know what I need to know today. Help me to be discerning... Help me give counsel... Help me...” I need Him at every turn of every day! Can’t you just hear the angels? “Oh, boy, make up another batch! Here she comes!” ☺

It’s the honesty of the heart that opens the hand of God. We used to sing it this way: “I need Thee, O, I need Thee!” EVERY HOUR! the song writer said. Every hour of every day! “I need Thee.” But we kind of put that song on the shelf when we came to: “I can do! I can do! I am! I am! Do you know who I am?” That’s pathetic! It’s like we’re chanting: “The Church marches on!” We might as well be singing: “Give me some men, who are strong-hearted men...” That’s just about as powerful as our *bragging* on our own strengths!

Maybe we need to take a step closer to God and sincerely declare: “I need Thee, Oh! I need Thee!” Because the truth is, my darling, you can’t even praise Him without Him! I can’t. I can’t even love Him without Him. That’s what the Word says – “*Herein is love, not that you have loved Me...*” (1Jn.4:10). Oh, Church, we can be so superficial when we pray or sing: “Oh, yes – I love You, Lord. I do. I do! I love You! I LUUVVVV You!” I think I can hear Him respond to that kind of attitude: “Watch Me cross you – and then We’ll see... just how much...” Then in the same audacious tone we think, “You better not – not if You want my love!”

“*Herein is love, not that you have loved Me, Iverna. But that I have loved you – and have given Myself for you*” (1Jn.4:10). At that realization we must sing softly: “I’ll never know – how much it cost...” Of course we won’t know that kind of price! We haven’t any concept of what it really cost – for our precious Lord to go to the cross in our place. All we can do is receive it. “I receive Your love today, Lord. I receive Your love every day. I receive Your incredible love.”

In reception of that love, I become a *vessel* – not a tube! I hear Christians talk about “just getting tapped into Jesus” or “I’ll just tap into Him, and then as an empty tube I’ll just let Him flow out to you.” That sounds so spiritual, but the Word teaches “*vessel*.” You are – I am – we are – to be filled up with Him (Gal.5:18) again! – and again! If we just constantly flowed and flowed, we’d never know how much we needed Him! We’d just stay tapped in – all the time – never getting for ourselves what we needed daily. It would become just – boring. “Ho-hum... I’m just a constant flow. Never much of anything different. Never much exciting going on. [deep sigh] Hallelujah...”

One of the most upsetting things anyone ever said to me occurred about 25 or 30 years ago. Not THE worst thing, mind you – but one of them. ☺ This person intended to make a nice compliment by saying, “You are a preaching machine!” But it just stabbed me – like a sharp knife – deeply penetrating. My first thought was: “If that’s what I am, I’m not worth much.” And then I thought: “If He can’t put me on the potter’s wheel – and make a vessel that He can *fill* – and then be in charge of the filling and be in charge of the vessel and be in charge of the pouring out – then it’s all back to *me* – machine-like. Just like the firemen – they put a hose on the source, and then just direct the nozzle and it shoots out – wherever.

That is the way some Christians are, but it’s not the way I want to be. They just tap into the source *once* in their lifetime. Their testimony becomes: “I thank the Lord, back in 19-such-and-such, I was filled with

the Holy Ghost!” So – you just tapped in, huh? To the hydrant? And you’re grateful for the hydrant? And you simply shoot wherever you want.

OR – are you *a vessel* in the hand of the potter, in the hands of the Master? Every day those pottery vessels in Old Testament days had to be *re-filled* – with *water* (Selah. You know water represents the Word!). They had to be picked up, emptied of anything left over (and by the way, the dregs went into what was known as the *unclean vessel*, or the vessel of dishonor. When that got full of the dregs, it was buried in the yard, now useless). But the *vessels of honor* – the vessel of refreshing that held the daily supply of fresh water, that greeted guests as they came tired and dirty from just living in the desert areas; or the refreshing vessel that ministered a cool drink to the family within the home – these were vessels that were re-filled every day – Hear it! Refilled – every day – with a fresh supply.

“Where would you pour me out? Where would you want to use me?” That’s the way David felt – the honest pouring out of the soul. He said, “*I’ve heard the slander of many* (vs.13). *Fear was on every side while they took counsel together against me. They devised to take away my life.*” “*They*” – not people, although David certainly had that problem as well.

But, “*they*” – the spirits that want to destroy you. The spirit of your enemy – who uses people, yet it is he who is the source of the attacks. You’re not fighting against certain people that have it in for you. I don’t care what you think – or think you see. It’s not true!

The truth is, people are used by the enemy – yes, only if they allow it. And they can make problems for us, but let’s not fight against *them*. Let’s begin *to war* in the way that we know to war. That’s the kind of battle – *in prayer* – that the church needs to enter into now: “I break the power of the spirit of this thing, in the Name of Jesus!”

We need to let the Holy Spirit guide us in that kind of warfare prayer (Jn.16:13; Rom.8:26). And let’s go into real honest *praise* because you can’t pray effectively if you don’t have faith. You can’t touch Him without praising! You just can’t! But if you combine your faith and prayer together, you will touch Him.

The reason that worship leaders often have a hard time getting the congregation to respond with corporate worship and praise is because the people just don’t touch God! We come into the church building from all sorts of situations in the home and family, or anything just concerning self and self-centeredness, or from the pressures on the job, and add to all that the rush hour traffic... Life seems to be just a lot of weariness – and I understand all of that.

So, when you come in to the church and immediately try to enter into praise – it’s hard to leave all your life-concerns at the door. The worship leaders are there, trying to prime the pump: “Come on, folks! Come on! Let’s shout! Let’s – let’s do something joyful before the Lord!” It’s simply their way of trying to break through your distracted mindsets. They know the pressures you face and how hard it is to let it all go so you can just worship God.

The *spiritually mature*, however, at will, are able to set aside the cares of this life (cf.Mt.13:22). They can reach up and touch Him, the Almighty God. They can. And it isn’t just the hem of His garment (Mt.9:20;14:36). We don’t have to settle for just a little nip. He always is available – *always available* – to be worshipped. There’s never a time you cannot worship God. If you know Him, you can worship Him – “*in spirit and in truth*” (Jn.4:23).

David says, “*Lord, You’ve pulled me out of the net*” (Ps.31:15) and then he adds, “*I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy*” (vs.16). Everything we have is because of God’s mercy! I have nothing – I am nothing. The same goes for you! God didn’t choose you because you’re wonderful. You’re wonderful because He chose you! “*You have not chosen Me,*” He said to His closest followers. “*I’ve chosen you*” (Jn.15:16). “*I’ve ordained you to go forth and bear fruit. You’re Mine, I knew what I could do with you.*” We ought, then, to be constantly delighted in His choosing of us!

The mercy of God... Oh, I am so thankful – I’m just *so* thankful! I’m thankful for the salvation He brought to our lives! For choosing us and for all His provisions. Who are we that He should spend His mercies on us? Step outside – walk around in downtown Phoenix. See the many people who have not yet discovered this fact: they’ve been chosen by the Lord! Look closely at the situations of their lives – and THEN you’ll praise Him!

Faith declared. And David continues: “*Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant,*” (verse 16) “*and save me for Thy mercy’s sake.*” For **Thy** mercy’s sake. For Thy mercy’s sake. So people can see the goodness – no, the greatness of our God!

Many years ago, when people would hear my testimony – in the “good old days” – when divorce was the “unpardonable sin”... ☺ (Some 40 years have passed, so now I’m allowed in the church ☺) Back then though, when I would testify to that negative and painful situation of my life, people would come up to me crying and say: “If He can use *you*... Did I really understand you to say that you grew up in a preacher’s home and you’re – you’re – *divorced*?” “Yeah, you understand that right.” “But – He *uses* you!” If we had known about this word back then, I could have said: “DUH!” ☺

He doesn’t use me because the marriage didn’t work. He uses me because He chose me. Because He said, “I’ll take that vessel there! And I’ll put My glory in her because I want to – and she will testify of Me and of My forgiveness. And I’ll reveal Myself through her – and they’ll know the truth. And if I can do it in that vessel I can do it in *any* vessel!” Dear friends, that’s how we got in! It’s all Him! His Grace! His Mercy! It’s only by the love and goodness of God!

So, if you’re one of those who calls yourself a Christian and yet you’re still beating yourself up every other day for all the negatives in your past... Well then, you just don’t get it! You really don’t get it at all! Do you think you’re being humble – spending most of your prayer-life repenting for sins that have already been forgiven? “Oh, Lord, I just come to You – *again* – and I’m soooo sorrrry....” (Can you hear the moanings and groanings?). But listen now to His truth. God lovingly declares: “We’ve been this route before. I forgave you the first time you meant it. Get on with it already. Sin again so I can forgive you again.” ☺

Stop doubting. Read the Word and remember what He said. Become real. Yes, become honest. His forgiveness is a sure thing – as soon as you mean it in confession and repentance.

Some of you are earnestly praying, “Oh, Lord, just send me to the mission field,” and you think He’s ignoring your genuine request. Look down your pew on Sunday morning! You have no idea how much that person on your very row needs you to love them. You don’t have a clue! You have no idea the power of a hug! (Or a handshake – if you’re still rigid. ☺) For now – that’s your mission field. Maybe later He will send you out in another way. But do what you can do *now* while you’re waiting.

Sometimes it’s the power of a simple smile. And yet we have to be told to do that too. We have to have our leaders say, “Find someone you don’t already know and tell them you’re glad they’re here.” Then we obediently turn around and say the words: “I’m glad you’re here.” ☺ Oh, yeah, right! And they really believe it too! Don’t you? ☺

But when you walked in the door, no one spoke a word. No greeting. No smiles. Everyone just heads for their pew – hoping they got through the traffic in time to claim their favorite seat. Oh, yes, the Greeters. They said the nice words. Well – that’s what they do. “Glad you’re here tonight.” “Yeah, right.” We have to do something about those dead pan faces!

But – what if we said the same words with great enthusiasm and sincerity, with warm smiles on our faces: “I’m glad you’re here tonight!” And Iverna really will be glad you’re here even when I’m not speaking. ☺ This is my church and I really love you! I love the love in this church! I truly do.

But I also think we need to grow up. I think we're a bunch of babies – who praise when we're beaten into it. It's just like when your mother shouted the command: "Clean your room!" ☺ Only in the church it's: "Tell someone you love 'em! – NOW!" Or, "Can I get a praise in this place? Can I hear a shout? Can I – ? Are you – ? Will you – ?"

What do you think would happen if we came to church already filled... absolutely FILLED UP... with the Holy Spirit? If this vessel (me – or you) was filled to the brim... Or what about this? What if you walked into work – full – of His Spirit? It wouldn't take much of a *slosh* to bless someone. Or, what about at home? Are you there? But we lament: "Oh, if I really had a ministry.... If only..." You have one! You just have a lid on it! You need to take the lid off and slosh! Just spill over. Walk wherever you normally walk looking for an opportunity to spill over. Sometimes it's enough just to look at somebody who's hurting and say, "It'll be okay."

Recently, I was with a young man who is living in a lifestyle the Word teaches against. I had heard of him and even had prayed for him before this particular meeting. During our conversation, I simply informed him of a fact: "I pray for you." That was so foreign to this man that he looked away – he just put his head down and looked away. We were near enough, so I took his face in my hands and turned it so he had to look straight at me, and I called his name. He wasn't John, so I'll use that. I said, "John!" And I looked right at him and repeated my earlier words. "I pray for you, John." This time, his face took on a completely different countenance. And then he replied, "Well, I have a job interview coming up. I really appreciate that." Now, that's as far as John's faith level could advance. Since then, as I have been praying for him, I've made this request: "Lord, give him a job in such a way that he must remember the words spoken to him."

I do hope this makes sense to you – that you're really hearing this. You see – we're usually looking for such *BIG STUFF*... We stand out there looking up in the sky and so piously declare – "*Even so – COME Lord Jesus!*" ☺ While down here on earth, where we live and work and worship, we can hear some desperate cries: "We're being mowed over down here!" ☺ And *::whoosh!::* the traffic goes whizzing by... ☺ "Can anybody help me?" But we're too busy. "Leave me alone – I'm *WORSHIPPING*." ☺ Oh, Church, we have to hear this!

"*A three-fold cord is not easily broken.*" (Eccl.4:12) Faith – Prayer – Praise. Together they will lead you into a realm of worship that is so glorious! But without these together, you have no idea what God really wants for us. We're talking about the power of "ONE."

Am I only talking about this church? Well, sort of. But also about every church in this city that names the Name of Jesus – and every church in our state and in our whole nation that names the name of Jesus. It's not by who we call in to minister or speak from the pulpit. It's not by gifted musicians – God bless them all. But it is by walking in obedience to the Word of God – *as vessels*. Vessels that are clean – and surrendered into the Master's hand. Vessels that are filled every day – poured out and refilled – poured out and refilled – poured out and refilled – and *ready* to be tipped over and poured out again.

Here's an old chorus we used to sing: "Will you be poured out as wine upon the altar for Me? Will you be broken as bread to feed the hungry? Will you be so one with Me that I can do just as I will, to make you Light and Life and Love – My Word fulfilled?"

My answer is: "Yes, Lord." Is yours?