With all that is going on in the world, we need to be ready to stand up and be counted – for Christ’s sake.
stand up and be counted

by berni dymet
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CHAPTER 1
THE POWER OF YOUR PRAYER

With the terrorism, the atrocities and the calamities going on around the world today, not to mention the trials that each one of us faces in our own lives, you could be tempted into thinking that God, if He exists at all, has seriously lost the plot. Yep, you could be seriously tempted …

Many people are concerned, even fearful, over global events. Terrorism, which unlike the superpowers slugging out during the Cold War, can strike so close to home. The rise of religious extremism, in particular, the rise and rise of Islam, which seems to be impacting hitherto so-called Western countries in detrimental ways. Also, the rise
of secularism which is impacting on the religious freedom of Christians.

I saw a news article just recently where two Christians in the United States were fined $13,000 for refusing to host a same-sex wedding at their reception centre.

Things are certainly changing. Things are sweeping across the globe which are scaring a lot of middle class people who have lived safely in the comfort that their freedom affords, for generations.

Okay, there have been wars and depressions and recessions, but there’s something different about what’s going on in the world today. It feels more insidious; it feels more threatening than before. It’s closer to home.

A tide has turned. And whilst before, Christianity represented, if not the default religion then at least the default basis for morals and the rule of law. That is becoming less and less the case and it makes people worried.

There is a passage of Scripture in the Book of Revelation, the one book in the Bible that
comprehensively, beyond any shadow of any doubt, tells us how all this stuff ends ... in the end.

Then I saw in the right hand of the one seated on the throne a scroll written on the inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals; and I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it. And I began to weep bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.” Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He went and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne. When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four
the point is that in the end, Jesus wins. In fact, He already has. He actually won on that Cross and through the empty tomb when He rose again two thousand years ago. And we’re simply waiting for the end to come.

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*stand up and be counted*
elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints … and on it goes, to describe the power and the might of Jesus as He brings history to an end, as all of creation bows down to Him. (Revelation 5:1-8)

Okay, it’s written in rather vivid picture language, something that in our culture we’re perhaps not quite used to. But the point is that in the end, Jesus wins. In fact, He already has. He actually won on that Cross and through the empty tomb when He rose again two thousand years ago. And we’re simply waiting for the end to come.

So let me ask you, why are we surprised? I know that may sound a bit offhanded, particularly to those suffering persecution right now – and there are plenty of those people.

One of the great litmus tests for how people see the world these days is social media. As you can imagine, I connect with more than a few people who would call themselves Christians on Facebook and through Twitter and I also receive rather a lot of emails from people from
the four corners of the earth. And one of the very clear trends that I sense in all of that, is this sense of foreboding, of fear and in some cases of desperation. A big factor in all of that, is that people feel that they’ve lost control of global events. People feel that there’s nothing they can do. And when I say to them, ‘Well, you can pray,’ for many that feels like a cop out.

My response to that is … really?! Prayer, a cop out? ‘Yeah sure,’ they say, ‘it seems like a feeble response to the terrible things going on in this world today.’ And so my response to that, is, quite simply this:

If in the face of some terrible calamity, some terrible, out of control force sweeping your life or indeed the globe, if in that place you are completely and utterly powerless to do anything … anything … except pray, then in your prayer, through your prayer, you have already done the single, most powerful thing that you will ever be able to do on this earth.

Here’s what Jesus said:

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done
for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

(John 15:7)

Here’s the thing, when you and I pray, it’s not about the eloquence of our prayer. It’s not about the size of our faith. It’s not even about how big the problem is that we’re praying into. No, it’s not about any of those things. When you and I pray, it’s about the power, the might, the love and the compassion of the God to whom we pray. It’s about the right-standing that Jesus has purchased for us on that Cross, which is why we ask in His name. It’s about God joining hands with us through our prayer, to see His will being done on this earth as it is in heaven.

I wonder how different this earth would be, if you and I got really serious about that sort of prayer. I wonder …

Perhaps you’re thinking, ‘But, look at the persecution of Christians going on in this world today. I’ve prayed and … look, just look!! It isn’t working’.

Almost in the very next breath, after Jesus
said what He said to His disciples about prayer, He went on to say this:

If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world – therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘Servants are not greater than their master’. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

(John 15:18-21)

Persecution is precisely what Jesus predicted would happen in these last days. Whether it’s the atrocities happening to Christians in some parts of the world, or whether it’s the creeping secularism, political correctness and threat of religious extremism that’s disturbing those living comfortably in democratic western nations. It’s exactly what Jesus said would happen. It’s exactly what the Bible says will happen to usher in the end.
And in the end, Jesus wins.

In the meantime, He’s calling His people to pray.

And when you do, when you ask the Father for His will to be done in Jesus’ name, you are doing the single, most powerful thing that you can possibly do to change the course of history. So, will you?
CHAPTER 2
THE POWER OF YOUR LIFE

Out of every one hundred people you know, one will read a Bible and ninety-nine will read ... your life. And in fact, your life may be the only Bible they ever read. Now that is a scary thought.

Yes, I know that this world is crazy out of control. And I know that you and I are infinitesimally small blips amidst the great sweep of world events. And I know that you and I can feel powerless to change even the course of a single life, let alone the history of the world. But any person – any man, woman or child who belongs to Jesus is filled with a power, the power of the Holy
Spirit, which is so much more than anything that we can imagine, that we can have a huge impact in this world.

So why don’t we?

Well, in part, it’s because those of us who believe in Jesus don’t really have a good handle on the immeasurable greatness of the power that He has placed in us. I want to share a story with you today, just something that came up as I was reading my Bible in my quiet time yesterday. A story that really leapt off the pages and into my heart.

It happens after Jesus has ascended into heaven, and the Apostles are busy starting off this new thing that today, we call, the church.

Stephen has just been stoned to death, egged on by Saul (who later became the Apostle Paul) and through this great persecution, the believers in Jerusalem flee and scattered throughout the known world. As a result of that great persecution, the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus, starts to spread. In particular, Phillip ends up in Samaria. Now, the Samaritans were the sworn enemies of the Jews. Related, but considered to
be the dregs. And Phillip proclaims the Gospel to them and they accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Here’s what happens next:

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit (for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:14-17)

Now, I know that this whole thing of receiving the Holy Spirit – whether it happens the moment you believe in Jesus, or at some time later, has been the source of great division across the church. Just quietly, what I see in the Bible is that sometimes receiving the Holy Spirit happens the moment you believe (Cornelius and his family in Acts Chapter 10) and other times it happens at a later date.

Do I believe that everybody who believes in Jesus has the Spirit in them? Yes I do, because that’s what the Bible says (Romans 8:9). But if
you ask me, has everybody who has the Holy Spirit received the Holy Spirit, then my answer would be, no. Because it’s as plain as the nose on my face that there are a whole bunch of people who call themselves Christians, who haven’t received the Holy Spirit into their lives.

The Holy Spirit brings the power to be holy. The Holy Spirit brings the power to be patient. The Holy Spirit brings peace and faith and hope and generosity and …

Now, am I suggesting that everyone who has received the Holy Spirit is perfect? No. Not at all. I have been filled with the Holy Spirit, and yet, I fall short of God’s glory every day of my life. What’s different about me though, is that my heart yearns to honour God. I don’t always do that, but in my heart I long to please Him and to honour Him. That’s what changed for me.

I know at this point, some people are thinking, ‘Berni, are you getting all Pentecostal or Charismatic on us?’ I don’t like labels. I just want to open the Bible and share with you what’s in it. And in this case, when Peter and John laid hands on these Samaritans and
they received the Holy Spirit, the tense of the original Greek word tells us that it’s a repeated, ongoing, continual action, not a one time event. In other words, they went on receiving the Holy Spirit, over and over and over.

I, for one, need to keep on receiving the Holy Spirit, over and over and over, because if He overflows out of me into the lives of the people around me, I need to continually be filled with Him so that I can overflow more. And that’s exactly what the Apostle Paul says later on to the Ephesians 5:18, where using the same tense for the verb. He writes, ‘Keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit’.

Think about this: if your life is the entry point of the power of the Holy Spirit into this world, if He drenches you so much (which is what the word ‘baptise’ means – which is why the Bible talks about being baptised with the Spirit) if you are soaked full of the Spirit, completely transformed by His Presence, then when you’re saturated, He is going to overflow into the lives of the people around you. That is, very deliberately, the picture that the Bible paints.
So forget this thing of splitting hairs about what we call it or when it happens! Let me simply ask you, *are you drenched with the Holy Spirit?* Are you continually receiving Him into your life so that His goodness and love flows out of you?

*stand up and be counted*
So forget this thing of splitting hairs about what we call it or when it happens! Let me simply ask you, are you drenched with the Holy Spirit? Are you continually receiving Him into your life so that His goodness and love flows out of you?

Because when we come to the realisation that we are completely helpless to change this world apart from Him, then we are in absolutely the right place. We are exactly where Jesus wants us – dry, hungry, thirsty – ready to be filled with the Spirit. If you believe in Jesus but you feel that dryness and that thirst, I want you to rejoice and ask the Holy Spirit to drench you, baptise you. I’m not talking about any out of body experiences here, just a simple prayer for Him to fill you afresh today, and again tomorrow, and again the next day.

Because now, all of a sudden, your life will be filled with the power to make a difference, a real difference in this world.

Not all of us are called to be national leaders, or TV preachers, or whatever. That’s not what I mean. Perhaps you have the gift of compassion,
or a pastoral gifting that I could never, ever have, because that’s not how God made me. And when the Holy Spirit flows out through that gift, your unique gift with which He has blessed you and anointed you, then watch out!

Things will start changing in you and around you. Things will start happening. God will start making a difference in this world ... through you.

Let me come back to what I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. If you believe in Jesus, then your life may be the only Bible that the people around you will ever read.

How you speak, how you behave, how you live your life speaks of the authenticity of this Jesus to the people around you. The very same is true of how I speak, how I behave, how I live my life. And doing what I do, my life is closely watched by the people around me. And rightly so, that they should expect a higher standard of teachers of God’s Word.

I can preach until I’m blue in the face. I can preach the best, most powerful sermon that has ever been preached since Jesus, but if my life
doesn’t back up what I say, then it’s completely worthless. The same is true of you.

The first, the most important, the only sermon that you and I preach that will ever really matter is the one that we preach with our lives. And when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, filled to overflowing, then our lives are going to tell a new story; a different story. A story that is so compelling, a story that rings so true, that people will be asking you for some of what we’ve got.

The single most powerful thing that you and I can do to change this world is to pray. The next most powerful thing that you and I can do to change this world is to live a life that is continually filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit. And the more He works in us and through us, the more we will be amazed as we see the Holy Spirit change the course of people’s lives and the course of this world.

Remember, in the end, Jesus wins. In the meantime, He’s looking for the likes of you and me to make that truth real in the lives of others.
Let me ask you something. In this crazy, out of control world where so much is going wrong, where so many people’s lives are out of control, can a single person – let’s say you – can a single person like you really make a positive difference? Really?

In the first two chapters of this booklet, we have explored what I believe are the two most powerful things that you and I can do to make a difference in this world.

The first is to pray – because when we pray, we are joining hands with God to get His will happening here on earth just as it does in heaven. Isn’t that how Jesus taught us to pray? Right?
And the second – is to live a life that is filled by the Holy Spirit, not with the rubbish that the world dishes up to us. This is what the Apostle Paul wrote to his friends in Ephesus about that very thing:

_Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ._

(Ephesians 5:18-20)

Again let me remind you that the tense of the verb, the original Greek word, used here by Paul, which we translate as ‘filled’ literally means ‘go on being filled’ by the Holy Spirit.

Because when we live a life that is based on prayer, the sort of prayer backed by a faith that knows that God is in control. And when we live the spirit-filled life that the Bible commands us to live, our lives are going to weigh in and count for Jesus in a whole new way.

Holiness – which is what the Holy Spirit
progressively brings into our lives as He transforms us from glory to glory – is the most powerful form of mission to a lost world that you will ever find because it proclaims Christ through our lives. It speaks of the authenticity of Jesus in our lives and this world. And it prepares people to receive the Good News of Jesus into their hearts.

And the more people who receive Jesus, the more this world is going to change and the more the will of God is going to get done here on earth as it is in Heaven, Amen?!?

But … there’s always a but, isn’t there? The ‘but’ is that at some point, those people out there who have never accepted Jesus have to hear the good news. They need to hear the story. They need to hear the Word of God. By and large, people don’t become Christians by osmosis.

Now that’s not to say that God doesn’t do totally mind-blowingly amazing things. So many Muslims are coming to faith in Christ now, and many, many have reported having seen Jesus in a dream. Jesus breaks through powerfully as and when He needs.
But more often, much more commonly, He speaks through other people. And the problem is that most people in this world are completely ignorant about the Bible, about Jesus, about what He promises and the new, eternal life that He offers as a free gift of grace. They think they know. But most often their understanding is that if you follow a bunch of rules, participate in a bunch of rituals, and live basically a good life, you’re in. Heaven is assured … well, sort of, maybe …

That’s the gospel of this world and it’s a false gospel, because it completely misses the whole point of grace – the free gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ. That’s why the Apostle Paul writes this to his friends in Rome:

*For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’*

*But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And*
how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” But not all have obeyed the good news; for Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:12-17)

So, people need to be told the Good News and someone has to get out there and tell them.

I’m a preacher, so my tendency is to want to race out there and tell the people all I know about Jesus. But who wants some Bible bashing guy that you want to run and hide from, as a friend? You get my point, right?

So how does it work? Do we tell people about Jesus, or don’t we? And if we do, then when should we and how should we? And what if they reject us or laugh at us or … you know, think less of us?

In Revelation Chapter 5, Jesus is referred to as the Lion of Judah. One day, each one of us will be subjected to His judgement, as every
knee in heaven and on earth will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Those people whom we love, those people who are our friends, even our enemies, each will stand before Christ in Judgement, as will you and I. And the only question will be, ‘Do you believe in Jesus or not?’ Everybody’s eternity hangs on the ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer to that question.

So at some point, they need to hear about Jesus, but how?

That’s why first we chatted about prayer and the Spirit-filled life, before coming into this subject of actually telling people about Jesus.

Sure, if you and I want to make a real difference in this world, if we want to see lives saved and communities transformed and ultimately nations at peace, we all need to tell others about Jesus. But unless the Holy Spirit has gone ahead of us, it will be a complete waste of time.

That’s where prayer is so important. You may have heard me once or twice in the past tell you about a couple who prayed eighteen
Do we tell people about Jesus, or don’t we? And if we do, then when should we and how should we? And what if they reject us or laugh at us or … you know, think less of us?

*stand up and be counted*
years for me to come to Christ. Ultimately, the Lord brought about the ‘impossible’ circumstances that were required for that to happen. But prayer is what brought me to that point. And then, led by the Holy Spirit, those people shared their faith with me. Prayer, the work of the Spirit, and timing – eighteen years!! That’s amazing timing … that’s amazing patience.

_We are not all called to tell every person we meet about Jesus._ Perhaps God will use your prayer in _that_ person’s salvation. And in another person’s, some impact of your life. And as you pray, as you are led by the Spirit, eventually, He will bring you to what is (for many Christians), the fearful place of telling another person about Jesus.

And at that point, you need the grace and the sensitivity and the courage of the Holy Spirit – because it is only He that can reveal God to another, not you or me.

Here is what the Apostle Paul prayed for and asked others to pray for in the face of much persecution and opposition in proclaiming Christ:
*Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.*

(Ephesians 6:20-21)

Yes, sharing the Good News of Jesus with someone needs to be preceded by much prayer. And yes, we need to be led by the Holy Spirit. But at some point, it’s time for us to stand up and be counted. At some point, it’s time for us to lay everything on the line – our reputation, the risk of being sneered at, the risk of an angry reaction, the risk of rejection, sometimes even our very lives – in order to tell people about Jesus.

At some point you and I, if we truly believe in Jesus; if we truly believe that He wants to work through us and for His Spirit to overflow through us into the lives of others, we need to stand up and be counted, and have the boldness and the courage to tell them. Because unless they hear about Him, how can they believe in one of whom they have not heard? Hmm?
CHAPTER 4
THE POWER OF THE TRUTH

We live in a world, in a day and age, where the truth seems to be up for grabs. As I watch and listen to the news each day and read my newspaper, what I see is a whole bunch of people clamouring for the right to declare that theirs is the truth.

Things aren’t as simple anymore as they used to be.

A couple of thousand years ago, when he was torn between the demands of justice and the demands of the crowd baying for Jesus’ blood, a man by the name of Pontius Pilate asked the question, ‘What is truth?’
That, as it turned out, is a very good question, and if Pilate was still around today and asked that question again, he’d be right there, up with the issues of the times.

Truth used to be considered something that’s absolute. It’s either true, or it isn’t. But these days, it’s become a fluid concept. Your truth is your truth, and my truth is my truth and if it works for you buddy, then it’s great. Go for it. But don’t try to foist your truth on me. And that last statement has become the mantra of our times, as it supports the new, 21st Century ideology of pluralism.

Ever wondered exactly what pluralism is? Well, my dictionary tells me that it’s a theory or system where two or more states, groups, principles, sources of authority and so on can coexist. Pluralism is the religious doctrine of the times. And the moment you step over its boundaries; the moment you insist on absolute truth – you’re considered a conservative, a bigot, an extremist … there are all sorts of stereotypes and labels to describe someone who commits the most heinous crime of this time,
by insisting that truth – far from being relative and pluralistic, is absolute.

Consider the assertions of atheism and secularism towards the Christian faith: *How dare you insist that your God exists or that He’s the only God or that the out-dated morals of the Bible apply to us today? How dare you insist that Jesus is the only way? How dare you?*

And so, confronted with what it is today, a relentless onslaught on the very foundations of their faith, Christians around the world (and yes, even churches around the world) are getting wobbly at the knees about their God and who He is and what He stands for. Christians are retreating from the marketplace of thought and debate and legislation and culture, into enclaves to protect their faith. A bit, it seems, like Custer’s last stand, circling the wagons. But oddly enough, there are still places where truth is absolute, objective, immovable.

Let’s start with my dictionary, which tells me that something is true, if it is an accordance with fact or reality. If it’s real and actual, accurate and exact. The dictionary definition
of truth, at least, hasn’t changed. And there’s another place where you find absolute truth, or at least where we expect to find absolute truth. And that place is in our courts.

I remember some years ago, when I was engaged as an expert witness in a civil litigation in the Supreme Court. I was asked to give my expert opinion on the failure of the implementation of a large and complex IT system, based on my review of some 1.1 million documents in discovery.

And as I wrote my expert report, all 600,000 words of it, and worked with the lawyers on the case, they were consistently challenging my conclusions. “Prove it!” is what they kept saying to me. “You can’t just say it, you have to prove it from the evidence.” The court requires you not just to say something, but to demonstrate that it’s true, based on the evidence in those documents.

But in our society, in our culture, people have somehow successfully managed to water down the truth, to turn black and white into fifty shades of grey in order to justify every perversion and evil under the sun.
But in our society, in our culture, people have somehow successfully managed to water down the truth, to turn black and white into fifty shades of grey in order to justify every perversion and evil under the sun.

stand up and be counted
So, here am I, I believe in Jesus. I believe that one day He will return to judge the living and the dead. I believe that I have the free gift of eternal life because Jesus died for me, to pay for my sins and He rose again to give me a new life. Those are the things I hold dear and true and yet the world wants to hound me down and tell me that I am not being liberal enough and open minded enough and pluralistic enough, while all the time the world is going to hell in a handbag; tearing itself apart through evil and strife and morals that are destroying families, robbing children of love and tearing communities and nations apart. What exactly do I do with all of that? Those people need to hear about Jesus, but they’re shouting me down! They don’t want to listen.

Isn’t that how many Christians think? Isn’t that what’s going through so many hearts and minds? What’s the answer?

The answer is this. That despite the fact that the world rejects the God of the Bible (which by the way is nothing new, after all, they crucified Jesus, right?), God’s Word is still true. Jesus will return. Jesus will judge the living and
the dead. And that compels you and me and anyone else who believes in Jesus to share His truth – the truth of freedom and salvation in Christ alone – with a world that’s headed for the judgement of God. But how do you do that when they don’t want to hear?

Well, actually, the Bible tells us exactly how:

_We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ …_

_(Ephesians 4:12-15)_

And again:

_And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, patient, correcting opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth, and that they may escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will._

_(2 Timothy 2:24-26)_

The answer is to speak the truth in love and correct with gentleness. I have heard so many
Christians out there condemning the world and shouting hatred at people. Jesus never did that. In fact, those so-called Christians are no better than the gun-toting, bomb-throwing extremists of other religions. The way with the world is to speak the truth – God’s unwavering, unchanging, unfailing truth – in love so that God may perhaps grant that some will repent and come to a knowledge of the Truth. His truth. The one truth that saves.

There have been so many times in history where ‘group-think’ has taken over and evil has reigned because all, or almost all, were led astray. Look at the Nazi regime that sparked WWII. Go back as far as the Roman Empire, whose symbology and methods Hitler drew upon. Time and time and time again, people like lemmings have flocked together only to plunge to their destruction.

And as I said before, all that is required for evil to prosper is for good men (and women) to stand idly by and do nothing and say nothing. Well, if you and I believe in Jesus, that’s not an option. Jesus said:
I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)

And then to prove it – He died for you, He died for me – so that His truth, written in His blood, would be spoken into our hearts through the love of sacrifice. There, right there, is the model; the approach for us to follow.

To speak the truth in love; to correct with gentleness – not with guile and hatred and vitriol and finger pointing and condemnation as some do. But with love, the sublime love that is so vividly painted on that cross in the crimson red of the blood of Jesus.

And no matter how dark the thoughts and beliefs and practices of our times may become, all that it needs is one small glimmer; one small flame to shed the light of the truth into this world.

And that one small glimmer, that one small flame – that’s you.
CHAPTER 5
THE POWER OF YOUR SACRIFICE

Nothing … nothing so testifies to the truth and the power and the objective reality of the love of God in Jesus Christ, than a believer; a disciple, who is prepared to sacrifice their life for the sake of sharing that Good News; that Gospel, with another.

Despite all the terrible things going on in this world, despite the attacks on our faith and on the God of the Bible, despite how hopeless things may appear as global events of terrorism, of secularism and of all the other ‘isms’ under the sun, one day … one day it will all come to an end.
One day, the Lion of Judah – Jesus – will roar. One day, He will return to judge the living and the dead and those who have placed their faith in Him, will have eternal life and live in glory. That’s an objective fact. How do I know? Because that’s exactly what Jesus says will happen. That’s exactly what the Bible says will happen.

It is a desperate world, hurtling towards judgement that has rejected the God of the Bible, that has rejected the truth of the Bible, that has rejected Jesus. When God speaks it’s not advice, it’s not an opinion – it’s the truth. Well, God has spoken, He has spoken to us through His Son who is the way, the truth and the life. The only way, the only truth and the only life. And it’s only when we know the truth, that the truth can set us free.

The question still is though, how exactly do we get that truth across to a world that’s intent on going to hell in a handbag?

Well, you might recall that a little earlier. I wrote about speaking the truth in love, and correcting people in gentleness, rather than trying to ram things down their throat.
Love is the key, because love always, ultimately triumphs over evil. Love is the only thing that will defeat Satan in this world. Love is the only thing that will woo the lost to Jesus. Love is what triumphed on the Cross of Christ and set you and me free to live out eternity with our God. Love is the key. Because love rings true to us, made as we are in the image of God who, the Bible tells us, is love. Love attests to the truth. And nothing attests more to love, in turn, than sacrifice. If you love someone, truly love them, then you will sacrifice for them. And when you do that, the reality of that love, will ultimately soften the hardest of hearts.

That’s exactly what Jesus not only said, but did:

> No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you.
And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another … (John 15:13-17)

And with those words, Jesus went to the Cross, willingly and without complaint to die for you and me.

His disciples, each one of them so far as we know, ended up dying a terrible death. Peter, Paul, John and the others, were all martyred for proclaiming the risen Jesus and the salvation, the life eternal that is only available in Him.

Do you, for one minute imagine that those guys would have laid down their lives for a lie? No! They experienced the love of God through the crucified and then risen Jesus, and then out of that love, they poured their own lives out, to the very end, to the very last drop, to tell others about Him.

Love testifies to the truth. It declares that the truth is true. And sacrifice testifies to that love. And that my friend is the key that opens even the hardest heart.
Love testifies to the truth. It declares that the truth is true. And sacrifice testifies to that love. And that my friend is the key that opens even the hardest heart.

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stand up and be counted
When you and I are prepared to sacrifice our lives for the difficult people who curse us – who reject our faith, who belittle us for believing in Jesus, when you and I are prepared to lay down our lives for those people even whilst they sin against us, just as Jesus laid down His life for us, while we were still sinners against Him – then and only then will we be a part of God’s great plan to win the world back to Him.

Is it hard? Sure it is. That’s why Jesus said it wasn’t about hanging onto our own lives, because if we live life like that, ultimately we lose. No, the ‘Jesus plan’ is about taking up your Cross, your own, brutal cross, and following Him. Because those who lose their lives for His sake, will surely find them.

Jesus is the Lamb of God who, through His death, came to take away the sins of the world. It is that sublime love that you and I are called to share through our own, personal, sacrificial laying down of our lives, so that others too might be saved.

And Jesus is the Lion of Judah, who one day will roar in judgement, separating His
own – those who have believed in Him, those who have put their faith, their very lives in His death and resurrection – from the evildoers who rejected Him.

And today, you and I are His hands and feet. You and I are His heart of love. You and I are His voice – to speak His love and His truth to a generation that has gone astray.

The people in my life who have the greatest license to speak hard truths to me, are the ones who have earned it by sacrificing themselves for me and serving me and loving me when I just didn’t deserve it. Those people have influenced me so greatly. Those people are the very reason that I am here with you now, sharing with you the good news that your King reigns. That your King is calling you to live a life of sacrificial love. And you and I too, can earn that right to speak into the lives of others through that sacrificial love. You and I can be the Lamb of God and the Lion of Judah to the lost around us. That, after all, was always God’s plan.

Yes, this world does seem as though it is crazy out of control. Yes, these are dark days
when our faith in Jesus is tested in the extreme. But in the face of all that, the Lion roars.

God laughs at men and their petty schemes.

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and his anointed, saying, “Let us burst their bonds asunder, and cast their cords from us.” He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord has them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, “I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill”. (Psalm 4:2-6)

He is above all powers and rulers and situations and persecutions and terrorisms and all the evil that this world has conjured up. Your King reigns and one day the Lion of Judah will roar in judgement.

In the meantime, to those who love Jesus, to those who have set our hearts like flint to follow Him wherever He may lead, He has one, simple command. Listen to His Words to you and me today, and let the Spirit of God write them on your heart:
All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

(Matthew 28:18-20)

Get out there. Share the truth, the love, the power of Jesus with the people around you. Make disciples of them. Teach them to love God by obeying Him. And remember, Jesus is with you, unto the ends of the earth; unto the ends of this age.

In the face of all the darkness that threatens to overwhelm this world, you and I are the light of the world. You and I are the ones called to go. You and I are called to sacrifice our lives to this cause.

You and I …
To live each day in victory, we know that we need to connect with God through His Word. But all too often, we seem too busy to open the Bible.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Berni Dymet is a contemporary Christian communicator with a passion for sharing the Good News of Jesus right into the middle of life. He comes from the perspective that this Christianity thing – it isn’t just a faith that lives in our heads or even our hearts, but that it actually works right here in the middle of our lives.

Christianity actually works when we dare to accept Jesus Christ into our lives!! Not just as Saviour, but also as Lord.

Millions of people around the globe tune into Berni’s radio programs each week. The Lord has given him a special gift for sharing the Gospel in a truly practical way. In a way that really connects into the hearts and lives of real people in real places, transforming their lives. That’s what the ministry of Christianityworks is all about. Leading people into a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ.

But Berni’s passion, his enthusiasm and his insights into the day to day realities of life are simply tools in God’s hands. The real change agent is God Himself.

And to Him – and Him alone – be all the glory.

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