

Let's Fall in Love with God
Chapter 16: Success Through Failure
(John Henry Alan, edited by Bob Clarkson)
{ Dig for the gold ! }

"God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of
our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world is crucified
unto me and I unto the world." Galatians 6:14.

Surrender Your Rights { 227 }

Men who have lived the intimate love affair with God agree that God cannot possess, and would not even though He could, anyone who is not surrendered to the conquest of God. How much you enjoy God is in direct proportion to your trust and absolute abandon to Him. That is why rebels seldom enjoy the pleasure of true love. Yet even the most stubborn rebel can be transformed into a humble and tender friend of God. In Christ, any of us can become intimate with God.

We are created beings and as such are derived, not self existent. We were never intended to have life in ourselves without God. Codependence on God alone was His plan from the beginning. We will only reach our full potential in close relationships with Him. We were **created in the image of God** for the specific purpose of being **in intimate relationship with God.**

"For how dare we put confidence in anything so fugitive, so fleeting as human life. The wise man, I affirm, can find no rest in that which perishes. Nor will he lend his heart to anything which does on time depend." Those words were written by a 16th century mystic. And in our

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quiet moments, we know they are true. Why then do we put our trust in things that perish? Even nature itself teaches us, that apart from God, we are like orphans caught helpless in a morass of external forces beyond our comprehension. The only thing that is certain is our ultimate death.

God Is Not Surprised { 228 }

I believe that God is not surprised at the decline of the church. Just as Israel did under the Jewish religious traditions, they lived in cycles of rebellion, punishment, repentance and restoration. This went on, cycle after cycle, for two and a half millennia. So also has the church for two plus millennia since the birth of Jesus. Revivals have come and gone. The church is in desperate need of one right now. But unless and until she is willing to face the lions and gladiators of today with the love of God, beginning in the heart of each individual *Christ-In*, revival will remain distant from her.

A Personal Wilderness { 229 }

In my own experience with God, I too, wandered away. But my wandering was not in rebellion and complaining. It was an inadvertent lapse in my fellowship with God caused by what I thought was the right way to live the Christian life. As I became involved in my career and responsibilities as a father, I believed that it was my Christian duty to be successful and provide for my family. Little did I know that this very world view would lead me

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into a wilderness spiritually.

Distracted by Success

Over time, my career successes and excessive participation in lay ministries in the church distracted me from God. I read my Bible, prayed, read daily devotional books and all of that. But they actually brought numbness to my relationship with God. My first love had deteriorated almost to the point of indifference. But when God revealed my wandering heart and wrong priorities, I repented of that choice for my priorities and put God's business and purposes at the head of my list of priorities. And this restored my soul.

Responsible but not Responsive { 230 }

Many budding artists, ministers, and missionaries did as I did. They embarked on their journey as a Christian as *sold out* as a bond-slave by choice. But the glamour and clamor for success and responsible living somehow overtook them. I remember specifically one musical artist. Amy Grant started out in the 1960s with intensity for God and Christian music. Later on, she seemed to have *sold out* to the lights and glitter of Music City, Nashville, Tennessee! Her music became very popular and profitable in non-religious circles.

In more recent times, she has written some of the most life-changing lyrics. One, that I use a lot in my current teaching and mentoring ministries, is "Don't Try So Hard!" This song reflects a sentiment shared by

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millions of Christians who are working their fingers to the bone in an attempt to please God. Amy's song releases the grip of the *tyranny of the should* from their hearts. It helps them **relax in the loving arms of the most significant lover in the universe!**

Gold Stars Instead of The Lode Star { 231 }

So where have all the worshippers gone? I would suggest that they have actually gone nowhere. They have stayed right in their pews. They have kept their gold stars for perfect attendance. They have continued their home Bible studies packed with information about God but avoiding the emotional expression of unconditional love from God, to God and to all men, especially fellow Christians. They have continued, for decades, in their tiny klatches of men or women meeting.

They have mundanely exchanged the same boring stories of their own lives. They have been passing the bottles of *Christian* baby food around, trying desperately to keep from eating the *possibly poisonous* fare of new revelation from God. And they have continued their prayer meals and meetings, engaged in a constant begging of God that He rescue them from their current morass of disease, distress or discomfort. And all of this has been cloaked in the same religious garb that covered the Pharisees in Jesus' day.

Affirmation of Men { 232 }

How is it that the *Christianity* of today should

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avidly seek the affirmation and acceptance of man, when it was the very most religious men who abhorred and rejected the very Son of God as He walked among them. How is it that we *Christians* are so intent on being indulged, applauded and served by other *Christians*, rather than washing everyone else's feet as Jesus did? And how dare we claim to be *Christians* when we are so full of ourselves that there is nearly no room for God. Our busy lives shout so loud, that our words which proclaim our love for God, either cannot be heard or are taken for exactly what they are, hypocrisy!

Contestants in Popularity Contests

As long as we continue to be contestants in popularity contests among unregenerate people or other believers, we will be of little use to God. Jesus' disciples, according to Jesus Himself, will suffer greater rejection and more horrible treatment than He Himself did. So if you are actually popular in the eyes of other people, you may want to look in your mirror to see what sort of person you have become. Are you a *Christ-In* or merely a follower of a *Christian* religion?

A Remnant Abides

Alas, there is hope. There is still a remnant of *Christ-Ins* who are so deeply in love with God, that their lives are, and will continue to be, a sacrifice of worship to God. To that end let me tell you of my own recent experience.

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Now That Is Worship! { 233 }

I was urged by the Spirit of God one morning to visit a church whose pastor and some members were familiar to me. I sauntered in and sat down in the front row. As the pre-church music was playing my attention was drawn to a passage of scripture displayed on the video screen. It said, “Abide in Me and I in You. If you abide in Me you will bear much fruit.” John 15. I was immediately struck by the fact that if each believer in my church or this church was truly abiding in Christ, our churches would double in size every few years. It almost moved me to tears to think that our lives, in Jesus, were so disconnected from the Vine that very little fruit was evident on our branches.

Worship or Entertainment

As the worship band of about twenty persons entered the sanctuary, they all seemed a bit tense as they watched me sitting alone in my expensive business suit. It was almost as though they thought I might be a government spy. But when their pastor came out and sat beside me and we engaged in jovial conversation, their fears subsided. They began leading in worship and the pastor and I turned to follow along with them. Because I was already well into my personal journey into intimacy with God, I asked the Holy Spirit to connect me with one of the band who was truly worshipping and not just entertaining. I sensed only three who were actually worshipping and locked onto one young woman who in her worship of God ushered me into His Presence with

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her.

Tears of Intimacy

When the service was over, I turned and headed out of the church. Again the Holy Spirit caught my attention and told me to tell the young woman about my experience of worship. I went back to the stage and approached the young woman. I told her how her spirit of true worship had led me with her into the very Presence of the Almighty. She broke down in tears and said, "That is all I ever want to do in this place of service." As I walked away, I shed a few tears of joy myself. God had not only allowed me to worship Him, but also to be an instrument of encouragement to another seeker of God's intimate love!

Perhaps we need a call to repentance. It is not a repentance for sins, but a repentance for shallow relationship with God. For all who desire to live abandoned to intimacy with God, *Christ-Ins*, the way is abundantly clear. To reach this intimacy, he must pass through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. He must attend the funeral of his own reputation!

Oh, No! Not Death { 234 }

Men crave life. When they are told that life comes by the Cross, they are not willing to embrace the humiliation that comes with it. Yet if they only knew the absolute peace and freedom this death to life brings, they would clamor to have it.

Even though our cross of death must occur, God

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never planned for us to live forever stretched upon it. Jesus endured His Cross for only six hours. Once the Cross had done its work, life emerged. "Wherefore, God also has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name," Philippians 2:9. Sharing the cross of death to self with Jesus leads us quickly away from our own pursuits and in the opposite direction from the crowd. We are now free from any and all condemnation and can walk free from all guilt, shame and fear of punishment. Jesus put it, in His final utterance from the Cross, "It Is Finished!" Never has a truer statement been made!

Christian or Christ-In { 235 }

There are several distinct differences between 'so-called or self-calling' *Christians* and truly surrendered "*Christ-Ins*" as they were first called in Antioch. The Cross, for the *Christ-In* is not death to sinful words or deeds. These are only the symptoms of a deep inner disease. The Cross for the *Christ-In* is death to the cancer of deeply selfish motive. His Cross is the last breath of one who has for his entire life been crying out, "Give Me!" or "See Me!" or "Serve Me!" to everyone around him. It is ever, only through identification with the Cross of Christ, that we allow our selfishness to be extinguished, so that His selfless love and life can be *born again* within us. It is this very exchange which puts *Christ-In* the true believer!

This is clearly stated by Jesus to His disciples at their last supper together when He said, "When people see the same selfless, unconditional love I have for you in each of you toward each other, then and only then, will they

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know that you are My Disciples.” It was this *Christ-like*, unconditional love observed by unbelievers in Antioch that compelled them to call the believers *Christ-In*. The only evidence, and irrefutable evidence to be sure, that one is a *Christ-In*, is **other-preferring** love which is both observed and felt by the objects of that love.

Intensity or Intimacy

It might be helpful to consider how some Christians are destined to suffer very literally for the cause of Christ. In many countries and to many orders of religion, Christianity is offensive. Some cultures require the excommunication or killing of any family members who come to faith in Christ. Many of these converts to Jesus as Savior must run for their very lives. And for others the persecution is very physical and very harsh, sometimes to the point of death.

However, just because some must suffer in such a way for their faith in Jesus Christ, it is not the only way. As a matter of fact, when such persecution is not required in a given culture, focusing on the love of God and the beauty of an up-close, personal and intimate relationship with Him is the ultimate in Christian experience. Now to be sure, if you are a lover of Jesus, you would be willing to die for Him if necessary. And it is also true that the more you love someone, especially God, the more you will desire to please them and will speak proudly and prolifically about them in very endearing terms.

There is no particular virtue in being a martyr for Christ unless it is purely for the love of God that you must sacrifice your life or run for your life. We cannot deny the

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value of the testimony of those who are martyred for the cause of Jesus Christ. But we would be well advised to take note of how much we actually do or do not love Jesus. What atmosphere is created when you walk into a room full of people. Is it love or intensity? Is it peaceful or tense? Does it draw people toward the God you **say** you love or repel them? **Does identification with Jesus in public places make you proud or embarrassed?**