

A Word from Pastor Chuck

C A L V A R Y C H A P E L D I S T I N C T I V E S



HAVING BEGUN IN THE SPIRIT

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit . . .
2 Corinthians 3:5–6

Calvary Chapel was begun by the Spirit. When we examine church history and the various great movements of God, we discover they were all born of the Spirit. Yet, such moves of God historically seem to transition from that birth in the Spirit to ultimately seeking to be perfected in the flesh. This seems to be a cycle—movements once alive in the Spirit to seek perfection in the flesh.

Ritualism is nothing more than a rut, and the only difference between a rut and a grave is its length and depth. We see the church expending energy to maintain life-support systems that

When I felt the call of God on my life to the ministry, I went to Bible college and prepared myself. While in Bible college, I was senior class president, student body president, and I developed an athletic program for the school. I felt that I had a lot to offer. When I started out in the ministry, I was certain that I had all the qualifications and background to build a successful church anywhere.

I had great confidence, but the Lord put me through the ringer. He allowed me to struggle for seventeen years with no success. I had to work a secular job in order to support my family and continue in

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keep a corpse gasping for breath. We believe that if a program cannot survive on its own, the most merciful thing to do is let it die.

In the book of Judges, we read of the Israelites' continuing cycle of infidelity. The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord gave them over to their enemies. After about forty years of bondage, His people cried out for help. God heard them and sent a deliverer, and things went great for a while. But then, the children of Israel would do evil again in the sight of the Lord, and again they would go into captivity. Similarly, we see this cycle in our lives. When things are going great, we have a tendency to slack off. And then when we get into trouble, we cry unto the Lord.

Church history shows us the same thing. Consider the modern movements and men like John Wesley and Martin Luther. It is evident that the power and the anointing of the Spirit were on their lives. Yet, when we examine the Methodist and Lutheran churches of today, with few exceptions, they are laced with modernism. There is a great drought of the Spirit, even a denying of the gifts of the Spirit, in these very movements born of the Spirit. And so goes the history of the church. God raises up a new work and begins a new movement. Calvary Chapel happens to be in the first part of the cycle. The Spirit of God moved, is moving, and will continue to raise up a new work, but our confidence must always be in God's Spirit: *"Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts"* (Zechariah 4:6).

the ministry. If it weren't for that sense of the call of God upon my life, I would have given up. In fact, I endeavored to leave the ministry on a couple of occasions, but the Lord brought me back. This all had to happen because of the confidence I had in my own ability.

The Lord allowed me to spend the prime years of my life failing until I realized that I had nothing to offer. I began to simply lean on the Spirit and depend upon Him. It was then that I was able to watch God work by His Spirit, and I wasn't tempted to take the glory for what God was doing. He brought me to the cross and emptied me of myself and my ambitions. When God began to work by His Spirit, it became a joyful, thrilling experience.

Writing to the Corinthians, Paul said, *"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence"* (1 Corinthians 1:26–29).

God purposely chooses those who aren't qualified and anoints them with His Spirit. Then, when the results are forthcoming, He is praised. He doesn't desire that any flesh should glory in His presence. That's why God chooses such totally unqualified people like us, fills us with His Spirit, and then does a mighty work through us that astounds and baffles the world. ☞

In the next issue, we will continue our look at the distinctives of Calvary Chapel by considering the supremacy of love.
All verses above are quoted from the King James Version.