

## Tending Ancient Paths

### The Paradigms, Posture, and Practices of Jesus

#### He Will Uniquely Meet You

“Darkness comes. In the middle of it, the future looks blank. The temptation to quit is huge. Don't. You are in good company... You will argue with yourself that there is no way forward. But with God, nothing is impossible. He has more ropes and ladders and tunnels out of pits than you can conceive. Wait. Pray without ceasing. Hope.” John Piper

We had made our way to Pensacola, Florida to attend the Brownsville Revival services. I came with a fair amount of skepticism. I do not like “hype” and I had seen my fair share of it in religious circles over the years. I was hungry to experience a *real* encounter with the Father. Although I was on my guard, my heart was expectant and hopeful. Because of the sheer numbers of people, we were escorted to the overflow area for one of the services. The message was poignant, but to this day I do not remember the content. What I do remember is being drawn to the altar. The feelings that had risen to the top for me in those moments were that of feeling cheap and dirty from the years of sexual abuse I had experienced as a child/teen. I approached the altar area and as I did the stairs *became* the feet of Jesus. I could actually see them in my mind's eye. As I knelt there I began to weep. I felt like the prostitute coming to Him, knowing I had no right to do so, but drawn by His intense love. I wept there, my tears ‘washing His feet’. He gave me the gift of comfort and a revelation of His love for me. He also offered me a deep sense of forgiveness, releasing me from the guilt I felt that stemmed from the experiences of sexual abuse. It was a beautiful moment for me. Amid hundreds, perhaps thousands of people Jesus found me and met me in a specific way, at *my* point of need. It was exactly what I needed from Him. As anyone who has been a victim of sexual abuse knows, there are several layers of healing in the journey to wholeness and for me, His voice was a way out of the darkness that had been lurking around the corners of my soul, whispering unworthiness and shame to my identity, for years.

This moment was also a mystical moment for me, part of the cement given to me from Holy Spirit to confirm the reality of our Triune God. We get so caught up, at times, trying to ‘prove’ God's existence with means outside of ourselves. So often this is done because we have made an idol of certainty, longing to explain away all the shadows that mystery lends itself to. But, in these times, in these moments when Father meets us so completely, consuming us with the fire of His love through His presence- it is a testament to His presence-to the fact that He is real and true, the very essence of Being. Earlier this year I read a book by Brian Zahnd, When Everything's On Fire. It stirred great hope for me. In one of the chapters Brian talks about mystical experiences of the Christian and how they should be normative, not elitist or something to be scorned. These types of experiences are the very ones that anchor us to what is true-beyond our intellectual prowess and into the depths of our souls. I have had several of these experiences over the course of my years. Sadly, informed by ‘theology’, I dismissed them as emotional drivel. Now, however, in the face of many who are leaving Christianity because the ‘certainty’ bill of goods they had been sold by the western church has cracks and flaws, I recognize that these moments, experiencing Father so personally, are invaluable. When I look into the eyes of young people who are questioning God's existence, it is not the theological rhetoric or apologetic proofs that will move them towards belief once again, it is a personal encounter with a good God.

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And the secret is simply this: **Christ in you!**

Yes, Christ in you bringing with him the hope of all glorious things to come. Col 1:27b, JB Phillips

Look at the life of Paul. He had all the knowledge of the day. He *knew* he was right in his persecution of the church because the God he *knew* simply wouldn't behave in the way these lovers of Jesus were behaving. It was when he had a personal encounter with God on the road that changed his mind, changed what he had been 'certain' about. Don't hear something I am not saying, to be clear, I believe in study, in the pursuit of truth through the witness of the church fathers and through Scripture. The bible is meant to lead us to know Jesus and Jesus lives to reveal Father to us. But is it possible that our desire for certainty has overshadowed our hunger for personal encounter. We too have been guilty of fear mongering. We have pedaled the Gospel as a way to avoid hell instead of a love story inviting us to live a life of self sacrificing, self emptying love like the God who gave us life. Is it any wonder people are looking to find certainty? I remember being taught in Bible College how to do 'cold calling', going door to door asking people— if you were to die tonight are you certain you wouldn't end up burning in the fires of hell. Oh my goodness! Where is the greatest gift of the Gospel in that kind of evangelism? Love. I am certain that the God who loves us, sent His only son to make a way for us to be who He had always intended us to be. I am certain that God is who He says He is. I am certain of these things, not only because of years of study, but because I have had many personal encounters with Him on my own Damascus Rd. How amazing is our God? How compassionate and kind? He sees us- knows our pain, our joys, our sorrows. He knows how we think and move. He knows our very being. Because of His great love for us, He meets each of us in unique ways that He knows will minister hope and healing to our hearts, ushering us into freedom. Do you hear Him now? Do you see the fire in His eyes for you? ***And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. John 17:3*** You were made to know Him. You were made to love Him. You were made to live a life partnered with Him here and now.

This excerpt from Brian Zahnd's book, [When Everything's On Fire](#), is a perfect exclamation point to this writing. Quoted from pg. 159 Brian writes:

*"The reason I cannot be cynic, the reason I refuse to despair, the reason I hold onto hope despite everything being on fire is that, along with the apostle Paul, I too am "convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:38-39). And so I say it without embarrassment: everything is going to be all right. Or in the famous words of the English mystic Julian of Norwich, "It is true that sin is the cause of all this pain, but all will be well, and all will be well, and all manner of things will be well." How can it be otherwise? If we are truly loved by God, everything is going to be all right. If we are truly loved by God, we can abandon the house of fear. If we are truly loved by God, we can live in the house of love here and now. This is what I believe. And it's not a careless ride into easy believism but the spoils of a hard-won struggle for faith. Once faith has won the day, or at least gained a foothold, we are free to dream dreams."*

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Ben and Denise, Please agree with us over these prayer needs for the next month...

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