Every generation seems to think that his/her generation is the worse; that it couldn’t get any worse and so there seems to be little hope for the culture or society as a whole. By briefly tracing the advancement of the Kingdom of God I want to show, as well as give “hope” to this (and the next) generation that even though the advancement of God’s Kingdom has faced many tribulations, set-backs and huge obstacles over these past two thousand years, it is still here and not giving up – all glory to God. Other earthly kingdoms have come and gone, but the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior will remain forever.

Regarding the past, Stephen Neil said that “throughout the history of the disobedient church and their unfinished task – God has used those disobedient churches to do great things, and brought into being a universal church. Missionaries on the whole have been feeble folk, not very wise, not very holy, not very patient. They have broken most of the commandments and fallen into every conceivable mistake. And yet, God has used their weakness to bring into existence a universal church.

“Missionary societies and churches have run their affairs in a way that would have reduced any ordinary business firm to bankruptcy in a year. They have tolerated rivalry, overlapping waste and imprudence. And yet, God has taken them up with all their follies into His service for the creation of a universal church. Converts on the whole have been terribly disappointing. Some have elapsed, others have grown arrogant and unusable, the majority have sunk down all too quickly into spiritual mediocrity. And yet, with all their failures, they have been God's front line for the winning of a universal church.”

What of the future? That our Lord Jesus has yet to return, only underscores the incompleteness of the “missionary task.” Indeed, to look abroad throughout the world today is to confront the tragic reality of disobedient churches and its unfinished task. Not that God has failed; for He still desires that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

In the end Almighty God will win. Power is on His side and His heaven rules. No weapon formed against Him will prosper, but how will we do in our generation? Will we finish what is ours to do? What will we leave behind for our children to carry on with – in the advancement of God’s Kingdom? We each need to consider this and then prove faithful.

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 1

Matthew 4:17 “From that time on Jesus began to preach, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.’”

Matt 13:31-32 “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches.”

Teaching on the kingdom of God is very important for several reasons. First, we are here to preach the extension of the kingdom of God or as Christ said the gospel of the kingdom. This takes in the church, but it is more than that as we also want to see our communities, societies and culture changed. Of course, we know that we go from the internal to the external. Before we can see communities, societies and cultures change we need to see individuals changed THROUGH THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL.

Secondly, it is important for us to understand where we are today in God's timetable so that we might know where we should be heading tomorrow. A world renowned hockey player when asked why he was so good said that he does not follow the puck, but he goes where he knows the puck will be. We need to know where God will be so that we can be there in order to carry on what He is doing.

Thirdly, it is important to have right theology and the right eschatology. We see the importance of right theology with Daniel. It says in Daniel 1:21 "…and Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus." This means that he remained in that pagan environment at the top echelon of power for over 50 years. The reason Daniel remained is because he had right theology and this comes out in Daniel 2:20-23. He recognized that God is sovereign over all things.

I will say at the very beginning that my eschatology is 'pre-tribulation.' This means that I believe God's true people will be raptured out of this world before Daniel's 70th week. However, there will be many people in the visible Church who will be left behind. During this 3 1/2 years there will be great tribulation for these people and many will come to Christ, but also many will die a martyr's death. Satan's fury will be poured out upon them. At the end of that 3 1/2 years they will be resurrected and be part of the first rapture that took place 3 1/2 years previously. Then we go into Daniel's 70th week where judgment is poured out upon this earth. At the end Christ comes back with the Saints to rule and reign for a thousand years. What we do during the thousand years depends upon our faithfulness in the here and now.

This is my eschatology in a nutshell. I cannot go and explain more of why I believe this because this is not the basis of my weekly letters for this year. The reason I mention this is because we need to know where God is going so that we can be there to work along with him.

What I also wanted to mention is that we are not here just to see people saved, but to be disciples in order to make an impact in our communities, societies and culture where we can bring out God's agenda. We live in a world where people are asking questions and they are looking for answers. The church, the body of Christ, is the depository of truth.

By being 'pre-trib' we are not to sit back and wait for God to take us out of this mess, but we are to occupy and bring solutions to this mess that we're in until the Lord comes and takes us out.

So in these weekly letters I would like to show how we are constantly going from terror to triumph and how the kingdom of God starting small like a mustard seed is growing into a gigantic oak. Where are we at this moment in time and what should we be doing is the question we need to be asking ourselves.

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH - Part 2

 Matthew 13:31, 32 "He told them another parable: The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed a man took planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air, come and perch in its branches."

Who would have believed that a small seed planted in an obscure village in Palestine 2000 years ago would emanate power that would begin to shake the world. Yet, that is exactly what has happened and is happening today when we look at the kingdom of heaven that is spreading.

A goal in these weekly letters for this year is to trace this kingdom as it spreads from village to village, town to town, city to city, nation to nation from culture to culture until, like yeast, it permeates the whole world. We are now at the 21st century and I believe we have before us tremendous open doors to see great things accomplished for the glory of God.

Every generation seems to think that with all the problems that they face, evil spreading more quickly, natural disasters, etc. that it’s the end. As we go through history in these past 2000 years we will see that the kingdom of God was continually faced with formidable obstacles that it overcame. The kingdom of God is still moving on.

The battle of the ages is constantly raging behind the scenes of history. The scent of death is always in the air, but there are special times when the conflict is so hot that it polarizes the world with the obvious contrast for all to see. It is in these times that the church has excelled and God has been glorified.

God repeats the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28 after the flood of Noah in Genesis 9 as well as in Psalm 8. We saw in the weekly letters from last year that the Old Testament laid the foundation for a man to be redeemed and brought back to the place where God's mandate of Genesis 1: 28 could be carried out.

God wants to use the sons and daughters of Abraham to redeem the earth. Galatians 4:4 says, "But when the time had fully come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under law." Why did He come? "To redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."

After the temptation of Christ, when the tempter came and offered Jesus the kingdoms of this world and which He refused, Jesus started His preaching ministry with the words: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." Or He preached that the kingdom is “at hand.” From the lowly start in an obscure village the kingdom of God began to move out.

The foundation for this series is based on three things.

1. God is reconciling the world to Himself. This is what the church is here for and we are told in 2 Corinthians 5:18: "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."

2. God has clearly revealed to us His plan and His strategy and we need to follow His battle plan or as one great Indian evangelist said, “Get the heavenly plan.”

3. His strategy for victory, which consists of several things:

 a. His plan is from the bottom up: generational, exponential, and internal to external.

 b. To see the manifestation of the kingdom of God. To see pagan nations give up their pagan ways and embrace godly principles.

 1. Transformation of individuals. Internal to external begins with the heart being transformed. We need to build ourselves into the saints of God.

 2. Family dynasty; God has chosen to use families.
(Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 7:9) Discipleship begins in the home.

 3. Victory is what the church is here for; to overcome pagan ways and be an influence on others in the same way.

 4. Civil government. If it gets out of control then it goes beyond its jurisdiction.

 5. Common grace. Grace goes from those of us who receive grace from the Lord to those who have not experienced God’s grace.

It is with these principles that we have the spread of the kingdom of God throughout the centuries and even now in the 21st century.

                            TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 3

Acts 2:14 “Then Peter stood up with the 11, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: ‘Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.’”

Jesus had died, was buried and rose again on the third day and later ascended back into heaven. Before He left He told His disciples to wait in the upper room until the Holy Spirit came upon them in power. (Acts 1)

After this we see Peter standing up, raising his voice and addressing the crowd that had gathered to hear the message that God had for them.

We read in Acts 2:41 that “those who accepted his message were baptized, and about 3000 were added to their number that day.” The kingdom of God is beginning to spread. Jews that had come from all over the world and were part of the 3000 that were baptized, went back to their own countries and began to spread the kingdom of God in their own communities, language and culture. It started small, from a little village in Palestine and began to spread throughout the Roman world.

Two things stand out in my mind. First, what was the situation like in the days of these early disciples with the extension of the kingdom of God? And secondly, what were these men/women like who were so greatly used of God to spread the good news of the gospel of the kingdom throughout the Roman world? It is these two things that I would like to look at in the next few chapters. I trust that it will be an encouragement to you as it has been to me.

Rome, "the mother of all nations," had conquered the world at that time. They ruled with an iron fist. In conquering the world, they had numerous slaves and prisoners that often were sacrificed in the arena for the enjoyment of the spectators. Rome, like other empires, committed the five deadly sins.

One deadly sin was tyranny and the worship of leaders. Caesar, and those who followed were 'gods' to the people and they would not tolerate the people worshipping any other gods but them. In the time of Christ, Augustus had died and his successor Tiberius came on the scene. Tiberius was not Augustus' first choice as heir, so his position was insecure. He and the Senate did not get along and so Tiberius looked for help elsewhere and turned to a man by the name of Sejanus. He launched a widespread purge, arresting and executing many rivals. Just when Sejanus seemed to be unstoppable, Tiberius told the Senate that Sejanus was condemned. Sejanus was arrested and executed.

Later came Caligula, who at first did well, but his behavior became strange. He seduced the wives of his guests and murdered people at random. Soon he was dead, murdered by his closest advisors. He then was followed by his uncle, Claudius who had been disfigured by illness when he was a child. Often he was the butt of jokes, but to everyone's surprise he worked hard and did well.

It was during this period that other changes in the empire were taking place as well. In Egypt, there were attacks on the Jews. In Judea, Jesus was challenging the religious and political establishment. At this time, the local furor barely touched Rome but the kingdom of God that was beginning to spread would one day engulf the entire empire.

Claudius’ wife, Messalina, was quite promiscuous and Claudius had her murdered. Claudius remarried with his niece, Agrippina. She wasted no time in removing her rivals and convinced Claudius to make her son, Nero, his heir. Once this was done she removed the final obstacle, Claudius himself, by poisoning his food and then announcing Nero as emperor.

We of course know the outcome of what Nero did in blaming the Christians for the burning of Rome, a fire that he had undoubtedly set himself. In his early days Nero was guided very much by his mother. It reminds me of the kings of Israel that when they are mentioned it is always with their mother as well.  How true the saying is: "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world."

We often think that the time we live in is hard and difficult and that spreading the gospel of the kingdom is difficult, but when we look through history we see that the kingdom of God is unstoppable. Yes, we might have many difficulties and obstacles, but when we look at history we see that there were others who have gone before us in even more difficult times.

                          TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 4

1 Corinthians 10:20 “The sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons.”

Rome, like empires before and after, were caught up in what is known as the five deadly sins. What were the five deadly sins of history?

1 - Rejection of God's laws. 2 - Tyranny/ worship of leaders. 3 - Enslave or execute enemies. 4 - Human sacrifice. 5 - Persecution of the believers.

We can see the same five deadly sins operating in some countries in the world today where the kingdom of God is spreading. One thing that comes out is that there is a major problem in the heart of man. God's laws are written on the hearts of all men. “Since they show that the requirements of the *law are written on their hearts*, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.” Romans 2:15

When we reject the laws of God we will have problems in our families to the third and fourth generation.  We can trace this through history.  We do not break God's laws, but God's laws should break us unto obedience. Persecution of believers takes place in all pagan empires.

It was this type of environment that the 12 apostles, along with the other disciples, went out into the Roman world preaching the gospel of the kingdom. The book of Acts shares some of the problems that they faced as well as victories won and sacrifices they made.

Paul, one of the guiding lights in the days of the early church, is converted in a dramatic way on the road to Damascus. During those days of Paul’s blindness and as he fasted, his theology was shaped. He begins to move out in the power of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. He is chosen to go to the Gentiles.

From Antioch Paul begins his missionary journeys into the Roman world and the kingdom of God begins to spread. Although Rome committed the five deadly sins mentioned above, there was still a certain amount of peace and common language, and the Roman roads that allowed the gospel to spread.

We read in Acts 16 that Paul and his companions traveled throughout the province of Asia. However, when they came to the border of Mysia they tried to enter Bithynia (which is located in the northern - Eurasian part - of modern-day Turkey), but the Spirit of God would not allow them. So we read that they came down to a place called Troas located on the Aegean Sea.

It was during the night that Paul had a dream of a man standing in Macedonia calling and begging him to "come over to Macedonia and help us." We read that the next morning they concluded that God had called them to preach the gospel to them in Macedonia.

We see that this decision to go to Macedonia in fact caused the gospel of the kingdom beginning a westward movement. The gospel was coming into Europe. It is quite remarkable to think that within 70 years the apostle Paul, with his companions and other disciples - that God used, spread the Kingdom of God throughout the Roman Empire.

In 68 AD Nero committed suicide and Rome was left without a leader. Civil War ensued and the generals fought for control of the empire. About 50,000 people died. Eventually Vespasian becomes the Emperor, but he lacked authority and so he knew that he needed a foreign victory to secure his throne.

He turned his attention upon Jerusalem and the destruction of Jerusalem came about. Not only was the Temple destroyed but over 1 million people died. However, Rome was coming to the end of the empire, but the kingdom of God that started in a small obscure village in Palestine was beginning to spread throughout the world.

Today, in the 21st century the Roman Empire is long gone, but the kingdom of God is moving on.

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 5

Revelation 12:11 "They overcame him (the devil) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."

The early expansion of the kingdom of God into the Roman world was not without difficulties and obstacles. However, it was done by men with great faith who believed God in what they were doing.

Seeing the extension of the kingdom of God comes down to our faith. The world is not going to change until people change. We have to go from the internal to the external. But for many evangelicals today the basic approach is to rescue as many sinners as possible from a dying world and then to simply just hang on until the return of Jesus. But, we are told to “occupy” and not just to survive.

When the early disciples started out they started with a protest against the tyranny, slavery, and the injustice that was in the world. Their basic weapon was Truth.  In his book, Shaking the System, Tim Stafford said: "It was truth that launched American anti-slavery. The truth was simple: Slavery is sin. Truth matters. Truth has the power to move people. When truth is recognized, the terms of debate change utterly. We need to be able to articulate the truth powerfully and convincingly.”

Jesus said that when we come to know the truth, the truth will set us free. These men/women armed with truth went out into the Roman world and within 70 years planted fellowships with the followers of the Truth.

Truth will lead to conflict and conflict will sort out our friends as well as enemies. The truth has enemies, but speaking the truth is crucial. When Paul and the other apostles went out, I am sure that they were faced with many frustrations and being faced with those frustrations they probably also had long discussions about tactics.

We see something of this when Paul and his team tried to go to different places in Asia Minor, but the Holy Spirit stopped them. They finally wound up in a place called Troas on the Aegean Sea. After Paul's dream of the Macedonian Call, Paul and his team debated over tactics as to what they should do. We read that they concluded that they were to go into Europe. Their tactics had changed, but the Truth remained the same.

Having the privilege of being able to travel in so many countries of the world I see that each country is unique and every country has the need for different strategies at different times. For example, in Karnataka India where I first worked almost 40 years ago I could not find any village pastors, but there was need to get as much of the Word of God out as possible then. Now, 40 years later the strategy has changed. Instead of being in the villages, preaching in the markets, giving out as much literature as possible, we are now finding that there is need for teaching the thousands of village pastors who have come into existence. The strategy has changed. However, the Truth is still the same. We must never forget or neglect the Truth.

I thought it was rather interesting to see the strategy of Paul and what Tim Stafford said in his book, Shaking the System: “We need to have a strategy for presenting truth (Paul did. He went to key cities). First, we need to stick to principle, not sentiment. Second, we need to insist on public debate (Paul stayed several years in Ephesus in a rented hall. He also spent time in the synagogues to reason and persuade). Thirdly, the discussion should be thorough and deep. We need to get away from 'sound bites.' Fourthly, we need to emphasize facts. Fifthly, calmly present the truth to ordinary people and not the elites (often Paul was among the masses of ordinary people). Sixthly, we need to press for a decision. Facts must lead to commitment.” We should not only know the truth that undergirds what we are doing, but we should think and plan on how to make it prominent.

To me this was the basis of the early disciples' strategy to see the extension of the kingdom of God.

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 6

2 Corinthians 2:11 "….in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes."

Although the truth remains the same, strategy changes according to the times, circumstances and situations that we find ourselves in.

This is also true with Satan down through the ages. His methods have been simple, but effective: persecution, death in the arena, and many other atrocities Satan tried in order to stop the advancement of the kingdom of God. However, Satan has found that the Gates of Hell cannot prevail against the Church of Jesus Christ.

About 300 A.D. we found that Satan's strategy changes. Constantine supposedly becomes a Christian and Christianity is accepted as the bona fide religion in the Roman world. Now God's people, instead of being persecuted, find themselves being applauded, accepted and put on a pedestal which is a dangerous place to be.

In the immediate years following Christ’s death there was little formal organization of the Christian movement. The early converts thought that the return of Christ was near and they concentrated on their own personal lives of being ready for His coming. But by the second century there was a formal, hierarchical organization within the church.

There seems to be a two prong attack against Christianity. One comes from being accepted and no more persecution, and another from within by a false doctrine.

The most important development was the rise of the Bishop of Rome to a position of pre-eminence in the hierarchy of the church and with the title of “Pope” or “Father” in Greek. Rome became the center of the Christian faith for it was the largest city in the West, the capital of an empire and had a certain respect that was transferred to the Pope or Bishop of Rome.

It was during this time that serious debates raged about the personage of Christ. Arias, a priest in Alexandria believed that Christ was not fully God because he was not of a substance identical with God. Arias did not believe that Jesus was co-eternal with God and the controversy became so serious that Constantine convened a council called the “Nicene Council.” The council branded the idea of Arias as a heresy which was a doctrine contrary to the official teachings of the Church. Christ was declared henceforth to be of the same substance of God.

It was during these years of relative peace that the doctrines of the Church were being worked out. However, it is like Jesus said when He gave the parables of the kingdom in Matthew 13 that the wheat and the tares (the real and the false) will grow together until the harvest. This is what we had then and this is what we still have today.

Throughout the ages we see three things developing in every congregation and denomination. First, we have the Lord's commands. This is not debatable; they are simply to be obeyed. Secondly, we have the apostolic teaching. Thirdly, we have what a congregation agrees on doing. There is nothing wrong with this, but what happens is that we begin to substitute point number three with point number one. In other words, what the congregation agrees on doing becomes as authoritative as the Lord's commands.

Like our text reads at the beginning of this chapter "we should not be ignorant of the devil's devices or schemes."

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 7

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the spirit of our God."

The Dark Ages, or as some historians call the Medieval Ages, was a time of continual fighting between warrior kings of Europe. It was a time of lawlessness, superstition, magic, evil and dragons.

To the north, were the Vikings, who were known as the “Tall Men of the North." They terrified the southern Europeans with their height, blue eyes, fair coloring, and fierce warlike ways. A prayer during that time was: "Lord, save us from the savages of the North.” The Vikings became known as the Norsemen - People from the North.

Few people could read or write. Most people lived in mud huts that were surrounded by a wooden stockade. Life was localized and self-sufficient. Scholars of the day found refuge in Arabia. There their records were made and kept safe. Societies and religions began during the Dark Ages. Much fighting took place, but it was also a birthing time.

Although there was much violence during this period it was also a glorious period in many ways. Scholars began to pave the way towards creating real scholarship, writing, books, printing, etc. Europe which had been demoralized by Rome's tyranny of many years also began to break out in its new found freedom.

Shortly after his historic sacking of Rome, Alaric the 1st dies of fever in 410. He did not live long to enjoy much of his success, but future generations did. Throughout the fifth century - wave after wave of invading tribes flooded into Rome and fought to stake their claim on the waning Roman Empire.

Clovis, King of the Franks (through his wife Clotilda) makes a decision to accept Christianity as his religion and was baptized in 496 at the age of 30. He made Paris his capital and his kingdom was basically what is known as present-day France and southwestern Germany. He formed a crucial alliance with the Roman Catholic Church and brought about a certain stability in the land.

Justinian the 1st, also called the great, was the Byzantine Emperor (527- 565). He extended Byzantine rule in the West, beautified Constantinople and completed the codification of Roman law. It was during this era of the Medieval Age what is known as the Justinian Code was formalized and became known as the body of civil law which still governs most of Europe today.

It was also in this era that Mohammed was born in Mecca. He would often withdraw to a cave where he would meditate and pray. It was during one of these times that supposedly Gabriel the Archangel appeared to him and proclaimed him a prophet.

Another prominent man during this era was Charles "The Hammer" Martel (688-741). He was also the grandfather of Charlemagne. Eventually he became a Supreme leader of the Franks. His greatest achievement was his war with the Muslims from Spain who invaded France in 742. In a battle near Poitiers, the emir of Spain was killed and the Islamic thrust into Europe was checked.

Also in 742, probably in Aachen, Charlemagne the grandson of Charles Martel was born. Charlemagne led the Frankish armies to victory over numerous other peoples and established his rule in most of western and central Europe. He was probably the best-known and most influential king in Europe in the Middle Ages.

It was in this atmosphere of wars, bigotry, superstition, etc. that the kingdom of God was invading. Slowly, but like yeast beginning to work itself throughout the society and culture, the Kingdom of God was advancing.

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 8

1 Corinthians 4:11-13 "To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answered kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world."

When we look back at the extension of the kingdom of God starting from that small obscure village in Palestine we realized that in the past 2000 years there have been the ups and downs. However, the scale goes slowly upwards throughout these past 2000 years. In other words, there were times when we saw the church declining in influence as well as outreach, but the general direction has been upwards.

The next season of time that we look at is what has been known as the “Dark Ages” from 400 to 800 A.D. Although modern historians have called the next 500 years of European history the dark ages in reality, this era saw truth and light piercing paganism and bringing conversion and cultural liberation to Europe.

The barbarians who had learned their lesson of debauchery from their Roman masters had now conquered the empire. This was also a time of great men/women with faith. A new army was being raised up. It was an army that did not conquer by sword and force, but through love. They laid the foundations of Western civilization, not with swords of steel, but with the sword of the Spirit and its truth, which promised to set the captives free.

It was during this time unknown to most that this new army was beginning to change society, culture, etc. one person at a time. We can compare these two armies. First, we have the pagan army that for 4000 years had accumulated all the wealth and had ruled with unprecedented power over these years. On the other hand, there is a small band of people who had no influence, no wealth, but they went out and began to spread the faith one person at a time until their influence began to permeate society.

They were men like Severus who had control over 100 men and had charge to keep order in the Temple of Venus while the people worshiped this idol. Not being able to stand any longer the worship of this false idol he stood in the temple and proclaimed Jesus Christ as Lord. This was not a popular thing to do and sure enough it was reported to the people higher up and he was brought befor e Caesar and while being held by two men they cut off his head.

There were others like Theodorus who had angels visit him. It is said that because of his faith he was stretched out on a rack with his bones being pulled out of their sockets. He was asked how he could endure the pain and he said: “For a while I did feel pain, but then a young man stood by and was wiping the sweat off my face and refreshing me with cool water and so delighted me that I regretted being let down from the rack.” His bravery was so great that the authorities let him go and helped him to recuperate from his wounds.

Thaddeus was another Christian who was so enraged against the gladiatorial events in the arena, where even Christians would come after church, that he rushed into the midst of the two gladiators who were fighting and shouted: "STOP!" The crowd was so enraged that they shouted, "Down with him!" Sure enough one of the gladiators ran him through with a sword. All of a sudden there was silence. While he laid there in a puddle of blood the people began to leave one by one. That was the beginning of the end of the gladiatorial events. One man made a difference.

When I think of the cultural war of the 21st century that we are in - how we need to see men and women like Thaddeus raised up who will stand in the midst of the malaise that we live in and say: “Stop; enough is enough.”

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 9

“Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His Name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” Luke 24:47

It was during this time in the dark ages (400 AD - 800AD) that Islam began and it spread quite rapidly - mainly through the sword. This new religion moved into areas where Christianity had sprouted and soon the church began to disappear. If you were to go to Turkey today you will find the ruins of the seven churches of Asia Minor mentioned in Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

Islam spread throughout the Middle East, came across North Africa and then over to Spain and tried to cross over the Pyrenees Mountains into France and the rest of Europe. I mentioned Charles “The Hammer” Martel who fought the Muslim invasion and the Islamic thrust into Europe that was checked when a battle was fought near Poitiers and the Emir of Spain was killed. During this time the "Tall Men of the North," that terrified the southern Europeans with their height, blue eyes, fair coloring, and fierce, warlike ways were also pushing into other parts of Europe.

It was during this time that our church fathers had to make a decision. When they sat down and evaluated all that was taking place in the world - especially with the spread of Islam wiping out the church in the Middle East and across North Africa - they had to make a decision. Should they dig in and try to hold on to what they have or should they go out and evangelize the Norsemen/men of the north? They decided that to go out and not dig in. It was a right decision and 300 years later after the fall of Rome Christianity had taken over Europe except perhaps for Norway.

Matthew Henry said: “The mighty heroes of the world conquered nations for themselves and made them miserable. The apostles conquered them for Christ and made them happy.” This was true not only of the Apostles, but also those who followed in their footsteps. Part of that army were those who took in the babies that were going to be aborted, fed the poor, and did other acts of mercy. They were seen by the others and this led many to accept Christ. The one thing that you find with this army is their commitment and sacrifice of the Gospel.

It was during this time unknown to most that this new army was beginning to change society, culture etc. one person at a time. We can compare these two armies. First we have the pagan army that for 4000 years had accumulated all the wealth and had ruled with unprecedented power over these years.

On the other hand there was a small band of people that had no influence politically speaking and no wealth, but they went out and began to spread the kingdom of God one person at a time until their influence permeated society.

Our view of God determines everything. If we have bad theology we will compromise and eventually our liberties will be taken away from us.

What can we learn from all of this for our day and age? One lesson that I would like to bring out is that we should never have a “dug in mentality.” After World War II some of our church and missions leaders in the early 1950’s sat down to evaluate the world after that tremendous war to see where we stand in regards to missions.

Communism took over China and the missionaries had to leave. Nationalism had taken over Indonesia and India (some of our largest mission fields) and missionaries could not come in any more. Church and mission leaders had to make a decision: Should we hold on to what we have or advance? Sadly, they saw a down trend in missions and made the decision to ‘dig in’ and hold on to what they have.

When I was converted and sensed God was calling me to the mission field I took a course in missions. In that course the teacher spent so much time telling me about all the places where I could not go as a missionary which were the places where missionaries were needed. I was questioning God if He was really calling me to the mission field. The teacher was thinking like those who have a ‘dug in’ mentality.

In Acts 2:14 Peter stood up in Jerusalem and preached the Gospel of the Kingdom and it began to spread. Through the Apostle Paul it took a westward course. In the last 50 years we have seen some of the greatest advancements of missions in the history of the church.

A couple of years ago I was in Dubai in the Middle East and saw how there was such a movement of the Gospel back to Jerusalem. The thought that came into my mind was: The Gospel of the Kingdom has circumnavigated the world and is now coming back to Jerusalem. Luke said: “Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His Name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” Luke 24:47

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 10

Isaiah 54:17 “No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, this is their vindication from me,” declares the Lord.

One other lesson that we can learn during this period is that we need to be intellectually ready to give a reason for the hope that is within us. When the barbarians came and the church was being wiped out in the Middle East and North Africa – this is what was needed.

It is said that history repeats itself. Also, it is said that the one thing that we have learned from history is that we do not learn. When we look back in history do we see any difference with what was happening then and what is taking place in our society today? I don’t think so.

For example, in his book RELIGION OF PEACE Robert Spencer brings out the following: “The ‘war on terror’ is an ideological conflict - one of which Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, atheists, secular Muslims, and others have a stake. But on that ideological front, the West is being notably deficient. And this is due, in no small part, not only to a lack of cultural self-confidence, but also to a sense that Christianity - upon which Western civilization is largely based - and Islam are at best morally equivalent. In the view of many left - liberal leaders, Christianity itself, or religion in general, is the real problem.”

Throughout history the early church faced “a war on terror.” Robert Spencer goes on to say: “If it is widely recognized, however, that the war on terror is in fact a struggle against an Islamic Jihad that would conquer and subjugate Western non - Muslims, and which is well on its way to doing so in Europe, and Western countries face a choice. They can acquiesce to the demands of their Muslim populations and, little by little, adopt provisions of Islamic sharia law until the Islamic social order is fully implemented. Or, they can choose to stand up for Judeo - Christian values and defend them against the ideological challenge of jihad and sharia.”

A question that comes to my mind is: Isn’t this what took place during the rise of Islam that began to spread through the Middle East and North Africa where the church had been planted, but was slowly beginning to disappear? They can ‘acquiesce to the demands of their Muslim populations and, little by little, adopt provisions of Islamic sharia law until the Islamic social order is fully implemented.’ We see this taking place in the West even today in countries like Great Britain, Germany, France and Sweden.

World Magazine interviewed author Rodney Stark about Islam and asked him the question: Why did the Muslims gain military victory with such ease during the seventh century? His response was: “They were very well-organized and led, and they were highly mobile (everyone rode on a camel and then dismounted to fight). In addition, they were opposed by fortress garrison troops who were poorly suited to fight battles of maneuver. Eventually, the Muslim invaders ran into quality Christian forces at Tours (Poitiers) and were routed. From then on the Muslim tide began to ebb. Christians soon began to retake Spain, then Sicily and Southern Italy, so that they were liberated.” However, it would be safe to say that there was no mass conversion to Islam. It took almost two centuries despite the immense financial and social benefits of converting.

It seems that the argument that Satan uses quite often is the argument of moral equivalency. In our Western world today (and it would seem the same in the Medieval Age as well) that we have modern liberals who would claim that there is no difference between the radical ideology of the Islamic Jihadist and the fundamental Christian today.

After September 11, 2001 very few in power would even suggest that Islam was the problem and that Christianity might be the answer. They saw the Islamist imposing Islam on their society, but the Christians doing the same thing and the latter posing a more serious threat. The modern liberal saw the Taliban beheading the people, but so would the Christians if they got the chance, according to their thinking.

Robert Spencer said: “It is a common assumption among many left – liberals in the West that Christian and Muslim extremist, radicals, or fundamentalists are two sides of the same coin.”

But is there a difference between Christians and Muslims? “When a tsunami devastated Muslim Indonesia and other South Asian countries in 2004, Western states pledged millions. The United States sent $950 million, Great Britain almost 800 million, Germany over 670 million, Canada of 400 million, France about 300 million, Norway 175 million and so on. The European Union also kicked in $628 million aside from the individual contribution of its member states, making Europe’s contribution two billion. The West contributions weren’t merely financial; the United States and Australia Armed Forces were the first responders to bring aid to people in need. This Western generosity, however, has gone largely unnoticed. What of oil rich Muslim nations? Qatar sent $25 million. After criticism of their initial paltry responses, Saudi Arabia sent 300 million, Kuwait 100 million, and the United Emirates 20 million.” (Quote from the book Religion of Peace)

What comes out to me is that we can learn from this period of history so that we need to know what we believe and be able to articulate it well. The more I look at history and the spread of the Kingdom of God the more I see that Jesus Christ is the answer and that the love of God conquers all; it never fails.

TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 11

Matthew 15:6 “You nullify the Word of God for the sake of your tradition.”

It was during this time (medieval age) that tradition began to set in. Three things come out that I think are important. First, we have the commands of the Lord. When it comes to these commands this is not something we debate, but simply obey.

Secondly, we have the commands of the apostles. Again these are things that we are to take seriously, but they are not in the same category as the commands of the Lord. For example, the early church, under the direction of the Apostles did something that has not really been repeated since:
Acts 4:34-35 “There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.”

Thirdly, what we have coming in is that a congregation will set up some rules or regulations that they agree to be governed by. Again, there is nothing wrong with this, but what happens is that number three begins to take on the importance of number one and soon number one fades out. Isn’t this what happened in Jesus’ days when He rebukes the Pharisees and teachers of the Law when He said that they nullify the Word of God for the sake of their tradition?

Author Rodney Stark, when he was being interviewed by World Magazine, said that the growth of Christianity from its start to the time of Constantine was about 3.4 percent a year. This means that at this rate of growth almost 50 percent of the Roman Empire would have been Christian by the year 350.

One other aspect of this growth was the importance of women. Christian women enjoyed many advantages compared with pagan women and the early congregations were quite disproportionately women and they in turn saw their husbands, sons and brothers converted.

Constantine made Christianity the official religion, lavished it with financial support and ended the persecutions, but the results were quite disastrous. Before Constantine made Christianity the official state religion – to take on the mantle of being a Christian they faced serious risks and made real sacrifices that their commitment demanded of them, but now it was different.

During this period church officials were among the ruling elite and so the sons of the rich and powerful rushed into the clergy and soon holiness was a thing of the past. The church became lazy and soon tradition set in and the commands of Christ became a thing of the past.

According to Stark, medieval Europe was very irreligious. He went on to say that people today point to the huge and splendid cathedrals built during this time and that they reflected the great regard that the common people had for the church. But, like Stark said, look at all of the splendid castles and palaces built during this same period. Does this mean that the common people had a great regard for the nobility? They did not have great respect, because both the palaces and cathedrals were squeezed out of the peasants at a great price.

However, there were some bright spots during this time.

1. The final dissolution of heathenism in the eastern empire may be dated from the middle of the fifth century. In the year 435 Theodosius II commanded the temples to be destroyed or turned into churches. In the West, heathenism maintained itself until near the middle of the sixth century.

2. The literary triumph of Christianity. In the first three centuries Christians confessed their faith in the midst of suffering and death. Now they had to come up against hypocrisy, selfishness, ambition, intolerance, the charge of catering to the ruling class, etc. Apologists like Augustine came to the forefront (City of God) as Schaff's, History of the Church said: “The City of God is the most powerful, comprehensive, profound, and fertile production in refutation of heathenism and vindication of Christianity, which the ancient church has bequeathed to us, and forms a worthy close to her literary contest with Graeco-Roman paganism. It is a grand funeral discourse upon the departing universal empire of heathenism, and a lofty salutation to the approaching universal order of Christianity.”

What is important for us to see that in the midst of all the turbulence we see that the Kingdom of God is continuing on.

TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 12

CHRISTIANITY UNDER SIEGE 600-1400 AD

Every few generations, every few hundred years - something comes up on the world scene that makes us think that this is the ‘end times’ or that the kingdom of God is not going to make it. However, the one common denominator in it all is that God is on the throne and the Kingdom of God marches on. It is unstoppable. Like I said before, we start with the will of God “in the beginning,” and we will end with the will of God “so that God may be all in all.”

Between these two book ends of God’s will we find many obstacles, hurdles, persecutions, doubts, discouragements and at times it seems that all is lost, but often at the last minute God raises up His men, His army and the kingdom of God continues on. This is the case between 600-1400 AD. The kingdom of God was up against not only the barbarians, but what we could now call bio-terrorism.

Up to this time in the history of the kingdom of God we see that dark kingdoms that had been dominated by pagan tyrants with human sacrifices are being liberated from misery to happiness. During this period in the history of the church some dark clouds were gathering against the church and the powers of darkness were marshalling their forces. Several questions come to mind.

During this period would the fledging kingdom of light survive an all out assault from the powers of darkness? Looking back we see that Satan threw everything that he had to stop the advance of the kingdom of God.

Savage armies would come up against God’s kingdom. Would they be able to fend them off? Armies were gathering, ideologies were being formulated to come against God’s kingdom. During this time three invading armies would come. Would the church be able to stand?

Islam, a new pervading religion was exploding on the scene and coming in to attack from the South. Vikings (the Norsemen of the North) were invading from the North and the Bubonic plague was coming in from the East. Was this the end? It certainly seemed so to those who were living at that time.

Another question to be asked during that time was whether the church would fall prey to the deception within its own movement? Not only do we have the enemies without, but also within. Right from the very start of the kingdom of God we see how deception throughout her history has dogged the advancement of the God’s kingdom. It became very acute during this period of time.

Along with the deception, another question arises: Would the church fall prey to the corruption of the very truths that set them free in the first place? I look at our own country, the USA, and see the Biblical truths that this country has been founded on, but today we find how corrupted our nation has become. Over twenty five hundred years ago Isaiah the prophet said: “So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey.” Isaiah 59:14,15

A.W. Tozer said there are three types of faith: Faith that takes us over the mountain (problem), faith that takes us around the mountain, and faith that takes us through the mountain. Real Biblical faith takes us through the mountain. This is the question during this period: Will the faith of the church survive the biological pandemic to come?

In answering these questions (which we will do in the coming letters) it will shape the lives, faiths and future of generations to come.

TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 13

CHRISTIANITY UNDER SIEGE 600-1400 AD

Christianity as it was just beginning to take root in Europe, was attacked in three different ways: Vikings from the North, plague from the East and Islam from the South. I would like to take the next letters and look at these three attacks that came upon the kingdom of God and see what we can learn from them.

First, we have the Vikings from the North. A key figure in this is Alfred the Great who defeated Guthrum and his Viking armies in 878 A.D. Up until this time when one army defeated another army the five deadly sins were committed. What were they?

1. Human sacrifice.

2. Tyranny / worship of leaders

3. Enslaving or executing enemies

4. Rejection of God's laws

5. Persecution of the believers

Alfred the Great gave to us what we now call "the just war theory.” He took the Ten Commandments and applied it to British Common Law. He is the one who said: “I need three types of men: men who can fight, men who can build, and men who can pray.” He went out to build Western civilization.

Alfred the Great, when he defeated Guthrum, did not do like other pagan kings did in the past to enslave and execute their enemies, but took Guthrum, brought him to Christianity, received baptism at the King’s own hands and was sent back to his own country. Alfred the Great went out to build Western civilization.

Alfred the Great was probably one of the best kings to rule England. He was just and moral. He brought a rebirth to religion; he advocated scholarly activity, brought about a code of laws. He had great military skills and the ability to inspire men. His testimony in brief was: “I desired to live worthily as long as I lived, and to leave after my life, to the men who should come after me, the memory of me in good works.”

Although King Alfred won many battles against the Vikings, the Almighty also allowed him to be harassed by the Vikings, to be sunk down in adversaries, be depressed by some of his followers so that he might learn that there is only one Lord and that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess. It is a lesson that every leader needs to learn, but sadly few do learn that it is God who is in control. He is the One who sets up kings and takes them down. Apostle Paul said: “And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.” Acts 17:25-27

We do not know for sure what religion Guthrum gave up, but we do know that some of them worshipped the one-eyed god of battle, called Odin, and the god, Thor, the hammer-wielding god of thunder. However, with the conversion of Guthrum to Christianity and along with German and Anglo-Saxon preachers - the kingdom of God was beginning to penetrate the men of the North, around 820’s onward.

Several things come out about Alfred the Great that are worth noting.

1. First, we see his piety towards his Maker.

2. Secondly, his devotion to learning and study. Whenever he had leisure time he would have books read to him. He, like Solomon, was a seeker after wisdom.

3. Thirdly, he believed that first things needed to come first. “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” Matthew 6:33

4. Fourthly, Alfred the Great surrounded himself with the right company to help him along the path of godliness and ruling justly. Werefrith, who was bishop of the church in Worcester and well versed in Scripture, Plegmund, the Archbishop of the church of Canterbury and a man of great wisdom, Etheistan and Werwulf, the king’s priests and chaplains, these were all godly men around Alfred. When he had free time he had them read books to him so that he might gain in knowledge and wisdom.

We need to pray and work towards seeing Godly leaders like this raised up in our day and age.

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 14

 TEA PARTY

April 15, 2009, I went to a ‘tea party’ meeting, not the kind of tea party where one sits and drinks tea, but a demonstration against the tyranny of higher and higher taxes. In the early days of the USA, the victory won by the British in the French and Indian war was costly. At the end of the war King George III looked to see how they might tax the American colonies to regroup some of their losses. A number of taxes were imposed upon the colonies (Stamp Act 1765, The Townsend Acts 1767). However, it was the tea tax by the Crown that spurred the colonists to action and laid the groundwork for the revolution that brought their independence.

April 15th, thousands gathered in almost one thousand cities across America to demonstrate by showing that when it came to taxes, entitlements, stimulus spending and bailing out failing companies - putting our future generations into jeopardy - that enough was enough. It was estimated by some news analysts that hundreds of thousands were involved in these demonstrations. In Atlanta, 20 thousand gathered together and in Sacramento, the capital of California, over 5,000 gathered.

We as God’s people need to keep in mind that we do not war against flesh and blood, but against principalities and the powers of darkness of this world. The battle that is being waged is for the minds and hearts of people. Paul tells us exactly what we are up against in 2 Corinthians 10:5 “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

What is the argument and philosophy that we see permeating our society especially here in the West? It is modern liberalism with its two legs - radical individualism and radical egalitarianism. To a great degree it was individualism that built this country. The founding fathers that came over from Europe were rugged individuals and it took this type of man to build a new country.  Alfred the Great said: “Give me men that can pray, men that can build and men that can fight.” However, to hold radical individualism in check we need to have the family, the church and the rule of law.

Radical egalitarianism (or equal outcome) is different. Out of the Great Depression of the 30s the idea of socialism was becoming attractive. The idea of government taking care of us from the cradle to grave was catching on. Bretton Woods was a turning point in all of this. The group known as the “Fabians” (an elite group of intellectuals who agreed with communism as to global socialism but disagreed over the tactics) were represented. Communists wanted to use force and violence (Lenin, Stalin, Mao, etc.), but the Fabians advocated gradualism and the transformation of society. As a matter of fact the “slow moving turtle” became their symbol.

God has given us government and the church and He had a purpose for both. According to our United States Constitution, the government is here to protect our borders and punish evil doers. The church is to reach out to the poor and needy and bring the good news of salvation.

Radical egalitarianism eventually leads to tyranny. To make everyone equal, a force is needed to bring this about. Only government can do this and we know, like Lord Acton said in a letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton in 1887 that: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men."

When I look at Western Europe I see a failure in the church and we in the States are following suit. Because the church has failed to do its duty that God commissioned us for, we find that a spirit of apathy has come over the church. There is a great complacency. It is as if we men do not care or that we reason: “What can I do, I am only one insignificant individual?” One man can make a difference.

A spirit of deception has invaded the church in getting us to think that we are powerless. In Matthew 28:18 Jesus said: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”  Christ is calling us, His church, to make a difference with His authority in the nations of the world. Jesus also said: “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.” Luke 19:10.

What was lost? Genesis 1:28 tells us: “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” We were called to rule on the earth, but we have given away our charge. Socialism is the result of the church giving away her responsibilities to the Government.

We go from the internal to the external, and God is waiting to see a transformation first in our individual lives, then in our families, in our churches, communities, states and countries. But where is the church today?

If we are not ruled by Christ then we will be ruled by dictators and oppressors. We choose what we want.

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 15

 CHRISTIANITY UNDER SIEGE 600-1400 AD

In the beginning of the seventh century a new paganism was coming on the scene called “Islam.” The last 1400 years has been a “jihad” to force people into Islam, or die or become slaves. In the first fifty years of Islam, most of the Middle East and North Africa came under the influence of Islam.

Winston Churchill said: “How dreadful are the curses which Mohamedanism lays on its votaries! Besides the fanatical frenzy, which is as dangerous in a man as hydrophobia in dog, there is this fearful fatalistic apathy. The effects are apparent in many countries. In improvident habits, slovenly systems of agriculture, sluggish methods of commerce, and insecurity of property exist whereever the followers of the Prophet rule or live. A degraded sensualism deprives this life of its grace and refinement; the next of its dignity and sanctity. The fact that in Mohammed Law every woman must belong to some man as his absolute property must delay the final extinction of slavery until the faith of Islam has ceased to be a great power among men."

610 AD, Mohammad had a vision supposedly from the angel Gabriel. There is no history of a nation changing to Islam except by force. A century after Mohammed’s death, the lands of Islam, under Arab leadership, stretched from Spain in the west across North Africa and most of the modern Middle East into Central Asia and northern India.

732 AD Islam was taking over the Iberian Peninsula advancing to take over Europe and on their way to England. It must have been a fearful sight to see 80,000 warriors with their curved swords coming at you. When Islam was spreading throughout Europe we had a problem with the church. Theology is the basis of civilization. If we do not have a right understanding of who God is then it will hinder the spread of a right and just civilization.

Medieval Christianity was more of a wholesale rather than individual conversion. The conversion to Christianity came about through the command of the leaders or by political influence with alliances made with heathen princes and their Christian wives. In other words, people became Christian in name only, and not through a new birth as laid down by the apostles. Christianity became more traditional (as taught through the fathers, monks and pope) than Biblical. It was more a baptism of water than by the Holy Spirit and fire. The missionaries of the time were mainly monks of little education or limited education, but they often had great zeal and self denial.

However, in the midst of all of this the contrast between Christianity and Islam that was spreading mainly through force and the sword. Christianity came with persuasion. Often when the Apostle Paul went into the synagogue he reasoned, proved and persuaded the people. Christianity carried with it the promise of freedom, family life and building a just civilization.

Islam came with the sword and brought in polygamy, slavery, despotism and desolation. The moving power behind Christianity was love to God and man, but the moving power behind Islam is fanaticism and the sword. I have been able to travel to a hundred different countries and have found that Christianity finds a home among all nations and different groups of people.

Islam forcefully marched and took over the lands of the Bible, the Greek Church, it seized the throne of Constantine, overran Spain and crossed over the Pyrenees and even for a time threatened the Church of Rome and the German empire. The Crusades originated with the desire to from the followers of Mohammed the “holy lands.” In the ensuing years of slaughtering one another, a hatred built up and even today when missionaries go out from the West to the Muslim lands the Muslims bring up the Crusades, and so the answer to other religions was “the sword.” In the crusades we tried the same thing and failed.

However, there were blessings in disguise. The conquest of Constantinople (now Istanbul) drove Greek scholars with the Greek New Testament to Italy where there was a revival of letters which in turn helped pave the way for the Protestant Reformation.

Several lessons that we can learn from this are:

1. True essence of religion is love to God and to man. The church cannot allow this to be eaten out by hatred and strife.

2. Disunity in the Body of Christ opens the door for the enemy to come in to steal precious souls from the Kingdom of God. We must keep in mind Jesus’ last prayer in John 17. The jealously between the Greek and Latin Church made the Body of Christ weak and there was no defense against marauding hordes.

3. God can take something that was made for evil and turn it around for something good. Islam coming in destroyed idolatry and, I believe, paved the way for the ‘real Gospel.’ Communism in China destroyed the ancestor worship and opened the door to the Gospel.

God did say, regarding the church, that the “gates of Hades will not overcome it.”

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH - Part 16

 CHRISTIANITY UNDER SEIGE 600-1400 AD

In 1348 the Black Death coming out of the East reached the shores of Italy and quickly spread throughout the rest of Europe. The bubonic plague had come and many people thought that this was a judgment from God because of their sins.

During this time, as well as with the onslaught of Islam into Europe, we had a problem with the church. Christianity had dominated Europe and had become accepted instead of persecuted. This brought about a certain peace and people’s devotion to the Lord began to wane. The church began to take on pagan characteristics.

We know from pagan rulers that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. This began to happen to the church. Church was weak and did not have a strong theology for the kingdom of God.

The spirit of passivity began to set in. Not only did devotion to God and the things of God diminish, but God was taken for granted. The church had become powerful and wealthy. When the plague came the church reacted in several different ways. Some turned to God and prayed for salvation, some turned to debauchery and increased in sinful behavior with the attitude of 'drink and be merry.” Superstition and scapegoats entered the scene. Religious fervor and fanaticism were some of the ways considered in dealing with the problem of the Black Death. Some even thought that the ringing of the church bells would drive the disease away.

Before this pandemic would runs its course almost ½ of Europe (about 25 million people) would be killed. Today that would be like two billion people. About this time was the start of what is known as the “flagellant movement.” These were people who traveled from town to town whipping themselves with leather thongs hoping to stay the ‘wrath of God.’ It could very well be that these people actually helped in spreading the disease.

People had looked upon the church as being all powerful, but now the reputation of the church declined because the priests as well as doctors did not know what to do. Although there were some doctors and priests who cared for the people unselfishly there were far more of those who left their post and those who had not contracted the deadly disease died. It is said that Pope Clement VI was forced to grant remissions of sins to all who died of the Black Death and allowed “confession” to be to one another and even to a woman.

Just from this one act one can see how the church was moving away from the Word of God. James tells us that we should confess our sins to one another and pray for one another that we might be healed. It would seem from this proclamation that Pope Clement VI and the Black Death was being used to bring people back to a more Biblical practice.

Several things with the church happened after the pandemic. First the new priests were more inexperienced and less educated than their predecessors which in turn led to a worse reputation of the church.

The church charged money for some of their services. The result was that the church became richer. So because of the inadequacies of the new priests stepping in, the church not having any answers regarding the Black Death and the church becoming richer off of her services, people started to question and even revolt against the church. This was actually laying the seeds for the reformation that was going to come.

The view on children had changed when the Black Death had run its course. Children were considered ‘not worth the trouble to raise’ and the birth rate dropped. It is said that it took almost 400 years to raise the population back to pre-Black Death figures.

Looking at this period of time one sees the need for right theology and a close walk with the Lord.

It is amazing to think that one tiny flea riding on the back of a rat changed the course of Europe - socially, economically, politically and religiously.

TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 17

 800 AD TO 1400 AD

Romans 1:18-19 “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.”

It is important to say something about the Crusades that took place during this time. They started in 1077 AD and continued for the next two centuries. Many mistakes were made on both sides, but I think it is important to understand that by the time of 3rd and 4th century Christianity had taken over much of the Holy Land as well as the Middle East.

By the 9th and 10th century, Islam, by force, had taken over these lands and much persecution had followed, and finally Christians in the West responded. It was a defense against Muslim imperialism.

Dr. Paul Johnson, an English historian said: “The Crusades, far from being an outrageous prototype of Western imperialism, as taught in most schools, were a mere episode in a struggle that lasted for 1400 years and were one of the few occasions when Christians took the offensive to regain occupied territories of the holy land.”

We must keep in mind that the lasting answer to the Muslim situation is not military war, but like John Calvin said: “Until the church finds the will and the heart to care for those lost souls bound in Islam with the hope of the gospel, we shall always be at peril.” We must have the heart and the sacrifice to send missionaries into that part of the world.

One of the reasons why Christianity is undefeatable is not because we have the more powerful weapons, but it is because we have the truth. The church is the depository of the truth that must be guarded at all cost. The truth spreads through acts of mercy and kindness, not by the Sword but by the Spirit and the Word of God - appealing to men and women to come back to the knowledge of God. Paul writing to the Romans told us that one of the main problems we have in the world today and why the world is like it is - is because men knowing the truth suppress the truth.

During this time we have several people - a new type of warrior was coming on the scene that seemed to have grasped something of what the cultural mandate is talking about in Genesis 1:28: “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’”

One of these new warriors who came on the scene was Alfred the Great (whom I’ve already mentioned) who did the following in building the Western Civilization. He brought in the ‘Just War Theory' that consisted of the following:

1. War as a last resort.

2. Waged against legitimate civil or individual authority.

3. Re-dressing a wrong suffered.

4. Reasonable chance of success.

5. Goal is peace.

6. Genocide of a population is prohibited.

7. Limited violence to noncombatants.

Also, Alfred the Great brought in the monogamous relationship in marriage. This elevated women, helped to teach children and began to bring in education, etc. We see the rise of the universities and other educational institutions.

Margaret, grand-daughter of Edmund King of England and daughter of Edgar the Aetheling who had been deposed by William I the Conqueror, was a devout Christian woman who reformed the Celtic church through her familiarity with Roman Christian practices and was sanctified as St. Margaret in 1250.

Margaret could have become the Queen of England, but had to flee when things turned against her and she fled by ship for Hungary. However, a severe storm came up and she landed in Scotland instead. Margaret met her future husband, Malcolm Canmore, when she was fleeing with her brother from William the Conqueror's invading army in 1066. Their ship was wrecked on the Scottish coast.

She married Malcolm III King of Scotland in 1070. Malcolm was the son of King Duncan. Duncan had been killed by Macbeth, and Malcolm in turn defeated and killed Macbeth after living for some years in England. Malcolm had been married previously to Ingibjorg, the daughter of the Earl of Orkney.

Margaret, being a godly person became a leading voice for changes that affected the social as well as spiritual life of Scotland.

One other person that I would like to mention is John Wycliffe who translated the Bible into the English language. Not only did he translate the Bible into the English language, but he trained a group of men who were called “Lollards.” These men went throughout England preaching and teaching the Word of God. It is said that in 30 to 40 years 40% of England were followers of the Lollards.

Yes, this was a period of many turbulent attacks against the Kingdom of God, but it also shows what a few dedicated people can achieve who want to follow the truth.

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 18

 THE DELUSION OF THE ‘DIVINE RIGHT OF KINGS’ (1400 - 1650 AD)

1 Samuel 8:4-5 “So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, ‘You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have.’”

The Bible tells us that we should not be ignorant of the devil’s devices. The mustard seed that was sown in the little obscure village in Palestine had grown by the 16th century and like a mighty oak; its roots were deep. No external pagan force could stand against it so the Prince of Darkness resorted to send forth his minions as counterfeit angels of light robed in righteousness. This evil delusion was the “Divine Right of Kings.”

Just like God warned the Children of Israel in what would happen if they appointed a king over them, so we see that these powerful monarchs did as God said would happen. Eventually they ignored the rights of the people, confiscated their land as well as weapons and forced them into their armies of conquest.

“Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do. He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. And others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. Your menservants and maidservants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves.” (Vs. 9, 11, 13-17)

During this time we see the tares being manifested. This was a time that the church was in a decline for almost 200 years. A new paganism was coming in, but not like the pagans of old because they were coming in with religious Christianity garb. Like one of the princes said: "To be successful you must use fear and expedience and not governed by principle. It is safer to be feared than to be loved." This was the thought that governed those in power during this period.

Basically the “Divine Right of Kings” was a political and religious doctrine of royal absolutism. It asserted that a king is subject to no earthly authority and his right to rule came directly from God. To go against the king and his rule would be to go against God Himself.

During this time there had been a revival of intellectual growth, but education among the common people had not changed. People on a whole were illiterate and not able to read the Bible. We find that monarchs, leading men/women of society, church leaders could make decisions that were even contrary to Biblical teaching, but the common people would not know what the Bible said and so who were they to confront the leadership on decisions that were made.

Eventually this ignorance allowed the monarchy to claim ultimate sovereignty over their land and impose laws and restrictions upon their people in the name of God. Some of the rulers, like James the First, used the “Divine Right of Kings” in a positive way to help the people, but most used it to push their own agenda and fortunes.

Theologically we know that no human being can have or obtain ultimate authority. Only God is truly sovereign. But when there is a lack of Biblical knowledge among the people this authority is not questioned. People assumed that the leaders were telling the truth.

One of the reasons for these weeklies is to look at history and see what we can learn from it. When I take a look at Western Civilization today I see where government has taken the “Divine Right of Kings.” It is not using that title, but the authority is there.

Here in the States we have what is known as “Eminent Domain” where land can be confiscated by the government if it can be used for, what they think might be, the common good.

We now are getting what we call “hate speech laws” where if we were to preach the whole truth of the Word of God some of it is now labeled “hate speech.” We see a ‘dummy-down syndrome’ in our education - especially here in the States - not only in Biblical knowledge, but also in knowledge of our own history and the principles that our country was built upon.

Western civilization (this includes the USA) is moving toward a system where a select elite group will rule and the rest are slaves. Let us learn from the past so that we will not repeat the mistakes in the future.

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 19

 TRUTH TRIUMPHS OVER TYRANTS 1400-1650 AD

John 8:32 “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

During this time period a new group of liberators were being raised up that would change, not only the course of history, but bring in principles that would enhance and change Western civilization. These liberators were men like Martin Luther, John Calvin, Tyndale, Swingli and many others.

They were men of conviction. Their faith in the Lord was not a preference, something they preferred over other faiths, but their faith was a conviction. It was in their very fiber of who they were. The difference between a faith that is a preference and one that is a conviction is that a preference can be changed if enough pressure is brought to bear upon the person. A person with a faith that is a conviction is unchangeable, if necessary is willing to stand alone; the matter is non-negotiable and they do not need to be assured of success before they stand. These were the men that God was raising up 'for such a time as this.'

Martin Luther was brought before the “diet of Worms.” Worms is a city in Germany. The Emperor of Germany held a council in the city of Worms. These council meetings were called a “diet” (from the Latin word “dies,” meaning day) because originally the meetings lasted for one day. Here is what Luther said: “Since your Majesty and your Lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason, I do not accept the authority of popes or councils, for they have contradicted each other. My conscience is bound by the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything; to go against conscience is not right or safe. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. So help me, God. Amen.”

It was also during this time that the printing press was invented and this helped to speed up the Word of God in being released. It was seen to be more powerful than sword or any army that ever marched. The Truth was being discovered and the Truth is what sets us free. Within 30 years a good part of Europe had become Protestants.

At the dawn of the 17th century despotic tyrants were still trying to hang onto their thrones, but the people had a new light that was beginning to shine into the darkest places in the most corrupt cities. This new light was being preached in pulpits throughout Geneva, Edinburgh and England and it was setting the people free.

This freedom did not come without a cost. Bodies were burned and tortured. Thousands were exiled and in some places whole towns were annihilated by those who were trying to put out the Holy Spirit fire. However, when England was at its worst, a new reformation was being started. John Knox, as a galley slave, looked out and said: “Give me Scotland or I die.” The Word of God was more powerful in the hearts of these men than the tyranny of the king.

When we trace the advancement of the Kingdom we see the ministry of the Holy Spirit. John Knox discipled John Witherspoon and it was Witherspoon who discipled some of our founding fathers here in America. A foundation was being built over a period of 1700 years.

A strategy that was used then to bring Reformation is also the strategy that we can use now to bring in Reformation today. Not compromising, but going out as conquerors in Christ.

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 20

 THE FRENCH REVOLUTION (1650-1850 AD)

Psalm 2:1 “Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?”

When Paul was in Athens he was invited to speak in a meeting of the Areopagus. In the midst of his discourse he said: “From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.”

One of the things that we see is that every nation has a relationship with God whether they know it or not. Nations can choose to walk in God’s ways or not to. By the 18th century nations in Europe were making their choice. Some ran towards the Creator, but others did not. Some of the richest and most powerful nations in Europe decided to go their own way.

France was one of the nations that decided not to go God’s way. Instead of going for the reformation they went for a revolution with the model of "libert`e, fraternit`e, equalit`e." Would the French revolution succeed where Rome had failed in freeing the human nature of its brutal propensity to murder, theft and slavery?

We see that the revolution killed or exiled its leaders, kept the masses ignorant and set the stage for their own downfall. We see that the temptation to have power and the excitement of the guillotine overwhelmed the model of liberty, fraternity and equality.

It is said that at the time of the French Revolution there was such a sophistication of deception that the world is still deceived after 200 years. It is important for us to see what some of the foundational stones were in the French Revolution. Later on we will be looking at the American Revolution and in all honesty there is no comparison. The reason this is important because we see some of these same foundational stones in our own Western civilization today. We need to learn from history so that we do not repeat those mistakes.

Foundational results of the French Revolution:

1. A violent rejection of Biblical Christianity. When we see today how God is kicked out of our schools, businesses and our courts we see this same rejection in our own society.

2. Ignorance in respect to God and the Bible. A survey was taken in one particular denomination to find out why so many pastors were dropping out of the pastorate. They came up with four reasons, but the last was interesting and highlights this second point. They dropped out because of "Biblical illiteracy." They did not know the Word of God!

3. The “Enlightenment” filled the vacuum created by unbelief. Man is a religious person. If we do not believe in God then that vacuum needs to be filled with something else. What is filling the vacuum in our Western Society today?

4. Historical revision bred shame of French heritage. I think of the chant given at a demonstration at Stanford University: “Hey, hey, ho, ho, Western Civilization’s got to go!” Yes, there are problems with our Western Civilization, but we still have the freedom to demonstrate, etc.

5. The reversal of the true nature of man. Instead of the recognition that the problem is sin, the explanation for the problems was that man was tied in knots by rules and laws, etc. It seems today in our Western society that nobody takes responsibility for their own actions. It is always someone or something else that is to blame.

6. A destruction of all order and established institutions.

7. Rejection of moral standards. They had moral anarchy. Anything goes today as well. Since there is no absolute truth everybody does what he/she thinks is right. The history of all societies is not class warfare, but ethical warfare against a sovereign God. This is one of the main causes behind the economic collapse around the world we are experiencing today.

8. Christianity is persecuted while the occult is promoted. I left the USA in 65 and did not come back home for seven years. When I did I was surprised to see how many occultist shops had been opened in those seven years.

9. Crime, vice, indulgence and socialism destroyed the French economy. In our Western world today we are seeing the destruction of our economy because of the same thing.

10. Circuses were given as holidays just like they did in the days of Rome. We have the same today with football, basketball, etc. If we do not turn our worship to God then we will turn to something else; it’s our nature to worship.

Like I said, the one thing we can learn from history is that we do not learn from history.

KINGDOM OF GOD – Part 21

AMERICAN REVOLUTION 1650-1850 AD

Luke 16:16 "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John (the Baptist). Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.”

After the French Revolution another man by the name of Napoleon came upon the scene and eventually brought death to over 20 million people. It is estimated that two generations of men between the ages of 15 and 25 lost their lives.

This eventually brought in communism, Nazi-ism, Statism which in turn eliminated millions of people in the 20th century. (We will look at this later.) We also see a shift in the enemy’s tactics. We now see Paganism in our day, using different ideologies to try to destroy the truth.

After 5000 years of human history a new continent opened up that became a bed of evangelicalism so that after 1600 years the kingdom could flow throughout the world. Our problem is that we do not see history as God's story; the story of His kingdom coming in to full fruition. The American colonies, 3000 miles west of Europe, had developed a model of liberty which was unique in human history.

From the time that Columbus discovered America and before the first Puritans came over - 100 years passed by. Benjamin Franklin Morris states in his epoch book The Christian Life and Character of the Civil Institutions of the United States (written almost 150 years ago) that God did not allow anyone to set foot upon the American soil until His prepared people over in Europe were ready.

The men and women who came over were Christian men and women who were trained and formed by the fires of conflicts raging in Europe. Ideas of liberty and religion were formed and developed through civil and religious revolutions. The persecutions of the Puritans in England for non-conformity, the religious agitations in Germany by Luther and in Geneva by Calvin and in Scotland by Knox – were the preparatory work for those who came over to this new continent to lay down the ground work of establishing the civil institutions of the American continent.

Morris in his book states: “It would, however, be a violence to historic truth not to affirm and admit that they were under the special and constant guidance of an overruling Providence. The Bible, as the divine charter of their political rights, as well as of their hopes of immortality, they reverently studied, and on it laid the corner-stone of all their compacts and institutions. The system of Moses (Mosaic) of political jurisprudence, which contains more consummate wisdom and common sense than all the legislators and political writers of the ancient nations, was thoroughly understood by the founders of the American republic and incorporated its free spirit and democratic principles into their organic institutions.”

When we look back over history we see that ideas have consequences whether good or bad. With these ideas come symbols that characterize a nation or an empire. For example Morris goes on to show that……

1. The Hebrew commonwealth was the symbol of a theocratic government. Its rituals of religion and liberty maintained the form and diffused the spirit of freedom and of a true republican government.

2. The Roman Empire, in its colossal unity and form, was the symbol of law, of the stately grandeur of a strong government, of the reign of military rule and conquest.

3. The symbol of the Greek republic was the ideal.

4. The symbol of the British Empire, from its earliest history till the present, was national aggrandizement and selfishness, originating in the feudal system.

5. The symbol of the French empire is glory. Atheism, practical and theoretical, has ruled the French empire, and its fatal power has more than once threatened the very life of the nation.

6. The founders of the Christian republic of North America adopted the symbol of civil and religious liberty as the great idea and end of all their civil institutions.

It is important for us to understand God’s hand in history so that we might comprehend what He is doing and work along with Him. Since Paul said, “From one man he made every nation of men that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:16-28), several things are worth mentioning here.

First, it is God who determines events - whether it is nations or individuals. It is God who is in control.

Secondly, God moves all things so that men might seek Him or come into redemptive contact of Christ’s work on the cross. God is on the throne and we are moving towards the climax of history: His…story.

 KINGDOM OF GOD – Part 22

 AMERICAN REVOLUTION 1650-1850 A.D.

Psalms 33:12 “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people he chose for his inheritance.”

We cannot go into all the details now regarding the founding fathers, but one thing that stands out is that there was a sense among them that God's hand was upon this new continent.

Listen to the words of Benjamin Franklin: "In this situation of this Assembly, groping as it were in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of lights to illuminate our understanding?

"In the beginning of the Contest with G. Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room for Divine protection. Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor.

"To that kind Providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful Friend? Or do we imagine we no longer need His assistance?

"I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth — that God Governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?

"We have been assured, Sir, in the Sacred Writings, that ‘except the Lord build the House, they labor in vain that build it.’ I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the Builders of Babel...

"I therefore beg leave to move — that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessing on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business."

The question now comes: How will the colonies respond? Will they deteriorate into anarchy and senseless violence, like France would do a decade later? Or, would they respond to the admonition that Benjamin Franklin gave to call upon divine help in laying the foundation of a Biblical nation, a nation that is based on Biblical law and order?

In the American and French Revolution we see that both extolled the ‘virtues’ of human rights. The difference between the American and French Revolution is that the American Revolution believed that human rights came from God, whereas in the French Revolution human rights came from the government. In the Western world today, this is the way that we are moving; that our government gives us our rights and not God.

What are the foundations that were laid by our founding fathers here in the United States of America?

1. An aggressive acceptance of Biblical Christianity. We see this in the words of Benjamin Franklin quoted above. President Obama made the statement that we are not a Christian nation but a nation made up of many different faiths. Was he right in saying this?

What is a Christian nation? Stephen McDowell said in his book Liberating the Nations: "A Christian nation is one that is founded upon Christian principles, whose laws and institutions reflect a Christian worldview.” Have we been founded on Christian principles? The answer is a definite yes!

2. An in-depth knowledge of the Bible by citizens. Our founding fathers were men of the book and as Stephen McDowell goes on to say: “The Bible teaches, and history confirms, that to the degree that nations have applied the principles of the Bible in all spheres of life - it is the degree to which they have prospered, been free, and acted justly.” If we do not recognize God as sovereign, then there will be someone or something else - most usually the government or some individual that we recognize instead.

3. Rejected the influences of the Renaissance.

4. A keen understanding of history and its causes and effects with obedience to God. They recognized that history was God's story and not just a lot of isolated incidents, dates, places, etc. It was God working out his plan and purpose.

5. No toleration of pornography.

6. Voting with secret ballots.

7. An economy based on the Puritan work ethic.

8. A media dominated by religious writings.

8. The days of fasting and prayer for battles, elections, and by pastors and civil authorities.

When I look at these foundations I think of the words of Benjamin Franklin when he quoted the Scripture: “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.” (Psalms 11:3) “If the foundations should be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” This is the question that we need to be asking ourselves.

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 23

 CENTURY OF GENOCIDE 1850-2000 AD

Matthew 28:19-20 “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

During the 19th century we saw one of the greatest expansions of Christianity in the world history. In the 18th century we saw a man by the name of William Carey who left the shores of Great Britain and went to India. He felt an overwhelming responsibility for the people who had never heard of the Gospel.

At a ministers' meeting in 1786, Carey had raised the question of whether it was the duty of all Christians to spread the Gospel throughout the world. J. R. Ryland, the father of John Ryland, is said to have retorted: “Young man, sit down; when God pleases to convert the heathen, he will do it without your aid or mine.”

William Carey published a little book called: AN ENQUIRY INTO THE OBLIGATIONS OF CHRISTIANS TO USE MEANS FOR THE CONVERSION OF THE HEATHENS. It was divided into five parts. The first part consisted of a Biblical basis for missions; the second part was a history of missions from the beginning to the present time; the third part consisted of statistics of what still needed to be done; the fourth part dealt with answers to objections that were raised, and the fifth part called for a mission society that could meet the practical means of seeing missions being accomplished.

Carey became famous for his saying: "Attempt great things for God; expect great things from God." In 1793 William Carey, along with his wife Dorothy and a missionary doctor by the name of John Thomas, arrived in Calcutta, India and began their missionary work. Later their son Peter died of dysentery which caused his wife Dorothy to have an emotional breakdown from which she never recovered.

William Carey started what was known as the "Modern Missionary Movement." New mission societies were formed, missionaries were sent out and the kingdom of God began to spread. In 1793 William Carey left for India and he died at the age of 73 in 1834. During those years of discouragements: no Indian convert for seven years, debt, disease, a deterioration of his wife's mind, death – the grace of God and the power of the Word continued to conquer for Christ through William Carey.

By the time Carey had run the race he had started what is known as a “Modern Missionary Movement,” and seen the Scriptures translated and printed into 40 languages, and founded a college at Serampore, been a college professor and started schools for girls. The Good News of the Gospel of the Kingdom was beginning to go out all over the world. An Indian theologian said about William Carey that he did more for India than Mahatma Gandhi did. Gandhi is known as the father of India. What a testimony of William Carey.

This was the first wave of the modern missionary movement. About 100 years later another young man (age 21) by the name of Hudson Taylor went to China and instead of working on the coast (as most missionaries were doing) he decided to dress like the Chinese and go into their interior. In so doing he started what is now known in mission history as the “second wave” of the Modern Missionary Movement. New societies were born, new endeavors were taken and the word of God began to spread into the interiors of the different nations and continents of the world.

The third wave, and possibly the last wave of nations in reaching this world, started in the 1930s when another young man was handing out Spanish Bibles in Central America. He met an old man that he gave the Bible to and the old man asked: “If your God is so great why can't he speak my language?” This young man, William Townsend, realized that in the boundaries of what we now call “nations” there are different groups of people who speak different languages, having different cultures, dress, etc.

He saw the need to get the word of God into these different languages and to see a church planted in these different people groups that could then evangelize their own people. At the beginning of the 21st century we now have an understanding of what it takes to get the job done (world evangelism), where we stand at the moment in completing that task and what it will take to finish. It is an exciting time to be alive!

However, during this time there are many other evil forces at work which we will look at.

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 24

 CENTURY OF GENOCIDE 1850-2000 AD

2 Chronicles 7:14 “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

We saw the three different waves of the Modern Mission Movement. In the 19th century we have experienced the greatest expansion of prosperity and freedom as well as Biblical faith – in all of history. It is said that the standard of living in America increased 900% by the principles of the Bible permeating every area of society, and it was being imitated around the globe.

However, at the dawn of the 20th century signs of a brutal paganism were coming back into the Western world. Also during this time Christians were abandoning the very institutions that their ancestors had carved out of a wilderness. **We see that the future course of nations, just like the past course of nations, rests upon the people of God.** When we look back over the history of nations we see that it was theologians who really brought about the change and laid the foundation for governments and families to build upon.

Benjamin Morris in his book Christian Life and Character of the Civil Institutions of the United States (written 150 years ago) said: "The institutions of the North American republic had their birth and baptism from the free inspirations and genius of the Christian religion. The founding fathers constituted the Christian religion as the underlying foundation and the girding and guiding element of their systems of civil, political, and social institutions."

In the light of what our present president said; that “we are not a Christian nation,” this statement by Benjamin Morris is very important.

What were some of the points that Benjamin Morris made to back up his statement?

1. It would be an injustice for historical truth not to affirm and admit that our founding fathers with their Christian inspirations and purpose were under a special and constant guidance of an overruling Providence.

2. The Christian men who founded our civil institutions were men who were trained in the midst of battle in which the truest ideas of liberty and religion were developed. Benjamin Morris also said: “The persecutions of the Puritans in England for non-conformity, and the religious agitations and conflicts in Germany by Luther, in Geneva by Calvin, and in Scotland by Knox, were the preparatory ordeals for qualifying Christian men for the work of establishing the civil institutions on the American continent. ‘God sifted,’ in these conflicts, ‘a whole nation, that he might send choice grain over into this wilderness;’ and the blood and persecution of martyrs became the seed of both the church and the state.”

3. They developed the true symbol of civil government. They saw that the Christian religion was not only for spiritual doctrines, but also for the basis of a civil government.

4. The papers and constitution of the different states show a clear understanding of the Christian religion. When one listens to what our founding fathers say about Providence guiding them it is very clear that they are referring to the Christian religion. George Washington said the following: “I am sure that there never was a people who had more reason to acknowledge a divine interposition in their affairs than those of the United States; and I should be pained to believe that they have forgotten that agency which was so often manifested during the Revolution, or that they failed to consider the omnipotence of that God who is alone able to protect them. He must be worse than an infidel that lacks faith, and more than wicked that has not gratitude enough to acknowledge his obligations.”

5. In Washington DC, our capital, one will see evidence of the Christian religion. Ten Commandments are over our Supreme Court; words of our founding fathers espousing the Christian religion on our government buildings. On our coins and fiat money we have “In God We Trust.”

6. The revolution for liberty, independence and even our type of government was due to the Christian religion. It was the Gospel of Christ that girded our men for war, our statesmen for debate and gave the early pilgrims hope and courage.

In closing, I again would like to quote Benjamin Morris: “The leaders of our Revolution were men of whom the simple truth is the highest praise. They were singularly sagacious, sober, thoughtful and wise. Lord Chatham spoke only the truth when he said to Franklin of the men who composed the first Colonial Congress, “The Congress is the most honorable assembly of statesmen since those of the ancient Greeks and Romans in the most virtuous times. They were most of them profound scholars, and studied the history of mankind that they might know men. They were so familiar with the lives and thoughts of the wisest and best minds of the past, that a classic aroma hangs about their writings and their speeches; and they were profoundly convinced of what statesmen know and mere politicians never perceive—that ideas are the life of a people— that the conscience, not the pocket, is the real citadel of a nation.”

We are in a cultural war here in the West and therefore it is imperative that we review our history as to where we have come from and what we need to stand on.

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 25

CENTURY OF GENOCIDE 1850-2000 AD

Daniel 2:44 "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.”

To understand a culture one must understand something of the underlining belief system that it has. Entering the 20th century we see that there was a weakening of the theology that eventually bred many false cults. True Christianity began to withdraw because of ‘weak theology.’

In every culture we have what we call the “opinion makers.” These are people who use words to make a living: teachers, lawyers, politicians, journalists, etc. that have the tendency to form the thinking of the populace.

True Christianity withdrawing from these professions has been catastrophic, because God’s opinion was not being made known. Another group of people who use words are the church pastors and teachers of the Word, etc. However, their voice in the world of opinions was silent and so eventually was silenced.

Sensing weakness and apathy, the infamous butchers of the 20th century took their turn on the world stage, attempting to smother the light - Karl Marx, Engels, Hitler, Mao, Pol Pot, etc. This ancient paganism (for there is nothing new under the sun) came in with modern weapons of mass destruction that resulted in the death of millions.

At this time there was another group of people promoting communism. They discovered that they needed to destroy Christianity if they wanted to bring in Marxism and to do so they had to take over the media and education. This is what is happening today.

In the 20th century there has been more mass murder, more genocide, etc. than in all of the other centuries put together. I remember preaching in Bangladesh right after it became a country where millions died in the process. Waiting to be called up to preach I began writing down the resulting death toll because of war, riots, genocide, etc. in country after country where I had been. When I added those figures, it came into the tens of millions. This all took place in my own life time and ministry.

Coming in on the scene at this time was a man by the name of Charles Darwin and his theory of evolution. “You have no notion of the intrigue that goes on in this blessed world of science,” wrote Thomas Huxley. “Science is, I fear, no purer than any other region of human activity; though it should be.”

Patrick Buchanan said: “As ‘Darwin's bulldog,’ Huxley would himself engage in intrigue, deceit and intellectual property theft to make his master's theory gospel truth in Great Britain.” What was being promoted as the ‘gospel of truth’ was the ‘survival of the fittest.’

"Karl Marx loved Darwinism," writes Windchy. To him, survival of the fittest as the source of progress justified violence in bringing about social and political change, in other words, the revolution. "Darwin suits my purpose," Marx wrote.’

Darwin suited Adolf Hitler's purposes, too.

Windchy goes on to say: "Although born to a Catholic family Hitler became a hard-eyed Darwinist who saw life as a constant struggle between the strong and the weak. His Darwinism was so extreme that he thought it would have been better for the world if the Muslims had won the eighth century battle of Tours, which stopped the Arabs' advance into France. Had the Christians lost, Hitler reasoned, the Germanic people would have acquired a more warlike creed and, because of their natural superiority, would have become the leaders of an Islamic empire."

The 20th century seemed to be dominated by tyranny, theological liberalism and the theories of social and biological Darwinism. However, Marx would never see his imaginary, godless utopia. Hitler would be reduced to ashes and the statues of Lenin and Stalin would be pulled down from their pedestals. The Kingdom of God marches on and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 26

CENTURY OF GENOCIDE 1850-2000 AD

Proverbs 3:5 "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding."

In the 20th century there has been more mass murder, more genocide, more deaths by governments than in all other centuries put together. However, in the 20th century we have also seen the greatest expansions of Christianity of all time. Even though believers in the West were being weakened by a lack of the knowledge of God, still there was a great movement of the Holy Spirit with the gospel spreading throughout the emerging world.

Great awakening took place in United States in 1945-1950s. More people came to Christ because of movements that started in the 1950s like Campus Crusade, Operation Mobilization (the movement that I am in), Youth With A Mission and some others. It is estimated that more people came to Christ since 1950 than during all previous centuries put together. Consider the following:

87% of Americans consider themselves the Christians.

Nearly 50% claim to be born again.

Christian schools have grown in 35 years from 1200 to 60,000.

One third of the 400 plus members of Congress attend some type of Bible study. In 2004, (latest statistics that I have) 57% of the people in Congress were pro-life.

One thing that comes out is that we in the United States will be held accountable. To whom much is given much is expected.

Coming to the end of the 20th century we are faced with three major challenges: First, the situation in our Western culture of what I call the Crisis of Truth; secondly, Radical Islam and thirdly, What it means to be Human. These are the three issues that we are going to have to deal with. I would like to spend some time dealing with these three challenges.

First, the Crisis of Truth: For example, I was listening to the O'Reilly Factor when Bill O'Reilly debated Whoopi Goldberg (movie star and now talk radio host) about some of the comments made by various movie stars who were participating in an anti-war demonstration in Washington D.C.

A comment that Goldberg made, which is so indicative of our postmodern culture, was that she made decisions based not on her opinion but what her heart was telling her and how she felt. This is the result of post-modernism that we now see; that facts are rejected and the truth is damned.

When I look at the whole debate within the anti-war movement it seems to be based more on what their hearts are telling them and not the facts or what the reality is. How can we continue to live like this in a free society? We get this more and more in our news: feelings and not the facts.

What is also interesting is that an answer like this seems so sincere and trustworthy, like a ‘lofty’ goal. If we are all making decisions based upon what our heart is telling us then what a confusion this will bring about! There are over six billion people in the world and if they all are following their heart can we imagine the chaos that will come out of all of the decisions that will be made!

When I look at the opinion makers that we all have in our societies it would seem that these opinions are being made not from facts or reality, but from what their hearts are telling them. So what does this mean? It means that they are shaping world opinion based on feelings of "the heart," and not facts and truth.

When there is no ultimate truth then what we feel becomes the truth for us whereby we can make our own decisions, based upon what feels best for us. This is what happened in the 60's with the student rebellion. They went on the assumption of “do your own thing” and “if it feels good, do it.”

There are many things that we can do that might feel good, but in the long run will do us harm. Look at some of the things that we eat, drink, etc. They feel good, but the end result might entail much suffering.

Listening to the program described above how often I heard the words, “This is what I feel.” It is not what I think, or what the facts are, but about what I feel. I think of a lady who made the comment that she knew that Jesus was alive, because, she said, “I feel Him in my heart.” But is this the way that we know that Jesus is alive? I know that Jesus is alive because this is what the Bible (ultimate truth) says. (1 Corinthians 15:4-8)

Our feelings are not a good barometer of what is taking place. The Word of God is. Even in the church today we hear the expression, “I feel”…that this or that is right. We must base our lives on the Word of God. This is a must especially in these days when there is so much deception taking place in the world. Remember that our enemy is out to deceive and that this is what he is trying to do. And I am sad to say he is having success.

We need to be reminded of the words of Solomon in Proverbs 3:5 "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding." So much of our trusting in our feelings is simply leaning on our own understanding or "following our heart" instead of following the Word of God.

TERROR TO TRIUMPH - Part 27 – Truth Matters

 CENTURY OF GENOCIDE 1850-2000 AD

In my almost fifty years of being involved in the Lord’s work in 100 different countries of the world (and some of these countries have been some of the most difficult) the Lord has shown me several things.

First, there is a need for us to always be on the offensive. I think of the words of Alfred the Great: “Give me men that can build, men that can pray and men that can fight and I will go out and build Western civilization.”

We read in Matthew 11:12: “From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.”

The forceful men/women that Alfred The Great said that he needed are men who can build, pray and fight for what’s right. However, we need to keep in mind that we are not fighting flesh and blood, but principalities, spiritual wickedness in high places, etc. We also need to understand that our weapons are not carnal, but spiritual: prayer, the Word of God, using our faith like a shield against the devil’s arrows; all activated by the Holy Spirit dwelling in us.

God is calling us to shake the world system. How do we go about doing this?
We must start with the truth. It was truth that launched American anti-slavery. The truth was simple: slavery is sin. Truth matters. Truth has the power to change people. When truth is recognized – the terms of debate change completely. We need to be able to powerfully and convincingly articulate the truth. Where we often fail is the inability to articulate the truth powerfully and convincingly.

Truth will lead to conflict and conflict will sort out our friends as well as enemies. The truth has enemies. Starting with the truth and speaking the truth is crucial. We must understand that we speak the truth in love. These two go together just like a hand and glove.

Have you ever noticed that here in the Western world you can talk about “God,” but as soon as you mention “Jesus Christ” (other than in a flippant or blaspheming way) people get so irritated. Why? Jesus is the way and the truth and the life. (John 14:6) No one comes to the Father except through Him.

“The truth,” Jesus said, “will set you free.” When a society is deeply enslaved to sin it will take the crucible of suffering to set it free. Freedom may come, but not without the cross of suffering for it.

In every society we have what is known as a “structure of sin.” Some would refer to it as “institutional sin” and often that can be confusing because people, not institutions are the sinners. However, we see that institutions play a large part in shaping the way we think which keeps us from breaking free. The institutions consist of laws, habits, customs, etc. that keep a society in the “structure of sin” that has been established. This is also one of the reasons why we are told to ‘occupy’ by bringing 'the truth’ into these different institutions.

We are faced with seven global challenges: The sad state of children in many parts of the world, women who are abused and taken advantage of, poverty and the system that keeps them in this state, HIV/Aids (killer diseases) that has decimated whole populations in some countries in Africa, protecting the unborn, the need for clean water and our environment.

I come back to the statement that Alfred the Great made that he wanted men who could pray, build and fight. I would also like to add one more thing to this list and that is men/women who have ‘staying power.’ We need people who are in it for the long haul. We need to see that we are not in a 100 yard or 100 meter dash, but in a marathon with a finish line. If we are going to be successful in meeting the seven global challenges listed above then we are going to need people with staying power.

Discouragement and burnout are real factors in anything that we do in seeking to make a difference in this world and see the Kingdom of God advancing. This is why staying power is so important. Staying power is not passive or fatalistic, but rather hopeful and energetic.

Other than learning to pace ourselves we also need several other things. We need to learn to live a day at a time. And we need a supportive community. It takes time and effort to build good relationships, but they are a must if we want to be ‘shakers for God.’

Another important ingredient is ‘sustaining faith.’ In all that we do we need to cultivate prayer, worship, study the Word of God and learn to celebrate. Faith brings staying power.

God is constantly working in us to bring about a sustaining faith. In 1 Peter 1:6-8 Peter said, “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.  These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

We need to be running the race until we hear the final gong.

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 28 – The Real Threat

 CENTURY OF GENOCIDE 1850-2000

This is something that I wrote several years ago, but it highlights what we are faced with today as we head into the 21st century.

Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohammad said, “The transformation of Britain into an Islamic state could come in two ways: if an Islamic state arises and invades, we will be its army and its soldiers from within. But if no such Islamic state arises Bakri said that Muslims would convert the West to Islam through ideological invasion without war and killing.” This is exactly what is happening in the West today. As one Muslim cleric said, “We do not need an army with swords, but an army of Islamic preachers.”

Sheikh Abu Hamza Al-Masri said, “Allah is the only one that must be worshiped on earth, and the only way to guarantee this is to control all the land masses, air, and sea and get Islam the proper channel to be heard by the people.” In other words, this is why Muslims must fight so that Islam can be heard by all the people.

Robert Spencer in his book Religion of Peace says, “Maududi, who is called one of the greatest revivalists of Islam in the 20th century said, ‘The truth is that Islam is not the name of a religion, nor is Muslim the title of the nation. In reality Islam is a revolutionary ideology and program which seeks to alter the social order of the whole world and rebuild it in conformity with its own tenets and ideals. Muslim is the title of that international Revolutionary party organized by Islam to carry into effect its revolutionary program. And Jihad refers to that revolutionary struggle and utmost exertion which the Islamic party brings into play to achieve this objective.’”

He goes on to say, "Islam requires that the earth – not just the portion, but the whole planet – should benefit from Islam which is the program of well-being for all humanity.” In the Islamist way of thinking, orders or commands that come from man are men sharing in the powers and the authority of God. And this, to them, is the root of all evil in the universe. This is the reason democracy is abhorrent to them.

This is interesting because we see a worldview that has been developed here. A worldview is how we screen everything that comes our way and the way we will respond to the world around us. A worldview must answer three questions.

First, where did we get the universe, all the complexity, etc? The Islamist would say God created it all and they would be right. The second question they must answer is: Why are we in such a mess? And according to what has just been said above, is that any orders or commands that come from man are tantamount to man sharing the powers and the authority of God, which to them is the root of all evil in the universe. In other words, this is why we are in such a mess. The third question would be: What is the solution? This has already been answered in what has been written, that Islam must take over every aspect of life here on planet Earth and to  instigate Sharia law.

A Biblical worldview answers these three questions by the following answers:

First, there is a God who has created all things and man has been made in His likeness and His image. Secondly, the reason man as well as the world are in a mess is because we have “suppressed the truth.” We have gone our own way and done our own thing. Thirdly, the solution is that God has given us His law in order that we might recognize what sin is, and that we have all sinned and have come under the judgment of God. However, because God loves us and in order to fulfill His justice and His mercy, He took upon Himself the form of a man (we know Him as Jesus), who lived among us, and tasted death for all men that we, through Him (Jesus), might live.

Those who advocate a moral equivalency between Islam and Christianity need to have a closer look at the difference in their worldviews. How we think is how we respond to the world around us.

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 29

 CHALLENGES AHEAD A.D. 2000-

When the original thirteen states adopted their new Constitution in 1787, this is what Alexander Tyler, professor at the University of Edinburgh, said about the fall of the Athenian Republic 2000 years earlier:

"A democracy is always temporary in nature; it simply cannot exist as a permanent form of government. A democracy will continue to exist up until the time that voters discover they can vote themselves generous gifts from the public treasury.

From that moment on, the majority always vote for the candidates who promise the most benefits from the public treasury, with the result that every democracy will finally collapse due to lose fiscal policy, which is always followed by a dictatorship.

The average age of the world's greatest civilizations from the beginning of history, has been about 200 years. During those 200 years, those nations always progressed through the following sequence:

1. From bondage to spiritual faith;

2. From spiritual faith to great courage;

3. From courage to liberty;

4. From liberty to abundance;

5. From abundance to complacency;

6 . From complacency to apathy;

7. From apathy to dependence;

8. From dependence back into bondage

When we look at the Western world today we need to ask ourselves: Where do we stand at the moment? I personally believe that in the USA, we are some place between the complacency and apathy stage. What happens in the next few years might move us into the apathy to dependence stage. Western Europe is in the apathy to dependence stage.

In October of 1798 John Adams wrote the following: "We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice (greed, covetousness, materialism), ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

We will either move towards radical egalitarianism or radical individualism. The first leads to tyranny or dictatorship and the latter leads to anarchy (where everybody does what he thinks is right in his own mind).

Morality comes from a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. This is why our founding fathers were adamant about Judeo-Christian worldview being evident in all that we do in politics, business, education, media, entertainment and our judicial system.

Listen to what some of our founding fathers said: "We Recognize no Sovereign but God, and no King but *Jesus*!" [April 18, 1775]

“The general principles upon which the Fathers achieved independence were the general principles of Christianity… I will avow that I believed and now believe that those general principles of Christianity are as eternal and immutable as the existence and attributes of God.”

“July 4th ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty.” (Quote from John Adams)

Samuel Adams in a speech at the State house in 1776 of August said this:
“He who made all men hath made the truths necessary to human happiness obvious to all…Our forefathers opened the Bible to all.”

US Senator Jim Demint made the statement that the architects, when building the Capitol Visitor Center in Washington DC, had left out “In God We Trust,” which Congress in 1956 established as the national motto. Instead, they put “E plurisbus unum” (out of many - one) as the motto. Senator Demint said: “There seems to be a trend of whitewashing God out of our history.” Praise God for this senator who put a hold on the bill and not letting the Center open until they had installed the correct motto.

But we see that the battle lines are being drawn that we are going to be faced with in seeing the expansion of the Kingdom of God in the 21st century and how, we, the church should be involved.

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 30

CHALLENGES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Looking back over the history of the expansion of the Kingdom of God 2000 years ago from that little obscure village in Israel, now we can see many challenges that the kingdom of God faced. Moving into the 21st century I would like to outline some of the things that we are now faced with and will be facing.

In Romans 12 we are told that we should “not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind.” One of the main battles in the days ahead will be with the mind, being able to think through issues, ideologies, etc. with a Biblical mindset or Biblical worldview.

A Biblical worldview is defined as a firm belief that absolute moral truths exist: the sinless life of the Lord Jesus Christ, God is all powerful and all knowing and is still running the universe, Satan is real and that salvation is a gift from God and cannot be earned. We, the church, have an obligation to live in the light of the revealed Word of God. The Word of God needs to be brought in to everything we do in life. This will affect our choices in life style as well as our way of thinking. It will be seen in our views on worship, family, business, morality, recreation, personal autonomy, personal possessions, etc. It will bring a complete re-working over of who we are and how we live and what we do.

A pastor remarked that the mission of the church is to prepare for Christ’s return in five ways. He went on to define these five ways: prayer, Bible study, fellowship, worship and evangelism. These five things are essential, but we can never overlook our responsibility to redeem our culture. God has not called us to let this world go to hell in a hand-basket. Generally speaking we define our faith strictly in terms of personal salvation, instead we need to keep in mind that we are not only saved from SIN, but saved to the task of cultivating God’s creation.

We are not only saved from sin, but we are saved to tear down the structures of sin that have created these seven global challenges: orphans or children of the world, abused women, HIV/AIDs that have decimated whole populations, poverty, lack of water, environment and protecting the unborn.

We read in  the first chapter of Genesis that in six days God created everything and in the creation of man turned over to us the task of cultivating what He created. This is called the “CULTURAL MANDATE” and is as binding on us as the “GREAT COMMISSION.”

Our faith must encompass every part of life, every sphere of work, every aspect of the world. It must be the lens on how we see reality. If God is sovereign over everything, as we confess He is, then everything finds its identity and meaning in relationship to Him not only in our spiritual life, but in our work, profession, politics, science, education, entertainment and the arts.

Since God made the world He has also put in place God-given norms that govern all that He has created - both morally and physically and just as we would not go against the physical laws (like gravity) so also with His moral laws. Like Chuck Colson said: “Moral laws tell us how to govern our behavior. Laws of logic tell us how to think clearly. Norms of justice tell us how to run a government. Aesthetic norms guide the creation of beauty and the arts. If we don't know the norms God has ordained for every area of life, then we're living blindly and are bound to make wrong choices - hurting ourselves and others. We're like a person who walks into a room blindfolded and bumps his shins against the furniture.”

I am getting ready to read a book called Biblical Logic in Theory and Practice by Joel McDurmon. It is looking at truth and fallacy. Like A.W. Tozer said: “Truth and error travel the same highway.” In this world of moral ambiguity we need to be able to discern what is true and what is false. This will be a real battle in the days ahead.

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 31

 CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Romans 5:3-5 “Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;  perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

In these next few chapters I would like to concentrate upon one of the important things that we will be faced with in the 21st century and that is: men/women of character. We are born with a personality, but not character. Character is something that is developed on how we respond to life situations that come our way daily. I would like to mention a few things that different people over the years have said about the importance of character.

“THE WORLD NEEDS MEN AND WOMEN...who can't be bought; who keep their promises; who value character over riches; with an opinion and a will; who value inner greatness over visible career; who readily take steps of faith; who retain their identity in a crowd; who do not compromise themselves with falsehood; whose personal ambitions are not limited to personal gain; who do not say, ‘We do it because the others do it;’ who remain loyal to their friends through success and failure; who believe that tricks, calculation and cunning are not the only keys to success who are not afraid of standing up for the truth, even if it is unpopular; who can decisively say ‘no’ in the face of a world saying ‘yes.’” (Source: Dr. Elijah Morgan &Peter Riederer (<http://www.yell.ch>) in "Schweizer Arbeitgeber," 14/2002)

''Character is higher than intellect. A great soul will be strong to live as well as think.'' --Ralph Waldo Emerson

''Character is like a tree and reputation like a shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing.'' --Abraham Lincoln

''Integrity is its own reward.'' --Laura Schlessinger

''Character is doing what's right when nobody's looking.'' --J.C. Watts

''It is better to deserve honors and not have them than to have them and not deserve them.'' –Mark Twain

“Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But if you must be without one, be without the strategy.'” --General H. Norman Schwartzkopf

''Outside show is a poor substitute for inner worth.'' --Aesop

''You must look into people, as well as at them.'' --Lord Chesterfield

“Characters do not change. Opinions alter, but characters are only developed.'' --Benjamin Disraeli

''Of all the properties which belong to honorable men, not one is so highly prized as that of character.'' --Henry Clay

''Man's character is his fate.'' --Heraclitus

Oswald Chambers said: "No man is born with character; we make our own character. When a man is born from above a new disposition is given to him, but not a new character; neither naturally nor supernaturally are we born with character. Character is what a man makes out of his disposition as it comes in contact with external things. A man's character cannot be summed up by what he does in spots, but only by what he is in the main trend of his existence. When we describe a man we fix on the exceptional things, but it is the steady trend of a man's life that tells. Character is that which steadily prevails, not something that occasionally manifests itself."

We see what people down through the ages have to say about character. The person that God uses is a man/woman of character. With all of our getting; get character.

                                 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 32

                            CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

"The one thing that God is after is character." Oswald Chambers

It would seem that in every one of our presidential campaigns or even when some of our other politicians are running for election or re-election how little emphasis is given on character. I was surprised when many who responded and said that character is not what counts. "It is the issues that count."

One would hope that it is only a few people that would believe that character is not important, but it seems that this is something that's becoming more rampant in our public offices as well as in our religious establishments. How can we say that character is not important? Everything we do springs out of character. Real leadership comes out of character or from lack of it.

I would like to quote an article by Chuck Colson regarding the importance of character and when there is a lack of character what it can lead to. In his magazine “Break Point” Chuck Colson said this:

“There's an issue that crops up in every major election campaign: Does a candidate's private morality have anything to do with his public life? For years, liberals have said no - people can do anything they like in private and it doesn't affect their ability to govern. And now a conservative leader John O'Sullivan, editor of national Review, has said the same thing, writing that he'd rather be governed by a competent sinner than by an incompetent saint. The assumption here is that governing requires only technical competence. But that's a mistaken assumption. ln reality, governing involves a whole philosophy of life - and that in turn involves our personal choices and behavior.

“Let me give you just one example - a very important one. Nearly all forms of modern philosophy borrow from the writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau, an 18th century French writer.  Rousseau's political ideas are described in his book The Social Contract, where he says the ideal state is one that demands total allegiance. Rousseau wanted the state to take responsibility for raising children so it could indoctrinate them to devote their whole selves to its service.

“These were the ideas that fueled the French Revolution and the Reign of
Terror. They were adopted by Marx and Lenin and became part of communism.  They even influenced Pol Pot and his cadre of Paris educated communists, who slaughtered a quarter of the Cambodian population in their pursuit of the totalitarian state.

“Where did Rousseau get such an awful view of the state?

“If we look at his life, the answer becomes clear. Rousseau was a drifter
and a Bohemian. He had several affairs and lived most of his life with a
mistress, a young washer woman, named Therese. When Therese gave birth to a baby, Rousseau faced a major challenge: Would he settle down and accept the responsibilities of family and fatherhood? The answer was a flat no. Children, Rousseau said, would cramp his lifestyle, would undercut his celebrity in the high society of the day.

“He persuaded Therese to give up the infant to an orphanage. (Today it
would be an abortion). Over the years Rousseau had five children. Each
one was deposited on the steps of the orphanage. When his friends
criticized him, Rousseau tried to justify his actions. He hit upon the
argument that giving up his children was actually the best thing for them -
that the state could do a better job of raising and educating them; that
the state was a better father.

“These ideas later became a key plank in Rousseau's political philosophy.
Having asked the State to be a father to his own children he devised a
theory of the state as father to us all. The state should be responsible
for forming our minds and our loyalties. In the words of historian Paul
Johnson, Rousseau portrayed all citizens as "children of the paternal
orphanage.”

Rousseau might have been appalled if he had known that so much of the
barbarism of the 20th century - the Concentration camps, the mock trial,
the genocide - resulted from his efforts to justify his own irresponsibility.”

Everything stems from character.

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 33

 CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

If you were to go to a concordance and look up the word "character" you would find that the word is listed approximately 5 times in the NIV Bible. Although the word character is not found as the word “character,” the thought and teaching of what character means runs throughout the Bible.

The idea of character in the New Testament is a sense of being proved, tested, tried and basically found trust-worthy. We find an example of this in the Old Testament when the children of Israel came out of Egypt. It says in Exodus 13:17-18, “When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, "If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt." So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of Egypt armed for battle.”

This is an interesting Scripture that brings out the need for character. God did not take them into a place where there would be conflict, although that would be a shorter route to the Promised Land, but took them instead where they would not have conflict. What is interesting to me in this passage of scripture is to see how God knew that they did not have the character, they had not been tested, tried for war, but we read that they went up out of Egypt armed for battle.

In other words, they had the external things for battle: swords, shields, spears, etc., but they did not have the inner fortitude to be able to press on. They didn't have "character."

So much of what we face in the Christian life today is just like this. We have people who have the external things like diplomas, degrees, the right words, etc., but do not have what it takes inside to not only face the enemy, continue on in the midst of the battle and finish the task. In other words, they do not have "character."

In the early days of the church when Paul was giving instruction to Titus and Timothy to appoint elders in the churches that had been established, he told them what “an elder must be…” (Titus 1:6) and then went on to tell them what that "must be" is: character. Our problem today is that we have turned "must be" into "that would be nice."

An example of character is a man I’ve mentioned before by the name of William Carey who started what is known as the Modern Missionary Movement. William Carey was a man of perseverance. William Carey said, "Attempt great things for God; expect great things from God." This was over two hundred years ago in the early part of November 1773, when William Carey (along with his wife and four young boys, his wife's sister and fellow missionary John Thomas) traveled east. Obstacles were numerous when they arrived in India.

They were unknown, had no influential connections, no means of livelihood, they entered India as illegal immigrants, they faced life threatening diseases and the language and culture were largely unknown to them. In forty years William Carey had translated the whole Bible into Bengali, Oriya, Hindi, Marathi, Sanskrit and Assamese, the New Testament and other portions of Scriptures into 33 other languages.

He started Serampore college, which later became a university. He started a net-work of more than 125 village schools. He pioneered the education of women. He brought the modern printing press to India. He founded India's first newspaper: Samachar Darpan (News Mirror) which is still published today. Even the oldest English newspaper in India today, THE STATESMENT, traces its roots back to Carey.

William Carey, like Elijah was a man like us, but he prayed and took steps of faith. When we see what is happening around us and the doors that God has opened, can we do anything less?

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 34

 CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

When we think of character we must think about COMMITMENT.

When I look at the evangelical scene today I see a great lack of commitment. When I look at the lack of laborers out on the field especially in the difficult areas of the world with the Muslim, Hindu and Chinese world - I believe it comes back to a lack of commitment.

Where are God's people who will go to these hard areas of the world and stick it out? We find very few who even respond to the call or the challenge. Out of those who do respond we see a great number dropping out after a short time. Those who make it to the field often do not go back again after the first term. Why? I believe there are a number of reasons, but a big reason is a lack of commitment.

Commitment is important. Webster dictionary defines commitment as “to bring together, join, entrust; to give in trust or in charge; consign for safe keeping.” I commit my life to Christ Jesus. I join my life to His. I give my life to Him.

The same is true of marriage. Why are marriages falling apart? I know that we often hear of incompatibility, mental cruelty, etc. All of these things are often camouflage for the real culprit that tears a marriage apart, a lack of commitment.

When we commit our lives to the Lord we are committed to His will. Jesus said, “If you continue in my word then you are my disciples.” The word “continues” brings out the idea of commitment. ‘To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.’” John 8:31

However, we need to think through some of the reasons why we break our commitment.

1. It wasn't quite what I felt it would be.

This is one excuse that I hear quite often with people who break a commitment. Perhaps we didn't count the cost.

Luke 9:57-58 "As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' Jesus replied, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.'" When Jesus laid down the terms of discipleship we do not hear from these 'would be followers' again.

2. We don't have a mind to suffer.

Peter 4:1 “Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.”

This is part of our armor and is as essential to us as the armor we read about in Ephesians 6. Because we do not have that mind-set or mentality we see that the enemy gets in and hits us just where we do not want to suffer. Consequently we see what we can do to break our commitment.

When I was the director, a young lady joined our ship Doulos, one of our OM ships, for two years. She had been very active in her church and had a responsible job. When she was on the ship she had to spend time washing dishes. Every night when she was in her room she was complaining about her dish-pan hands as she was complaining about how she did not join the ship to be a dish washer, etc.

One night while she was complaining to the Lord about her hands, how red they looked, etc. and thinking how she might be able to get out of her commitment – the Lord spoke to her and said, “Look at my hands…”

That was a turning point in her life. She realized how the Lord had suffered for her. She armed herself with the right mentality and stuck it out. She became one of our line-up team who have the responsibility of going ahead of the ship and lining up the program, a job that carries much responsibility, a job for people with commitment.

3. Wrong ideas of what it means to follow Christ.

We seem to think that following Christ there will be no problems, etc. We do not understand how the Lord builds in us character. It is not that we do not have problems because we do. As a matter of fact, we probably have more problems (because Satan is against us), but we also have solutions to our problems. And this is what makes the difference.

There is a tendency to think that by following Christ if things are rough and don't seem to work them out that this cannot be of God. It is this type of thinking that leads into many erroneous ideas about discipleship.

How do we interpret Hebrews 11:35-38? “Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated - the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.”

What about these people mentioned here. Didn't they have any faith? Couldn't they believe God for deliverance? Yes, they had faith. As a matter of fact they probably had more faith. Here we see what real Biblical faith is. Biblical faith takes us through the problems. This is what commitment is all about.

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 35

 CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

“A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.” (Proverbs 22:1) A good name and character go together.

When we see in our culture here in the West the surging moral relativism as well as our eroding value system, the family breakdown, sleazy television, movies and music that is poisoning the mind of our young people etc, we realize something of the challenge that is before us.

When we couple this moral breakdown with our subprime mortgages, fraud, corruption in our political system, lies that are being told, a media that report their own agenda rather than the truth, we realize the battle before us. Our public schools do not teach right from wrong, but only tolerance. Our young people as well as older people have no moral compass.

The following story illustrates very clearly what is happening in our culture, especially in the business as well as stock market world. The story is told about the farmer who left his prized cow with a friend so he could go on a trip. “The cow died while the farmer was gone, and he was distraught to learn the sad news upon his return. ‘I was going to sell the cow,’ he said. ‘I desperately need the money.’ Then he decided, ‘I will still sell the cow – by lottery.’ He sold 300 tickets at $2 each, and presented the dead cow to the winner of the lottery. When the winner complained that he had no use for a dead cow, the farmer apologized and returned the $2 for his ticket – and retained the remaining $598!”

This is one picture of what has been occurring in the business world, particularly in the technology industry. Instead of bricks and mortar, investors have become shareholders in ideas and dreams, and in some cases, schemes. In the wonderful vision of hindsight, many, especially venture capitalists, are realizing they have been buying stock in “dead cows.”

When we think of character we must also give attention to 'integrity.' A man of character will also be a man of integrity.

The definition of integrity: unimpaired moral principles; honesty, soundness, the quality of being whole or undivided. Some of the synonyms that go along with integrity are words like: virtue, honor, morality, principle, uprightness, righteousness and goodness.

Sometimes we can tell more about a word, not from the synonyms, but what we call the antonyms or words that have the opposite meaning. Antonyms for integrity: corruption, deceit, disgrace, dishonesty, disloyalty, double-dealing, duplicity and faithlessness are just a few.

What does Scripture say? The Hebrew word for integrity would be the word "tom:" it means completeness, simplicity, upright, integrity.

It is interesting that a root of the word 'tom' which is the Hebrew word for integrity is “Tummiyn.” The Tummiyn was one of the objects in the high priest breast plate. It was an emblem standing for complete truth.

Perhaps one of the ways to interpret the word integrity is complete truth. This brings out the idea of several things. First, a man or woman of integrity is transparent. Secondly, there is no exaggeration with a man of or woman of integrity. And thirdly, a man or woman of integrity is a person that can be counted on. They mean what they say and they do what they say. They walk the talk.

The church is the institution that God has given to us to teach us what character really is. We need men and women of integrity.

                              TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 36

   CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

"It is not a question of learning a thing outside, but of determination inside." Oswald Sanders

I spoke in a church on John 4:34 where Jesus mentioned to His disciples that His food was to do the will of the Father. I brought out that one of the reasons (perhaps the main reason) we do not see more being done for the Kingdom sake is because of a lack of ‘will.’

Moving into the 21st century to not only meet the challenges that lie ahead, but to see the Kingdom of God advance will take men/women of character. I have been writing about different aspects of character. What we need today are men/women of determination.

A lack in the church of Jesus Christ today is determination. We have a
tendency to quit, especially if the way is hard or not what we thought it
would be.

A person who lacks determination in their character is like the man of
Proverbs 22:13: “The sluggard says, ‘There is a lion outside!’ or, ‘I
will be murdered in the streets!’” How often the difficulties stop us.
This means that we will never be able to accomplish much because we will
always have problems and difficulties in life. Like Billy Graham said, “Life at its best is filled with problems.”

Church history is filled with men and women of determination. They left
their mark for God. At the age of 21 Hudson Taylor went to China. Instead
of staying on the coast like all of the other missionaries he decided to
move inland. By doing so he started what missionaologists now call the second wave of missions, reaching into the inland parts of the world. New mission societies were started like the China Inland Mission that Hudson Taylor founded.

At the age of 52 C.T. Studd went to the Belgian Congo. He had already
spent time in India and China. He had to leave his wife behind because of her illness and over the next 18 years he saw her for about two weeks. Praise God for the determination of C.T. Studd. The Gospel is going out in Africa today.

Charles Fuller was a man who preached for thirty or more years on the "Old
Fashion Gospel Hour." Every Sunday his voice was heard by over twenty
million people. Fuller started the Fuller Theological Seminary that has been a blessing to thousands of students. The burden of finance was upon him. His wife heard him praying to the Lord to be taken home. The pressure was great. Could this be what the Apostle Paul meant in 2 Corinthians 1:8 “We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life.” Yet God did not take him home at that time. Like the Apostle Paul, he instead became a blessing to millions of people. Praise God for his determination.

Amy Carmichael has been a real blessing to my wife and I through the
reading of her books. We named our oldest daughter after her: Amy.

In the midst of real difficulties in India Amy Carmichael opened up an
orphanage and rescued little girls destined to be temple prostitutes and gave them a new life. She did this at the peril of her own life because she was
determined to see something done.

The last nine years of her life she was completely bed-ridden. If you were
to go into the room where her bed was you would see the imprints of the bed posts in the stone floor. When my wife and I visited the orphanage we
were told that Billy Graham wept when he saw those imprints.

Yet from the bed she penned some of her greatest books and poems relating
her love to the Savior. One of her famous lines that I liked very much and
in many ways my prayer is the same: “Make me Thy fuel o' flame of God!”
Dead and yet she speaks on through her writings. What an example of
determination.

What of the 21st century? Do we have the Hudson Taylors, CT Studds and the Amy Carmichaels being raised up that will not be stopped? I think so.

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 37

 CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

I have been writing about the need for character. When we look at the business, political, educational as well as art world we see this need for character becoming more and more manifest.

A congressman yelled out, “You lie!” when the President of the United States was speaking to both houses. Now, that is not the right thing to do (we need more civility in our conversations with one another and this congressman apologized later to the White House), but it has been proven that there were several lies in what was being said.

I wrote about determination and I would like to mention a few more things about this. Besides men like Hudson Taylor, CT. Studd and women like Amy Carmichael being examples of men/women of determination, we also have in Scripture many examples of men with the same characteristic, men like Elijah and the first martyr of the church, Stephen. What are some of things that we can see from these examples to help us in building determination in our lives?

1. They were men and women who were filled with the Word of God. When Stephen was giving a message to the people who eventually stoned him, he quoted over 100 Scriptures verses from the Old Testament. He quoted from Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah and Amos.

We also see with Elijah that the 'word of God came to him." They were examples of what Paul was talking about when he said, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.." Colossians 3:16

Bakht Singh, a great man of India, was a Sikh convert. Brother Bakht Singh preached throughout India and saw fellowships established all over. In the face of much difficulty and opposition he was a determined man. What was his secret? No secret. He was a man just like us, but he had a great love for the Word of God. In every sermon he would quote 100 or more Scripture verses. At his funeral hundreds of thousands turned out to pay honor to the passing of this man of God, a great man of India.

It is interesting to see that after the command of Colossians 3:16 we have the same list of things after the command of Ephesians 5:18, to "be filled with the Spirit." There is a direct parallel between being filled with the Word and being filled with the Spirit.

2. We see from the passage of Romans 5:3-5 that God uses adversity to build in us the character that He wants.

We see this also with Elijah and Stephen. Their lives were filled with adversity. Eventually Stephen lost his life by stoning and Jezebel was constantly trying to kill Elijah. However, we see that adversity instead of stopping them made them stronger.

This is what we must understand as well. Adversity can make us strong. After coming out from spying on the Promise Land Joshua told the people of God not to listen to the ten spies that said they could not take the land. Joshua's comment was: “If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us.” Numbers 14:8

“Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them." Numbers 14:9

Joshua's comment was: They are food for us. This is what gives us our spiritual vitality. This is what can make us men and women of character; men and women of God; men and women of determination.

3. We also see that the Lord will test us. He will allow the testing to come in order to teach us trust. He will not allow any more than what we can bear although at times it might seem unbearable.

We see this in the life of Elijah. He was told to hide himself at the brook Kerith. There he could drink from the brook and God commanded the ravens to bring him food to eat.

Night after night when he laid down he could hear the water running in the brook. It must have been a reassuring sound to hear the water. However, he noticed that each night he laid down the sound was becoming less.

Eventually we read the brook dried up. Where was Elijah? He was still at the brook waiting upon the Lord. The Lord had not told him to leave. If we were in Elijah's shoes or sandals most of us would probably be digging our own wells. Not Elijah. He was waiting upon God.

After the brook dried up God told him to go to a widow woman in Zarephath. And Zarephath was where Jezebel came from. God was sending him to Jezebel's back yard. Here was a woman that was looking all over the world for this man and God sends him to her back yard. What a test, but Elijah goes. He was a man of determination.

4. Men of determination are men who are single-minded. Determined men are like the Apostle Paul who said: "This one thing that I do.." They are men of one objective and that objective is the “glory of God.” (Philippians 3:13-16)

When Elijah was fighting Baal worship, God's glory was at stake. The people were leaving the worship of the One and Only God for something that was far less.

With Stephen we see that he was up against a corrupt priesthood. The priests were making money off of the people's worship. What was the result of these men of determination? Elijah calls a nation back to God. The prophets of Baal are killed and Elijah is taken to heaven in a fiery chariot.

Stephen was stoned, but out of that stoning came a new advance of the Gospel. The gospel started to move into Samaria and later on into the uttermost parts of the world.

During the stoning there was a young man by the name of Saul who saw it all and it made an impact in his life. Through this young man the Gospel started moving into all the world. We all have been blessed by the letters that he wrote that are now part of the New Testament of the Word of God.

In the book of Isaiah there is a prophecy about the Lord Jesus Christ: “Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame.” (Isaiah 50:7) In the New Testament we read: “As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.” Luke 9:51

Jesus Christ was determined to finish the work that the Father had given Him to do. "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do." (John 17:4) Later on the cross he cried out: "It is finished." A way was made for sinful man to approach a Holy God.

Paul said, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” 2 Timothy 4:7

We too have a job to do, a course to run. Will we finish the race? Will we complete what the Lord has given us to do? If we are to finish, not just somehow, but triumphantly then we need to learn the quality of determination.

 TERROR TO TRIUMPH – Part 38

 CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

"Patience is the result of well centered strength; it takes the strength
of Almighty God to keep a man patient." (OS)

 “Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the
LORD.” Psalms 27:14

“Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.” Psalms 37:7

“For the director of music. Of David. A Psalm. ‘I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry.’” Psalms 40:1

A virtue that is of great importance in our lives, but few of us seem to
have it, is patience. Often by not waiting patiently for the Lord we have the capability of hindering the Lord, not helping the work of God. We can either move too slow, lagging behind the Lord, or too fast, running ahead of the Lord. Either way we hinder the Lord.

A key word in all of this is “faith.” Do we really believe all that God says
in His Word? “I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word
I put my hope.” (Psalms 130:5) The Lord has given us a number of examples in Scripture to show us what he means.

In Genesis 16 we see the situation with Hagar and Ishmael. God had told
Abraham that out of his body would come a son that would be heir to all
that he has. However, time went on until it was, humanly speaking, impossible for Sarah to bear a child. Sarah came to Abraham and gave her handmaiden for Abraham to go to and have a child. This was an accepted custom in those days. Abraham does so and the result was Ishmael. As soon as he was born there was confusion in Abraham's camp and there still is. At the right time God gave Sarah the opportunity to conceive and bear a child and Isaac was born. It was through Isaac that the Abrahamic blessing would move.

Sarah moved Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away. Ishmael became a
mighty nation as well and even today we see the problems of this situation
in the Middle East. Here is a situation where it would have been good for
Sarah and Abraham to have waited patiently for the Lord.

In Genesis 25-27 we see the situation with Jacob and Esau. The LORD said to their mother, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger." The older will serve the younger. This is what God said. “When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him, ‘My son.’ ‘Here I am,’” he answered. (Genesis 27:1) Here we see Isaac getting ready to bless Esau.

However we read that Rebekah hears about what Isaac is about ready to do.
“Now Rebekah was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau.” (Genesis 27:5) She gets a hold of Jacob to share what is taking place and to hatch out a plan on how to help God out of this predicament.

What was the result of all of this? Esau, rightly so, felt that Jacob had
deceived him. "Your brother came deceitfully and took your
blessing." (Genesis 27:35) Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the
blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, "The days of
mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob." Genesis 27:41

Jacob fled into his mother's country and for a number of years did not have
contact with his own people. Jacob found some of the same duplicity being
played upon him when he goes to Laban to take a wife.

Another example of patiently waiting is David. David had been anointed as King by the prophet Samuel. Yet instead of being King he was fleeing for his life. Saul was relentless in trying to kill him. Instead of sitting on a throne David was sitting on a rock in cave. It seemed that what the Lord said was not going to work out.

We read in 1 Samuel 27:1 that David thought to himself, "One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me anywhere in Israel, and I will slip out of his hand."

Here we see David's lapse of faith. David escapes to a city called Ziglag.
Ziglag was a border town. It is a place of compromise. David leads his
six hundred valiant men into this place of compromise. I believe it had an
effect not only upon him, but also upon his men.

What is the Lord trying to do in our lives? He wants to build character in us. A part of character that we need is patience and faith. God wants a pure faith in our lives. This is more important in the eyes of God than gold or silver.

We must learn the lesson of waiting upon the Lord. First, we let Him speak and then secondly, we must learn to wait until He tells us to move.

It is my hope and prayer that you have been encouraged to not give up no matter what your failures are, and no matter what you see happening in the world around you. In writing this series the one thing that comes out to me is that the person that God uses is a man/woman of character. We are born with a personality, but character is something that is developed as we respond to the challenges that come our way daily.

I believe that Alfred the Great, whom I quoted a lot, was right when he said, “Give me men/women that can fight, build and pray, and I will go out and build Western civilization.” God is building His Kingdom out of men and women with Christ-like character that will finish what God has given them to do, no matter what.

Will you be able to say what the Apostle Paul said at the end of his life? “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.” 2 Timothy 4:7-8