

Reporting For Duty

By Paul D. Norcross

Have you ever heard of Florence Chadwick?

Florence was a famous swimmer who was the first woman to swim the English Channel in both directions. Determined to add to her records, in 1952 she took up the challenge to become the first woman to swim the 21 mile ocean channel from Catalina Island to California.

On that day, Florence didn't make it. After nearly 16 grueling hours in bone-chilling, shark-infested waters, she gave up. She still had enough physical strength to keep going, but when she could no longer see her goal in the thick fog around her, she quit. The saddest part of all was that she had a mere half mile to go. It was not until hours later, when her body began to thaw, that she felt the shock of failure. To a reporter she blurted out, "Look, I'm not excusing myself. But if I could have just seen land, I might have made it."

Sometimes I have felt that way too. I used to think it was the hope of Jesus Christ's return, and my eagerness for that day, which provided the mental surge to keep going. Don't get me wrong –we dare not lose sight of the hope, the anchor of our soul. But what enables us to gain and keep a fresh, continuing vision of this hope?

The real sustaining strength of every believer's walk is not the Godly imaginations and disciplined thinking of their soul. The sustaining strength of every believer is the relationship they keep with the Master, Jesus Christ.

How Was Your Breakfast?

Let me ask you honestly – what did you eat at the Lord's table today? What manna from heaven did you gather from His lips this morning? What fogs of uncertainty, what shrouds of misted visions were parted by the loving rhema words of our Lord when you spent time at His feet listening to His still, small voice today?

I'll tell you what happened to me this morning. I cried. The Lord ministered to my heart in so many wonderful ways. He does that often, always encouraging, always edifying, instructing, sharing His heart, and re-patterning mine after His.

That's what the Lord does for every believer who takes the time to lie on His breast, and listen to His heart. He gives words of life – downloads of wisdom and blessings which keep us from getting lost in the spiritual fog of our own religious agendas. And if that wasn't enough for me today, He even had a wonderful believer from Canada call me to tell me a vision the Lord showed him about my ministry. Then I cried a whole bunch more!

Your life and your ministry purpose for having been placed on this earth are both so unique. They are special; just for you and the Lord. The Lord even has a new name to give you! He so longs to spend time with you to tell you, His Beloved, all about His plan for you, your destiny, and your purpose.

Personal dialogue with His people has always been the Lord's way of communicating. I think a lot about Elijah's time at the brook Cherith. What lessons do you suppose Elijah learned from conversations with the Lord as he whiled away the days and hours, and watched the brook drying up before his eyes? What things did the Lord share with him that set the stage for his future ministry? How about the Apostle John on the island of Patmos when the Lord gave him the book of Revelation to write? What do you think the Lord was stirring in David's mind as he penned Psalm 91, and in Paul's heart as he walked between villages on his evangelistic journeys through Macedonia, Turkey and Syria?

Psalm 91:1-2

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

These words are the prelude to the awesome deliverance which God reserves for people who develop a personal relationship with Him. Look at the promises that all of Psalm 91 contains! They are always fully available to every believer who chooses to dwell in the secret place. Ponder with me how this is going to happen in your life. Jesus had a lot to say about how to bring Psalm 91 into your possession.

So Shall You Be My Disciples

Words of Life come from Jesus, Who is The Living Word. These words flow from the secret place of the Most High. Absent a fresh gathering from Him, The Bread of Life, we don't just go hungry. We deteriorate with starvation and thirst. Our lives spiral into a wilderness wandering – a place wherein we have only so much time to gain a relationship with the Lord before we die there – OR – we can gain a relationship that learns to hear and obey every rhema word that proceeds out of His mouth

(Deuteronomy 8:2-3; Matthew 4:4). This is how we learn His daily plan for us to not only cross over into the Promised Land of blessing (and learn to stay there), but where we can start taking cities for God!

John 15:4-8

4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

7 If ye abide in me, and my words [rhema revelation words from His mouth into your spirit; i.e. that still small voice that believers are to learn to hear and cultivate as sheep that hear the voice of their Shepherd and as people who learn to open the door to his knock and hear His voice to fellowship with Him]

abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

Come again? So, in this manner, shall you become my disciples. Hearing and obeying requires abiding in His words to you, words He tells you in the secret place of the Most High. In this manner the Lord builds His team of disciples. Do you want to be a disciple of Jesus?

The relationship with Jesus Christ involving hearing Him speak into your heart is what distinguishes the church of Jesus Christ from the religion of men that we often mistakenly label as Christianity. Christianity is not a denominational label. It is simply and only this: a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and through Him, with our heavenly Father. The disciples who walked away from Jesus in John chapter 6 were the ones who became offended when He tried to teach them this subject. His question to the ones left was, "Will you also walk away/" To which Peter responded, "Lord, where would we go? You have the rhema words of eternal life."

How Is Your Relationship With The Master?

I've not arrived 100% in this process, nor can anyone make such a claim. But each day we can seek a fresh encounter with Him. Each day we can seek first the kingdom of God, and each day He leads us to more people to minister to, to pray for, to share with. A funny thing happens when we decide to let Him set the agenda – a lot more miracles happen those days!

The antichrist spirit is alive and well in every country, even those who are considered to be Christian. Recent examples include Australia – where two pastors were just convicted of a newly invented crime (called hate speech) of sharing what the Scriptures say about the sin of antichrist Islamic idolatry. Similar laws are being made in Canada regarding the sin of homosexuality. In public schools in the US, students and school boards are being terrorized by ACLU antichrist-driven threats arising from even mentioning God and Jesus Christ even when those references are done in the historical context of teaching about the founding fathers of our country and the documents they wrote. So much for tolerance and diversity. These countries are each places where free speech and the right to voice one's Christian beliefs are supposed to be protected by the laws of their land. Free Christian speech in France (and now Germany too) has been culturally and legally taboo for years.

But Beloved, the antichrist spirit is alive and well inside the Christian church today too. Inside the walls of doctrines which largely exclude the active personal role of the Holy Spirit is a special wall that habitually places doctrinal veils over personal, intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ. To share that a person can really hear the voice of the Lord today is anathema in more than just a few churches. It is actually the majority ecclesiastical opinion and practice. This is an apostate church. This is a lukewarm church. According to Revelation 3:14-22, the antidote for lukewarm-ness is zealous repentance followed by learning to hear the sound of the Master's voice through daily meals at His table.

Report For Duty

But even among those who earnestly desire a more intimate conversational relationship with Jesus Christ, so many brothers and sisters fall into the habit of satisfying their personal agendas and busy schedules before they satisfy Jesus. I hope you are not one of the many who, perhaps inadvertently, invite Jesus into the back seat instead of asking Him to drive. Jesus is our Lord – the One Who is supposed to be the Boss, with all the trappings of a boss, the One to Whom we are to report for work assignments each day.

The common Christian experience is that few ever report in for duty. How can a business (the business of the Kingdom) grow when the workers don't even report in for the day's assignment? Jesus often has little or no active say in how a person utilizes their most precious possession – their time.

Proverbs 3:5-8, for example, contains eye-opening promises. Swallow hard and read these verses, and ask how often are they in evidence in your day? Ask yourself why sickness still plagues the Body of Christ, even though the solution

appears in these verses? Beloved, God has not changed His way of doing business with His people. He has only made it more clear and obvious since commissioning the New Testament.

Follow Him Like A True Disciple

When was the last time you cleared your schedule and invited the Lord to tell you what you were to do today? What did He mean when he said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me?" What did He mean when He told the rich young man to sell all and "follow [i.e. accompany] Me?" When was the last time you reported for duty, having forsaken your all important agenda, and waited for an assignment from Him for the day?

Religion seeks what only relationship can provide. Religion and relationship are driven by opposite spirits. A worldly religious spirit says "I'm too busy" to meet my Lord in the garden today (hoping He will understand that I have other things, even church things, that I have to do before I am ready to sit at His feet). We assume and even expect the Lord to accompany us instead of the other way around. Martha had this problem ("Lord if you had only been here..."). But hearts that seek a relationship with the Master are willing to set aside all else to sit at His feet, like Mary. Which kind of heart do you have, and which kind do you want to have as you are reading these words?

Getting The Assignment

A wonderful brother recently shared at our church that the angel Gabriel's job was done once Mary believed, declaring "be it unto me according to thy rhema."^[1] She said this immediately after Gabriel had told her wondering heart, "For with God shall nothing^[2] be impossible." In other words, every word you receive in your spirit from the Lord will come to pass when you apply faith to it. Our challenge is to cultivate hearing ears for His constant stream of revelation assignments.

Will it take a severe drought to drive us to the secret place of the Most High in solitude at our brook Cherith (where we learn to tune into His fountain of rhema revelation)? Floodwaters? Forest fires? Earthquakes?

Will it take three days of blindness to get us to go to Arabia for the next three years to learn how He talks with us (like He did with Paul)?

Will it take 14 years in prison for us to learn to become still enough (like Joseph) to learn the lessons that the Lord is waiting to impart into our spirit (so that we finally begin to cooperate with His divine plan for our individual lives)?

Will it take 40 days of fasting in the wilderness for us to become certain and practiced in how the Holy Spirit works in us?

What will it take for you to become as solicitous and as responsive to the Spirit of the Lord as Philip, or -- perhaps more homespun and identifiable for us -- Ananias?

Ananias – What A Guy!

My favorite person in the Bible (next to Jesus Christ) may surprise you. It is Ananias. He's the guy in Acts chapter nine who obeyed the voice of the Lord to go witness to the Apostle Paul. I cry every time I think of the simplicity of his heart. He didn't seek a reputation, and he wasn't building a ministry. He was neither lazy in spending time in the secret place with the Lord, nor stuck in idolatry of being too busy living his life. Instead he was enjoying His relationship with the King. He had postured his heart to listen to the Lord speak the revelation that built His church, against which the gates of hell will not prevail.

Beloved, how about you? Shall we cut to the chase? Can I lead you (and me too) in a prayer of repentance?

Dear Heavenly Father, I ask Your forgiveness for the times I have squandered, in pursuing my own agenda. I ask Your forgiveness for my idolatry of putting others things in my day ahead of You. I purpose in my heart to seek You and My Lord Jesus first, and not last, behind my day's activities. I give You permission to set my schedule, and to give me Kingdom assignments. I am reporting for duty.

I purpose and I choose to make You Lord over my schedule today. I cancel all of satan's efforts and ambushes against my accomplishing those assignments, and I choose to forgive myself for having not made You Lord over these things in my life.

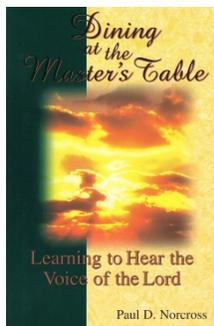
Holy Spirit, please heal my heart and teach me Your truth in all these things. Help me to change from leaning on my own understanding and abilities, to leaning on yours. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

May the Lord give you many assignments this new year, and may you have the heart, the faith, and the persistence to carry them out under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, for with God no rhema is impossible!

All our love in Him, from Whom all blessings flow,

--Paul & Rita Norcross

FROM THE BOOKSTORE: Dining At The Master's Table – Learning To Hear The Voice Of The Lord



Learn how to hear the voice of the Lord with confidence!! This is a no nonsense book for those who want to build their confidence and understanding of how and why the Lord speaks with them, and how to grow into more of it. Many churches and Bible study groups are using this book to strengthen their walks in the Lord. It is also used in over 80 Bible Schools in more than 25 nations!

Available at the bookstore at www.KingdomFaithMinistries.Org

[1] **Luke 1:34-38**

Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?
And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee,
and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing
which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age:
and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

For with God nothing [no rhema word, or saying] shall be impossible.

And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy
word [rhema word]. And the angel departed from her.

[2] literally in the Greek "nothing" consists of three words: ouk pan rhema, which
literally mean "not every word," i.e. no word (of revelation), shall be impossible. It
was this promise, that no revelation from the Lord would be impossible to
accomplish, which triggered Mary's willing response "be it unto me according to
your word!"