



## A LETTER FROM YOUR PASTOR: JANUARY 2021 *by Lee Shipp*

### WHY “WHAT” IS HAPPENING TO YOU

They rose up! They had all they could take of the defeat and despair; they simply decided to not live there anymore. How? Why? Nobody would have blamed them if they had given up. Most people do ... they give up. Many have given up over smaller things. But they rose up. These people who defeat defeat and praise their way out of despair are the ones who have colored the pages of history with the glory of God.

What would the past look like if it were not for the colorful depictions of David or Peter? What if there had been no fiery furnace and three Hebrews who were willing to be thrown into it? And why are they outstanding? Why do we still talk about them? Because their stories are supernatural.

There is nothing supernatural about suffering, pain, abuse, loss, or grief. Anyone who lives but a brief time on this earth has experienced these troubles. But how precious are those who overcome, it is their lives we celebrate. And why do we celebrate them? Why do we still speak of Ruth, a young Moabite woman from millennia ago? Why do we still celebrate David with all of his bloody wars and sexual escapades? What is so special about Abraham who put his wife in another man's bed so his life would be spared?

Their stories are special because of their relationship with God. They had faith. When others were quitting, they held on. When others were encouraging them to curse God and die, they praised instead. They had a faith that praised God in the furnace and in the lions' den. They had a faith that marched out to meet giants. Giants equipped with swords, spears, and shields were met by men adorned with the weapon of praise!

How could they praise in such confusing situations? How could they praise when it seemed God Himself had abandoned them? How could they praise when their sinful behaviors were worthy of hostile punishment and wrath? The answer is the fact that they knew God. They didn't just believe in God, they knew Him. They knew His heart. They knew His faithfulness. They knew His mercy. Many of them knew His purposes. They did not necessarily understand the seasons they were required to walk through, but they did know the covenant promises of God and the glory of the end. Likewise, you must know what God is doing or you will lose your bearings, your way, your joy, and your peace.

You must know that God is not destroying you. God will crush you, but He will not destroy you. And you must know why He is crushing you. He is crushing you for the fruit, for the aroma, in order to clothe you in the anointing.

I know, we have all asked the same question, “Why? God if you want to anoint me why does it have to hurt? Why does it have to involve so much suffering and confusion? After all, you are God, you can do anything.”

It is hard to understand this path, because sin has so damaged our understanding of God and His ways. But I do know that the outstanding people of this world are those who believe in the goodness of God and have learned to praise Him and rejoice in Him at all times.

The outstanding people are those like Job, when everyone else is giving reasons to curse God and die, they choose to bless the Lord. Like Job, outstanding people live to show hell that some people down here actually love God, not because He assures them of a pain-free life, but because they actually believe

He is wonderful.

Outstanding people like Abraham, who believed God through a life of great confusion, endured by faith ‘till they received the promise. People like Joseph, whose rejected life was an aroma of faithfulness rather than a stench of bitterness, because he chose to live in praise rather than depression. Someone like Moses, whose life of faith prevailed over the desire to quit while leading God's ungrateful people out of their bondage. Do not forget Jesus' passionate love for His Father. There, He hangs upon the cross, suffering unutterable cruelty, pain, and rejection in order to bring to the Father those His heart so longed to love. Certainly, these are the outstanding people who impacted history.

### YOU HAVE TO KNOW WHY “WHAT” IS HAPPENING

Think of the “*what*” moments of life in the terms that Paul described in 2 Corinthians 4, “*We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.*”

Here Paul expresses the truth I shared a moment ago, “*you must know what God is doing or you will lose your bearings, your way, your joy, and your peace.*” Paul understood that all of his trials, his trouble, his perplexing moments, and his persecutions were serving the purpose of manifesting the life of Jesus through his life.

If we know and believe what Paul is telling us, then how can we do anything less than give God praise? Therefore, let us go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we do not belong – we have no city here. By Jesus, let us offer the sacrifices of praise to God always, that is the fruit of our lips (Hebrews 13:14-15).

## “HOW MUCH GREATER IS LOVE WHEN YOU CAN COVER THOSE WHO’VE SINNED AGAINST YOU?”

You have to know why “*what*” is happening to you. You are called to be the demonstration of His life, to bear His reproach, and to let your mouth declare His worth!

Why “*what*” ... simply means those times in your life when you cry to God, “*What are you doing? Lord, what is going on?*” When you know God and know why “*what*” is happening you will become the expression of victory and praise. Like Paul, you will actually rejoice in your weaknesses and suffering for you will become so intimate with God's grace and power.

### REJOICING IN “WHAT” SEASONS

“*Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits*” (Song of Solomon 4:16). Here the woman is asking for the winds of affliction to blow upon her spices that her lover may smell them and attract him to her.

He had declared to her that she ravished his heart and that her love was so precious to him. Then he told her that the smell of her ointments was more pleasant than all other spices (Song of Solomon 4:10). It was the smell of these spices that attracted him to her. When she was ready for love, she would pray for the winds to blow so that her aroma would compel him to her.

As well, verse 11 reveals that her lips were like the honeycomb. That milk and honey were under her tongue. What is this language in the Bible? What is the Song of Solomon showing us? It is not some random book of love causing multitudes to wonder at its significance; rather, it is a revelation of the great love God wants to have with us.

The Song of Solomon depicts the passionate love of God. God is the great lover. In the Song of Solomon, God reveals that He craves your love; you ravish Him. He craves the aroma of your life. He desires the milk and honey that are

under your tongue. This is what God wants, He wants the fruit of your lips – your praise!

The thing that attracts God to us, the aroma that He loves to smell, is our praise. The sacrifice of praise is the sign to God that His pleasant fruit is ready, and you are ready for love. It is the aroma of our praise that comes from us, even in *“what”* moments of life, that compels the presence of God into our life.

In my dark seasons, in my *“what”* moments, God came to me, to love me, to encourage me, to speak to me! He was looking for His milk and honey, which means He was desiring my praise, the fruit of my lips. I gave that to God and He gave me love.

## THE BEST FRAGRANCE

The fragrance Solomon speaks of in his song was produced by combining the spices used in making the anointing oil. This fragrance is obtained by cutting off branches (the ugly things of our life). The branches are set aside for a period of time to dry out. This would denote those seasons where God seems distant and our spirit seems cold, though we desperately want things to change.

Once the branches were dry, they would then be ground to powder (this is the brokenness of our life; God gaining our humility). Next would come the boiling (the time of heat and affliction). This would pertain to those seasons of walking through dark valleys full of peril. Then a cooling process would occur where all the spices are mixed together. This is where we finally realize that all things are working together for good. Then the fire would be applied again; however, this would denote the fire of the Holy Spirit – renewal and holiness unto God.

The fragrance is now you! You become the fragrance. You have been crushed, stripped, and only Christ is coming out. Like Paul described, the crushing of your life is the manifestation of His life through you. Your life has now become the sweet aroma of Christ and this is what the Father, the lover, loves to smell! Truly, these are the outstanding people. They are rare for not many can agree to this crushing.

How many mighty preachers lie forgotten because they resisted the process of becoming the fragrance of God? There was a season when they were known. They had influence and power, but their life's influence was snuffed out. They failed to become the fragrance of God and instead became the aroma of bitterness.

But how precious are those whose lives bare the aroma of His love in such a strong way? Two thousand years have passed away and still we smell the aroma of Paul, Peter, and Stephen. We still smell the praise of Whitefield, Spurgeon, and Finney. So, what about you? Will you be a savor unto God? Will you affect a generation you will never see? Or will you be a stench of bitterness?

## THE MYSTERY OF THE “WHAT”

How does God do this to you ... make you this aroma? How does He crush you in order to bring forth such a lovely fragrance? Well, He uses *“what”* moments. He uses church people. He uses friends. He uses relatives. He allows trying and unfair treatment to overwhelm your life, giving you every reason to quit and give up. He postures you in places to quit, and nobody would blame you if you did quit; most people do. That is why outstanding people are outstanding, they don't quit when others expected them to.

He who loves you strips you. He humbles you. He boils you by the unfair treatment of those who were supposed to love you. Like David you cry to God asking, “What are you doing? If it were an enemy, I could have borne it, but it was you my friend, one I ate with that lifted up his heel against me.” And that is the truth, if it were an enemy you could have handled the abuse; therefore, it has to be a friend.

Without controversy, one of the most bitter aspects of the cross is the fact that brothers are used to crucify us. The question must be asked, *“What is our aroma while we are being crucified? How is our praise in those moments?”* The honest answer, and the typical response is we spend most of our time vindicating ourselves, crying out ... proclaiming our innocence, and how unfairly we have been treated. We sure don't bear our cross as Jesus did His. This is why the fragrance of Jesus is supernatural. Only God can give you that aroma. We

cannot produce it by our willpower. God has to break us and crush us. But one thing is for sure, once we are on the cross everyone around can smell us, and what we are.

Just consider how impatient we are with family but so kind to strangers. It is this impatient self that God is stripping us of. It is this self that must be removed if the aroma of Christ is to be savored. By a multitude of offenses, God uses the members of the Body of Christ to expose the ugly things of our life. God uses family and friends to hang us out to dry. We can spend our time sulking. We can live in self-pity. We can go around telling everybody how cruel we were treated. Nobody would blame us. We can quit, give up, and walk away from the church ... from our friends, everyone would understand. However, that does not make us outstanding. That self-pity does not make you pleasant, actually it makes you foul. Our bitterness makes us toxic. But, if by faith we submit to the cross, defeat defeat, and praise our way out of despair, then the beauty of Christ will come out of our lives.

Understand, it is not the circumstances, outside influences, and unjust treatment by others that is the real issue. The real issue is us: our impatience, our bitterness, our unforgiveness, our lack of praise in a time of abuse. God is stripping us of this stench so our life will be a sweet smell to Him.

God is setting us free, so our life has the aroma of Christ. But what do most people do in these confusing seasons? They leave the church. They cut off family and friends. Instead of becoming a sweet-smelling savor unto God and a fragrance attracting God they smell foul, and their stench grieves God.

Many will not let God crush them to this sweet-smelling savor because they don't know what He's after. Some of you reading this letter are already conflicted and upset that praise would be expected in the face of such abuse in the injustice shown to you.

Many withdraw from the fellowship because of what they consider to be mistreatment from other believers. But where is your love? Where is your Christlikeness? Can you only love those who love you? Can you not love your enemies? Can you not seek peace? Can you not take the cross and bear the punishment and let the others go free?

It is so easy to cover a brother with love when they didn't sin against you. But, how much greater is the love when you can cover those who have sinned against you?

I am more aware of God's grace when I have suffered calamity. The strongest aspects of my testimony are not when I was strong, but weak; not when I felt great, but worthless; not when I felt holy, but undone. It was then that God gave me a song. It was there, in that *“what”* moment, that I saw the God I would forever love and praise.

## WHY DO YOU HAVE TO BE SO LOUD?

Those who are brightest among us have typically faced the darkest night. Those who shout the loudest have fought the hardest. They are outstanding! You look at them and think, *“Why do they have to be so loud? Why are they running and dancing? Why are they lifting their hands and crying?”* Because God saved them, that is why!

They will not be dragged down by conversations that draw the enemy; they are going praise God! They do not care what you think about them, they do not care that you laugh at them, they do not care that you make fun of them. They will not let you take the praise out of their hearts. They will not let you steal their peace. They will not let you make them attract hell powers. They will not let you make them cynical and bitter. They are going to praise the Lord!

It may be that you have lost all sense of God's nearness and love. Perhaps you are in a *“what”* season. Instead of exercising your sorrow, exercise your praise. Instead of dwelling in your well-deserved-self-pity, dwell in praise. Don't live with doubt but believe. Why sit we here till you die, make something happen! God is looking for fruit – have you none to give Him? Are you too bitter to attract God? The choice is yours. The events have happened, but you have a choice – you can draw God or the demons of despair. Praise or silence, the choice is yours, and the power is yours to choose.

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