



# RESURRECTION CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES

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*Paul and Gretel Haglin*

EVANGELIZING THE HEART OF THE BELIEVER

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## Letters of Faith

September 2016

### The Simplicity and Purity of Devotion to Christ

Dearly Beloved,

I will never forget the amazing spiritual experiences I had when I read the Book of Acts for the first time. The church of my forty-year religious upbringing read Acts in their evensong service in mid-August when, as an active Minnesota boy, I was swimming, or sailing, or playing tennis, or enjoying the company of cute, blond, Minnesota ladies. I could hardly believe how dramatic and powerful and real were the experiences chronicled for us by the apostles in the Book of Acts. My excitement in reading what Jesus-filled, Holy Spirit-empowered saints *did* was overwhelming.

One such revelation shaped my spiritual walk. It started with the description of Paul's ministry in Lystra. **"At Lystra a man was sitting who had no strength in his feet, lame from his mother's womb, who had never walked. This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when he had fixed his gaze on him and had seen that he had faith to be made well, said with a loud voice, 'Stand upright on your feet.' And he leaped up and began to walk. When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they raised their voice, saying in the Lycaonian language, 'The gods have become like men and have come down to us.'" (Acts 14:8-11)**

**"But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out and saying, 'Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, Who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them...' Even saying these things, with difficulty they restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.**

**"But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. [Historically, he was dead! That's what happened when they stoned someone—just as they are doing today.] But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city. The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe. After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.'" (Acts 14:14-15, 18-22)**

I was overwhelmed! What kind of man was this Paul? He went back into the city that had just had him executed, and he kept preaching that we need to endure many "tribulations"—like a stoning?—to enter the Kingdom of God. I vividly remember going to bed that night with a deep feeling in my inner being that I was missing something God was trying to imprint on my spirit about Him, and about the Apostle Paul, and about my Christian walk. The next day in my bible reading, I got all the way to Second Corinthians Chapter 11, and was stopped cold by verse three that starts out with the Apostle Paul saying: **"But I am afraid..."**

What? The recently stoned and resurrected, persecution-defying Paul was afraid? Afraid of what? What frightened Paul if being stoned didn't?

Verse three continues: **"But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ."**

What frightened Paul were the devil's deceptions, not man's tribulations and persecutions!

What frightened Paul was the devil's crafty ability to deceive a disciple's mind enough to move it away from the simplicity and purity of devotion to our Lord Jesus.

That's what frightened Paul, and his being frightened by that shocked a righteous fear of God into me that has lasted over my 40-plus ensuing years of ministering deliverance and freedom to hundreds of saints who had been deceived and allowed their minds to be drawn away from their original simple, pure devotion to their Lord Jesus Christ.

**The Simplicity of our Devotion to Jesus:** No rules. No procedures required to show or to prove our devotion. No categories, ranks, or titles. Simplicity equating to uncomplicated totality.

Paul warns again in Colossians 2:8, **"See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ."** Note well: we *are* to be taken captive to Christ.

Simple devotion is simply saying an unqualified, all-inclusive Yes, Lord! Simply loving Jesus!

Simplicity is God's way! (1 King 19:11-12) God spoke to Elijah: **"... 'Go forth and stand on the mountain before the Lord.' And behold, the Lord was passing by! And a great and strong wind was rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of a gentle blowing."** God's voice came to Elijah in his time of triumph and fear, in the simplicity of a gentle zephyr, and Elijah recognized the still, small voice of his God!

**The Purity of our Devotion to Jesus!** Philippians 4:8 says, **"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things."** Pure devotion means: No Mixture! No Dilution! No Pollution! No Confusion!

**The Devotion to Jesus!** (John 21:15-17) The resurrected Jesus said to Simon Peter after serving the disciples a lunch of fish and bread on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, **"...do you love Me more than these?"** to which Peter answered, **"Yes, Lord; You know that I love You."**

What were the "these" in the "more than these" for Peter? The fishing? The huge catch of 153 fish? Fellowship with the other disciples? Scripture doesn't tell us.

But Jesus asked him two more times **"...do you love Me?"** Remember Peter's three denials? Three simple and pure declarations of devotion to Jesus brought Peter into full repentance and acceptance of Jesus' full forgiveness!

Abraham's "more than these" was his son, Isaac. (Gen. 22:16-18) God said to him, **"...because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son... I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens..."** That is another WOW! Beloved, when we totally devote to Him what He asks for, the return to us from God is thousands of times over. Abraham gives up his one and only son, then the boy is restored, the family becomes as the stars and grains of sands in number, and in the fullness of time, from this family comes the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Maybe it isn't important that we know what "these" Jesus was talking about with Peter on the seashore, but when the Holy Spirit of Christ asks you, **"...do you love Me more than these?"** we have to know that our simple, pure devotion for Jesus is greater and stronger than our affection for whatever Jesus thinks are important "these" in our lives!

May I put this all together in perspective? I believe that Jesus will ask each of us at some time, or at several times, in our walk of full devotion to Him: *Is your professed love for Me a simple, pure, devotion, exceeding your affection for anything or anyone else?* There will come a specific "these" that He asks about that you can not just easily answer that question with an Of course Yes, Lord! But the Holy Spirit will empower you to say Yes, and you will know in your spirit you mean Yes, and you will be aware that you have been changed by your finally saying Yes.

What will come in the future from devoting all of your "these" to Jesus? It could be the full, simple, pure devotion to Jesus for which you are praying and professing right now.

How do you guard and maintain your simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ? By your simple, pure, devotion to Jesus above everyone and everything on which Jesus challenges you. It is my humble opinion, based on my painful personal experiences of these questions being addressed to me by my loving Lord Jesus, that He will challenge you on every person, thing, or situation that He sees is encroaching on His primacy in your life.

First John 4:16 states, **“We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. [How? By experiencing it!] God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.”**

In a world filled with fear, distrust, and hate, we are to be like the Apostle Paul, committed to the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ to the point of a holy fear of falling short of it in any way. Let simplicity, purity, and devotion be your daily goal for your walk with Jesus! Don't let any deception of the enemy draw your mind away from them! The Holy Spirit of Christ will empower you to stand firm on them. As you stand firm, you will help others stand firm, because you will be a living testimony of God's love and enabling power to make us all stand firm and be more like Jesus!

Simple hugs,



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