



THE PURGING OF THE CHURCH



**A CHURCH WITHOUT SPOT OR WRINKLE, A PEOPLE WITH
CLEAN HANDS AND A PURE HEART, PREPARED AND
WAITING FOR THE RETURN OF JESUS**

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INDEX

- 3. INTRODUCTION**
- 4. 1. A purged, purified ministry!**
- 6. 2. A Church that God is calling back to repentance and holiness**
- 10. 3. A people washed, cleansed - offering praises in true righteousness.**
- 13. 4. A revival among our young people! Drug strongholds coming down! Alcohol and divorce no longer prevalent among God's people.**
- 16. 5. The sound of prayer - intercession!**
- 20. 6. A people of God who will discern between the holy and the unholy!**
- 23. 7. Everywhere, God's people turning again to the Word.**
- 26. 8. A tested, tried people, once again devoted to the Person of Jesus Christ!**
- 29. 9. His Person being lifted up to draw all men to Him!**
- 32. 10. Christ no longer the stranger in our midst, but CROWNED - PRE-EMINENT!**
- 35. 11. A Pentecost that truly exalts the name and power of Jesus Christ, the Lord of all.**
- 37. SUMMARY**
- 39. CONCLUSION**

INTRODUCTION

The Lord has led me to go back to a sermon/prophecy I received in a group mailing, and filed, some time ago. It is by David Wilkerson.

David was the Founding Pastor of Times Square Church in New York City. He was called to New York in 1958 to minister to gang members and drug addicts, as told in the best-selling book, **The Cross and the Switchblade**.

After the introduction, he gave 11 bullet points about THE GLORIOUS FUTURE JUST AHEAD. As the Lord leads, I will expand on these challenging but inspiring aspects.

Let us begin.....

1. A purged, purified ministry!

As we look around the world today, we can see how this is coming about throughout the 'ministry world'. From the rich and famous, worldwide ministries, to the local church on the corner of your town, God is purging His church.

Interestingly, Jesus saved His harshest words for the Pharisees and scribes, who were the religious leaders of His day. In summary, in the gospel of Mark.....

Warning against the teachers of the law

38 As he taught, Jesus said, 'Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the market-places, 39 and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets. 40 They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely.' (Mark 12:35-40)

The detailed criticism is found in Matthew 23, headed, *Seven woes on the teachers of the law and the Pharisees*. We all know these but I would like to offer something a little different, my idea and paraphrase of what Jesus could have said had He been ministering here today.

1. Woe to you ministers, you preach a feel good gospel designed not to upset the people. Both you and they will be excluded from the kingdom. You prey upon the susceptible and make long prayers. You will be condemned. (23:13-14)

2. Woe to you evangelists. You travel everywhere preaching a low cost gospel of forgiveness without responsibility and life change, committing the both of you to hell. (23:15)

3. Woe to you ministers, you teach, rules, regulations and theology that takes people's eyes off me and focuses them on you. (23:16-22)
4. Woe to you ministers, you preach tithing to the people and reward yourselves with power and lifestyles out of the sacrifices they have made. (23:23-24)
5. Woe to you ministers, to make money you sell books, prayer cloths, holy incense and other indulgences that falsely promise to make followers spiritual lives better, while your own lives do not live up to the illusion you are trying to sell. (23:25-26)
6. Woe to you ministers, you wear robes and beautiful clothes to make your people look up to you, but your personal lives do not live up to the image you create. (23:27-8)
7. Woe to you ministers, you lift up on a pedestal the founders of your denomination, then fail to live yourselves the revelation and obedience they displayed in their lives. (23:29-32)

You hypocrites, I am now sending those who are prepared to speak about and live the truths of my kingdom. You ridicule and reject them. Therefore you will come under My judgement both now and upon My return! (23:33-39)

For Jesus is returning for a pure and holy bride. Purging of unholy elements starts at the top!

Are you convicted? I am!

2. A Church that God is calling back to repentance and holiness

As a modern church we have placed an unbalanced emphasis on GRACE, with many preaching and teaching that grace over rides all else. That God's grace is so all encompassing that we can simply say the (unbiblical) 'Sinners Prayer', thereby earning our 'ticket to heaven' which is unconditionally redeemable at the (unbiblical) 'Pearly Gate', irrespective of the life we have lived after making our verbal commitment to Jesus. An exaggeration? Sadly, no, amongst many evangelists and in many churches today.

This has led to a church where 'Shades of Grey' are turning darker by the day. A church where so many unbiblical behaviours are being accepted in the name of grace and love. I don't need to expand - especially in light of recent events!

A church in which the biblical life of holiness has been relegated to the bottom of the pile or discarded entirely!

Let's consider some New Testament scriptures.....

Instructions for Christian living

17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed. 20 That, however, is not the way of life you learned 21 when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true

righteousness and holiness. (all emphasis mine) (Ephesians 4:17-24)

Surely a very clear instruction.

Warning against idolatry

14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? 15 What harmony is there between Christ and Belial[b]? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.' 17 Therefore, 'Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.' 18 And, 'I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.' 7 **Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.** (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1)

In fact we are told that if we want to see the Lord, we must live holy lives.....

Warning and encouragement

14 Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. 16 See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. 17 Afterwards, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done. (Hebrews 12:1417)

Jesus, through the apostle John, called the churches of Asia to repentance, when they fell into ungodly ways. To the church at Ephesus.....

4 Yet I hold this against you: you have forsaken the love you had at first. 5 Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. (Revelation 2:4-5)

The church at Pergamum.....

14 Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: there are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality. 15 Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. (Revelation 2:14-16)

At Thyatira.....

20 Nevertheless, I have this against you: you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. 21 I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. 22 So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. 23 I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. (Revelation 2:20-23)

And at Sardis.....

I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. 3 Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you. (Revelation 3:1b-3)

May we all be warned. REPENT now and live HOLY lives. Our kingdom futures depend on it!

3. A people washed, cleansed - offering praises in true righteousness.

"Why bother taking a shower or bath? Am only going to get dirty again!" Have your kids said that to you, as mine did - and as I used to say to my parents! LOL!

Seems that parents live in Old Testament days, where the priest on duty at the Tabernacle, and then Temple, had to wash himself in the Washing Basin before making sacrifices on the Altar.....

They washed whenever they entered the tent of meeting or approached the altar, as the Lord commanded Moses. (exodus 40:32)

But we live in New Testament times, where Jesus washed us clean once and for all through His cleansing blood, on Calvary's hill. (Please don't let your kids read this bit! LOL!)

10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 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. (1 Corinthians 6:10-11)

Unfortunately we all to often take licence from this to live how we like! We 'conveniently' forget to read the next verse.....

12 'I have the right to do anything,' you say – but not everything is beneficial. 'I have the right to do anything'– but I will not be mastered by anything. (1 Corinthians 6:12)

Sin creeps back so easily into our lives. Peter warns us.....

5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to

goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But whoever does not have them is short-sighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins. (2 Peter 1:5-9)

Theologically speaking, we are 'positionally' cleansed, but still have to work this out 'experientially' in our lives.

Sadly, the church has walked away from the need for righteous living, thus the reason for David Wilkerson's, and my, plea.

A plea for a return to righteousness in the church. A plea to each believer (myself included) to walk in the ways of Jesus, our mentor, guide and friend, through the Holy Spirit living within us.....

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14:26)

To become imitators of Jesus, as were the Thessalonians.....

4 For we know, brothers and sisters[b] loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. 6 You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. (1 Thessalonians 1:4-6)

As we enter these times of great tribulation, which we can see developing daily, our God is calling us to a new life of righteous living, praising God as we stand before Jesus on His throne.....

The great multitude in white robes

9 After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.' 11 All the angels were standing round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, 12 saying: 'Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!'

13 Then one of the elders asked me, 'These in white robes – who are they, and where did they come from?' 14 I answered, 'Sir, you know.' And he said, 'These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore, 'they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. 16 "Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them," nor any scorching heat. 17 For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; "he will lead them to springs of living water." "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."'" (Revelation 7:9-17)

Do you, do I, want to be a part of the bride of Christ? To do that we must live holy and righteous lives now.

This is the challenge facing each and every believer today.

4. A revival among our young people! Drug strongholds coming down! Alcohol and divorce no longer prevalent among God's people.

These outworking's are the results of a weak faith, an ungodly lifestyle and a church more interested in 'putting bums on seats' through easy Christianity, Father Christmas teachings, than 'kicking people up the backsides', than on convicting people of sin.

We supposedly preach a gospel of love, but which is not love, without showing people the consequences of sin. Jesus loved the sinner, but also was strong on not sinning. To the woman caught in adultery He said.....

10 Jesus straightened up and asked her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' 11 'No one, sir,' she said. 'Then neither do I condemn you,' Jesus declared. 'Go now and leave your life of sin.' (John 8:10-11)

The items listed in the heading are the result. A falling away of the young, drugs, alcohol and divorce plus more. And this is in the church! As well as in the world.

Jesus told us that this would occur in the last days. Can you see these signs in today's church.....

9 'Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. 10 At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, 11 and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. 12 Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, (Matthew 24:9-12)

But the good news follows.....

13 but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. (Matthew 24:9-12)

Paul also writes.....

3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather round them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

And confirms.....

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. (1 Timothy 4:1)

Jesus himself said through John, to the church in Laodicea, a picture of today's church.....

15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 17 You say, "I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing." But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. 18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so that you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so that you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so that you can see. 19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. 20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. (Revelation 3:15-20)

But the news is not all bad!

In the prophecy of Joel, quoted by Peter on the Day of Pentecost.....

Be glad, people of Zion, rejoice in the Lord your God, for he has given you the autumn

rains because he is faithful. He sends you abundant showers, both autumn and spring rains, as before. (Joel 2:23)

At that time the autumn rains came but the spring rains of Holy Spirit power are still come, indeed are already starting today.....

[Patience in suffering] Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. (James 5:7)

While the world will continue in its (more and more) wicked ways, there will be a mighty move of God.....

"I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten-- the great locust and the young locust, the other locusts and the locust swarm -- my great army that I sent among you. (Joel 2:25)

Come Jesus, come.

5. The sound of prayer - intercession!

This morning, after my hard gym workout, I was reaping my reward sitting in the spa pool in the complex, chatting to, amongst others, a Christian friend who shared with me that she has difficulty praying publicly, but spoke to God in a normal voice, in her mind, and He spoke back to her in a similar way (Not in King James English it might surprise some to hear!) I understood what she was saying, for that is similar to me.

Most prayers we hear and say, sadly, are actually very self-focused. After a short preamble about how great our God is, we quickly continue "God please give me this", "God please do that for me", "God please make life easier and better for me."

Do you recognize yourself here? I can at times.

I often think, and occasionally say to others, "How long would your marriage last if all you did was tell your spouse everything you wanted, without taking any interest in their desires and needs?" So how does God feel when we do the same to Him?

MMMMMM!!!

Of course I , and we all, know the verses, primarily in John's gospel, that tell us to ask and we will receive. And often when we do ask, we do not appear to receive (particularly if we ask for a \$1,000,000!) and we are disappointed and feel let down.

Interestingly, Jesus closest friend was John. They knew and understood each other well, so I believe that John would have had concern also in what he asked for, in that it would be in the will of God.

When we are young Christians, God often does give us more gifts, as we do to children at Christmas. (Please no more socks this year! LOL!) But seriously, God is not Father Christmas and He expects us to mature and grow up in Him.

Jesus also, was quite dogmatic about prayer.

Prayer

5 'And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. (Matthew 6:5-6)

Did you notice the last sentence? God knows our needs before we ask Him! These are often quite different to our 'wants'. James, in his usual way, was blunt about this!

2 You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. (James 4:2-3)

Prayer, as I understand it then, is primarily talking to God, one on one.

The public prayers our God truly desires of us are those of intercession, which is praying prayers not from our own mind but the words that he gives us. Of waiting upon the Lord until He tells us what to pray.

But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but

the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God. (Romans 8:25-27)

As Jesus intercedes for us.....

23 Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; 24 but because Jesus lives for ever, he has a permanent priesthood. 25 Therefore he is able to save completely[c] those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. (Hebrews 7:25-7)

So we are to intercede for our God. This is a mystery, but God uses us to pray in His desires for the world and His people. This is a step of faith for us to do this.

Too many years ago now I belonged to an Intercessors Group at the church we attended at the time. We would meet and wait on the Lord to tell us what to pray for - and He did. They were things completely separate from ourselves and the church to which we belonged. Some we did not understand. Some we prayed in the Spirit, others in the natural. But our prayers were determined by God, not by us.

To change the world, these are the prayers God desires of us.

Jesus however did have one prayer He commanded the disciples, and us, to pray. It is a simple prayer and sets a pattern of prayer for us.

9 'This, then, is how you should pray:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." (Matthew 6:9-13)

Prayer too, requires action. I saw a quote today on Facebook, from Pope Francis, along the lines of 'Pray for the poor, then feed them.' This reflected the tenor of the words of Jesus in the verses following the Lord's Prayer.

14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. (Matthew 6:14-15)

Amen.

6. A people of God who will discern between the holy and the unholy!

Discernment, or rather the lack of, is a huge problem in the church today.

Why is this? At its heart, I believe, is the extra busy society in which we live. This means there is enormous pressure on all of us to do what we believe, rightly or wrongly, we have to do. The logical consequence is that we have become a 'soundbite society' where, through busyness, we only learn a little about a lot. An article over a page long is considered too long - "please summarize the highlights for me", is our attitude. We cannot concentrate to listen for long either. Our attention span has decreased as the jumble of, and in, our lives has multiplied. Relationships have fractured, problems are avoided rather than overcome. For relationships take time to build and maintain. We all (should) know the consequences

But mark this: there will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people. (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

This 'time deficit' has also had huge consequences for our relationship with Jesus. As with marriage, the only way we can develop a deep relationship with Him, is to spend time with Him. To spend time in His Word, to spend time in contemplation and time in prayer. Then to follow the instructions He gives us to build His kingdom upon the earth.

your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10)

What is happening, indeed has happened, is that we are entering a new Dark

Age in relation to biblical knowledge and discernment! We are, once again, relying upon modern day 'priests' of pulpit and TV to illuminate us with God's word in as few minutes as possible. We believe what we hear, whether it is true , false or just slightly off, as we haven't the time to check it out for ourselves. Jesus warned about this.....

True and false prophets

15 'Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognise them. Do people pick grapes from thorn-bushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognise them.

True and false disciples

21 'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?" 23 Then I will tell them plainly, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!" (Matthew 7)

Let us look to people's fruits, not talk, before we take notice of them.

Peter too, warned about the scoffers, who will ridicule God's Word and make us doubt, or destroy, our faith.

3 Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 They will say, 'Where is this "coming" he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.' 5 But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 6 By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. 7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and

destruction of the ungodly. (2 Peter 3:3-7)

Reality is, we cannot totally rely upon others to develop our relationship with Jesus. We are moving from the medieval Dark Ages where only the Roman Catholic priests had access to the Word, and manipulated it suit their own purposes to a new Dark Age, where we have lots of Bibles, but not the time (we think) to read and contemplate upon them.

Until we get back into the Word and spend time with our Saviour and Lord Jesus, our ability to discern between the holy and unholy will not change.

The choice is ours!

7. Everywhere, God's people turning again to the Word.

This is really a continuation from last week, where we saw that lack of reading the Word was giving rise to the New Dark Age, or apostasy in the church.

It is not a new problem! Hosea prophesied about this around the 8th century BC.....

my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. 'Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children. (Hosea 4:6)

The Lord criticized the priests for their failure and rejected them. May I ask who are the priests today? We are.....

*5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 **and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father** – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. (Revelation 1:5-6)(emphasis added)*

In the Old Testament the priests were the mediators between the people and God. But now we have a new and better covenant.....

5 They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: 'See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.'[a] 6 But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises. 7 For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. (Hebrews 8:5-7)

Jesus is our mediator.....

4 who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. 5

For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. (1 Timothy 2:4-6)

Put simply, we cannot *come to a knowledge of the truth* unless we study and absorb the Word, which for true believers is the 'living word'.....

22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart.[a] 23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. (1 Peter 2:22-3)

When I was young (surprising I can remember back the far!) my parents made me read the Bible each day. It was boring, and I hated it! I learned my own method of 'speed reading'!

Once I came into a relationship with Jesus when I was 42, I started to read the Bible again, for it was interesting to find out more about my Jesus. I could read and understand the words on the page. However, it was only after coming into the realm of the Holy Spirit, the Bible truly came alive to me. I got revelations, for now I could read the 'words between the lines'. Thank you Jesus. Thank you Holy Spirit. (And thank you Father.)

Over the past 20-30 years, at an estimate, there has been a big falling away in the West in people walking in Holy Spirit power. Going into supposed Pentecostal and Charismatic churches today, I am saddened by the lack of evidence of people moving in the Holy Spirit. Most of our Pentecostal churches have become formal and dead. Just another religious movement based upon the revelation and life of earlier times.

When visiting Africa too, there is lots of joyful worship, for that is inbuilt, but the greatest demand of people I share with is for Holy Spirit baptism. My friend Rodney Francis's manual, 'The School of the Holy Spirit' is meeting with insatiable demand.

In order therefore, for believers to turn again to the Word, there is a need for Holy Spirit infilling or baptism, however you prefer to express it, to come back into the church today. Then we will see a return to the Word.

Come Holy Spirit, come.

8. A tested, tried people, once again devoted to the Person of Jesus Christ!

I live in a society here in New Zealand where 'health and safety' rules above all! The rules and regulations applying to workplace safety are so extreme, that common-sense has departed out the door. Children are so protected, by regulations and over protective parents, that risk taking is no longer in our vocabulary. Yet risk taking, so learning where boundaries are, is a part of maturing to become well rounded people. Phew! Got that off my chest! Without developing RSI (Repetitive strain injury)!

Why I mentioned it though, is that this mind attitude has crept into all life, including our spiritual journey. We all look for comfort. We are risk averse. But God is not! He leads us through trials and testings, '*Through the valley of the shadow of death*', in order to bring us into a deeper and closer relationship with Him.

Reality is, if you want a peaceful, comfortable life, do not give your heart to Jesus! I know that this goes against a lot of modern teaching, of the 'Father Christmas', easy Christianity theology, I mentioned earlier. But it is the truth. Jesus himself said.....

34 'Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law – 36 a man's enemies will be the members of his own household." 37 'Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it. (Matthew 10:34-38)

We are to lose our life for Jesus! And take on the character of our Lord. That is

the purpose of the ministry giftings of Ephesians.....

*11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God **and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.** (Ephesians 4:11-13) (emphasis mine)*

My experience has been one over the years of financial trials, the first of which brought me to Jesus, and those after that closer to Him. Do I enjoy financial problems? No! But I do know that for me personally, they have helped mold my character to what it is today. Had I continued to have ongoing business success, I know pride and self-sufficiency would have been at the centre of my soul.

James wrote about this.....

Trials and temptations

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (James 1:2-4)

Peter too, talked about trials building faith.....

5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. (1 Peter 1:5-7)

Persecution is also a means of developing faith. Jesus set it out plainly that we would be persecuted for our faith.....

'Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. (Matthew 24:9)

Paul experienced huge persecution during his life. He told Timothy.....

11 persecutions, sufferings – what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.

12In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 13 while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. (2 Timothy 3:11-13)

Devotion to Jesus, as we can see, is developed through trials, testing, and yes, persecution, in our lives.

Are we prepared to pay the price?

9. His Person being lifted up to draw all men to Him!

The prophet Isaiah, who lived c.740-681BC, both prophesied the coming of Jesus and His glorification.....

The suffering and glory of the servant

13 See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.
(Isaiah 52:13)

On the other hand, Isaiah also prophesied that fallen man, confident in their own strength, such as we in our modern world, would be humbled by the glory of the the Lord being lifted up by His people.

12 The Lord Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted (and they will be humbled), 13 for all the cedars of Lebanon, tall and lofty, and all the oaks of Bashan, 14 for all the towering mountains and all the high hills, 15 for every lofty tower and every fortified wall, 16 for every trading ship and every stately vessel. 17 The arrogance of man will be brought low and human pride humbled; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day, 18 and the idols will totally disappear. (Isaiah 2:12-18)

The New Testament acknowledges that that Jesus was to die and be lifted up.....

13 No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man. 14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.’ (John3:13-15)

And that finally, all people will be drawn to Him.....

31 Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be

driven out. 32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.' 33 He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die. (John 12:31-3)

Footnotes: John 12:32 The Greek for lifted up also means exalted.

He died on the cross, overcame death, and was lifted up. We all should bow to Him.....

8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, (Philippians 2:8-10)

Amazingly He made a one-time sacrifice for us.....

25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. 26 Such a high priest truly meets our need – one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. 27 Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. (Hebrews 7:25-7)

He is to rule and reign in the church, and then over the world in the age to come.....

20 he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, (Ephesians 1:20-22)

The times when Jesus has been made preeminent in the church have been those of revelation and revival. Unfortunately we, as humans, have tended to

absorb revelation, converting it into religion, and have worked out the pattern of revival, wresting control back from the Holy Spirit. Today's picture, a quotation of Reinhard Bonke, sums it up perfectly, particularly in the Western world.

The kingdom church is based on the exaltation of Jesus, as revealed by the Word and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Are you prepared to put Jesus in first place in your life?

10. Christ no longer the stranger in our midst, but CROWNED - PRE-EMINENT!

Again, this follows on from last week.

Jesus was prophesied to come as King and Lord.....

7 Lift up your heads, you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. 8 Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. 9 Lift up your heads, you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. 10 Who is he, this King of glory? The Lord Almighty –he is the King of glory. (Psalms 24:7-10)

Jesus has been crowned, and will be returning as *Lord of lords and King of kings.....*

13 They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. 14 They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings – and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.’ (Revelation 17:13-14)

Jesus is to be our personal Saviour and Lord. He is to be preeminent in our lives.

18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever! Amen. (2 Peter 3:18)

Jesus is no stranger! As genuine followers we are his brothers and sisters.....

10 In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. 11 Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. 12 He says, 'I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises.' (Hebrews 2:10-12)

We are precious to God, and He must be precious to us.

The living Stone and a chosen people

4 As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him – 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For in Scripture it says: 'See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.' 7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, 'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,' 8 and, 'A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.' They stumble because they disobey the message – which is also what they were destined for. 9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:4-10)

We need to both understand this and show it through godly living, to show that He truly is preeminent in our life.....

Living godly lives in a pagan society

11 Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. 12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. 13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human

authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, 14 or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. 15 For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. 16 Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. 17 Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honour the emperor. (1 Peter 2:11-17)

So that we may be truly able to share in this doxology.....

24 To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – 25 to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and for evermore! Amen. (Jude 1:24-5)

Amen.

11. A Pentecost that truly exalts the name and power of Jesus Christ, the Lord of all.

We need to return to a church that focuses upon Jesus, operating in the power of the Holy Spirit - and in obedience to the will of the Father. A kingdom church, building God's kingdom here and now; the bride of Christ, a church prepared for the return of Jesus. Let us just absorb these scriptures into the very centrality of our being.

This verse should be imprinted in every disciple's heart.....

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.(Philippians 2:9-11)

Through life changing, 'lived out' faith that brings power.....

15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. 16 By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see. (Acts 3:15-16)

And.....

Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.' (Acts 4:30)

Rejoicing in the Lord.....

19 speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for

everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 5:19-20)

Always acknowledging Jesus in all that He does through us.....

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:17)

Through submission of our lives to Jesus, He will be glorified in us.....

We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 1:12)

Looking not to the past, but living in the present and looking forward to that which is yet to come.....

14 For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. 15 Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. 16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. (Hebrews 13:14-16)

Believing (dedicating our lives to) Jesus, so loving God and loving others.....

And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. (1 John 3:23)

Jesus is Lord! JESUS IS LORD!! **JESUS IS LORD!!!**

HALLELUJAH!!!

A summary of the 11 points we have considered follows.

SUMMARY

1. A purged, purified ministry!

Jesus is returning for a pure and holy bride. Purging of unholy elements starts at the top!

2. A Church that God is calling back to repentance and holiness

May we all be warned. REPENT now and live HOLY lives. Our kingdom futures depend on it!

3. A people washed, cleansed - offering praises in true righteousness.

Do you, do I, want to be a part of the bride of Christ? To do that we must live holy and righteous lives now. This is the challenge facing each and every believer today.

4. A revival among our young people! Drug strongholds coming down!

Alcohol and divorce no longer prevalent among God's people.

A purified church, living lives in accordance with the will of the Lord.

5. The sound of prayer - intercession!

Prayer and intercession in accordance with the Lord's will, not our own.

6. A people of God who will discern between the holy and the unholy!

Until we get back into the Word and spend time with our Saviour and Lord Jesus, our ability to discern between the holy and unholy will not change.

7. Everywhere, God's people turning again to the Word.

In order for believers to turn again to the Word, there is a need for Holy Spirit infilling or baptism, however you prefer to express it, to come back into the church today. Then we will see a return to the Word.

8. A tested, tried people, once again devoted to the Person of Jesus Christ!

Devotion to Jesus, as we can see, is developed through trials, testing, and yes, persecution, in our lives. Are we prepared to pay the price?

9. His Person being lifted up to draw all men to Him!

The kingdom church is based on the exaltation of Jesus, as revealed by the Word and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Are you prepared to put Jesus in first place in your life?

10. Christ no longer the stranger in our midst, but CROWNED - PRE-EMINENT!

Jesus is 'No. 1' in our lives!

11.A Pentecost that truly exalts the name and power of Jesus Christ, the Lord of all.

Jesus is Lord! JESUS IS LORD!! **JESUS IS LORD!!!**

HALLELUJAH!!!

Now we will draw some conclusions from what David Wilkerson was saying.

CONCLUSION

THE PROBLEMS

At the heart of his insights was the reality that the church, as it exists now, has lost its way. While the church does many GOOD things, GOD things have been lost, as we have adapted more and more to the ways of the world. An 'O' has been added, which has fundamentally changed the character of the church and reduced its effectiveness in the community.

Interestingly, his first point of reference was to the ministry. For ever since the institutionalization of the church by Emperor Constantine in Rome during the 300's, the church has been operated for the benefit of the ministry, rather than to the glory of God. Effectively, God has been hijacked by the modern 'priesthood', setting themselves up once again as conduits, effectively barriers, between God and His people. The Reformation, first and foremost, was born over this issue, but soon fell back into similar habits with a different set of names and people. Regrettably leadership's heart, throughout the ages from the Old Testament Priesthood, the Roman Catholic Church and the 33,000+ plus denominations today has primarily been on perpetuating their hierarchy. Revelation comes, new movements are formed based on direct inter-relation between God and man, but inevitably, deteriorate into formality, rules, regulations, with theological doctrines promoted through colleges or seminaries issuing qualifications that replace God's calling in the ministry. This self-perpetuating process sets up formal organisations, builds buildings, institutes programmes, and collects money from its followers in order to maintain the system, so becoming integrated into society, rather than offering a radical alternative to it.

Virtually all the great reformers down the ages have been rejected by the established churches of the time - from Wycliffe to Luther, from Wesley to

Booth, from Finney to Tozer, from the early Pentecostals to David Wilkerson.
That is the way of the church.

The problems of the church, in the broader sense of the people, listed as

- no repentance and holiness
- no righteous living
- worldly addictions
- worldly or selfish prayers
- no discernment
- ignorance of the Word
- avoidance of trial and testing
- relegating Jesus
- Jesus as a stranger
- a lost power of Pentecost

can to a large extent be attributed to an inward looking leadership, focused on survival through promotion of a ministry or grouping, rather than the outward focused, self-sacrificial example of the life and ministry of Jesus.

And the people, the followers, have found it convenient to offload their 'religious responsibility' to the establishment. For that is comfortable, and does not disturb the status quo.

But there is change coming!

From the problems we move on to.....

THE SOLUTIONS

The primary solutions to many of the church's current problems are a refocusing of leadership to an outward focus, putting Jesus and others above

themselves - plus a people prepared to sacrifice comfort to dedicate their lives to the ways of the Lord.

Neither of these come through personal striving, for that will fail, but must arise through the power of the Holy Spirit, convicting leadership and people of the need to change, and the willingness to submit to His direction.

David Wilkerson along with others, could see that this is starting to happen. For there is arising today, a 'church' (in the widest sense) of people around the world who are setting aside the chains of religion for a close, deep, personal relationship with Jesus, in order to fulfill the purposes of the Lord in these last days before the return of Jesus.

We are looking at a church, a people.....

..... led by humble, God-directed people, called to the ministry, not as a job, but at the personal leading of the Holy Spirit.

..... of people called to repentance and holy living

..... of people washed in the blood of the Lamb, cleansed from worldly ways, walking in the ways of righteousness.

..... setting an example to others, putting aside the strongholds of the world such as drugs, alcoholism, divorce, and many others, that corrupt people's lives.

..... turning back to prayer and intercession, to grow in God and discover His will for their lives.

..... who can discern between the holy and the unholy, through understanding the pattern of the Word and spending time with Jesus.

..... a people dedicated to read and meditate upon the Word.

..... prepared to *walk through the valley of the shadow of death* in order to be made into the likeness of Jesus.

..... unashamed of Jesus, lifting up His name before all mankind, not just in words, but through the example of their lives.

..... willing to make Jesus No.1 in their lives, submitting their all to Him.

..... of victory in Jesus, operating under Holy Spirit guidance and power.

This is not a church living between four walls, but a powerful church witnessing to the world through the strength and power of Jesus operating in their lives.

It is a church of individuals united in the Spirit, paving the way for the return of Jesus.

Do you want to belong? Then submit yourself 100% to Jesus. He will lead you and guide you into paths you could never have believed possible for you.
HALLELUJAH!

Jesus is Lord! JESUS IS LORD!! **JESUS IS LORD!!!**