

## A WAKE-UP CALL TO THE CHURCH February 25, 2002 - by Bill Ferguson

In 1998 God gave me a vision of a dark figure standing over a major church in the city (more detail later). From this came many questions about church leadership, prayer and intercession and some destructive evil forces

Now let me share with you God's solution to the problems these questions raise in many churches today. Please read this with an open mind and a heart open to what God is saying to His church leaders, intercessors and warriors today. What is happening to the churches and their members in this city? Why are pastors and other church leaders needing to take a leave of absence or stress leave? Why are some church leaders struggling with marriage problems? Why are churches failing and ceasing operations? Why is the largest church in the valley constantly on the move (people going from church to church) never finding a church home? Why is there little of God's power evident in many churches today? I don't pretend to know all the answers to these serious questions or perhaps questions I haven't even mentioned. But let me suggest some possible answers and perhaps challenge the church leaders in this city to take a closer look at themselves and what can be done to solve some of the problems. Then position oneself as a leader, to meet the challenges that come their way. I would like to define church leaders as the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers as well as worship leaders, and church board members or the church council.

The apostle Paul did much preaching and teaching, but he traveled through out many countries in that area establishing churches. He started them up, put a pastor in as the church leader then moved on to establish another church. He made sure these leaders were real pastors, shepherds, that cared about the sheep. Sometimes he was given what he needed to survive, but sometimes he paid his own way. At no time was he a burden to church members.

Paul picked his church leaders carefully. Could it be that too many people are trying to fulfil the role of pastor or shepherd, but with the gifting of evangelist or apostle or teacher? Only a shepherd is able to care for the sheep. Anyone else with any other gifting will only lead to a scattering of the sheep. Some people may have more than one gifting, but only one will be more prominent than the others. As an example a church leader may be in the position of pastor, maybe a good teacher, may be able to prophesy and even be a good apostle having a desire to go out to establish new churches. But one of those giftings will be more prominent than the others. If he is in the position of pastor (shepherd) but doesn't have time to visit each of his sheep or be available to help with their needs, his gifting or anointing is probably in one of the other offices. In that case he must leave that position of shepherd and get into the gifting God has given him, his most prominent gifting. That could mean leaving that church. If that person stays put for whatever reasons, two things will probably happen. First the sheep will scatter. God's word says the sheep know the shepherd's voice. People become frustrated, confused, angry, etc. The church becomes full of discontent, then they begin to leave. Second, the church leader himself begins to feel like a failure. The power of God doesn't seem to be there. He could even think about leaving the ministry, all because he was trying to fulfil the wrong office. In a case like this God's church becomes weakened. The unchurched will look at and listen to the disharmony and confusion and say "I don't need that". Look what Ezekiel 34 says in the amplified.

And the Word of the Lord came to Me: Son of man prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, even to the (spiritual) shepherds, Thus says the Lord: Woe to the spiritual shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the sheep?

You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, yea kill the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. The diseased and weakened you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the hurt and crippled you have not bandaged, those gone astray you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought to find; but with force and hard hearted harshness you have ruled them.

And they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild beasts of the field.

My sheep wandered through all the mountains and upon every high hill; yes, My sheep were scattered upon all the face of the earth, and no one searched or sought them. (Math. 9:36) Therefore, you spiritual shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: As I live, says the Lord, surely because My sheep became a prey, and My sheep became food for every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd; neither did My shepherds search for My sheep, but the shepherds fed themselves and fed not My sheep;

Therefore, O you (spiritual) shepherds, hear the word of the Lord:

Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I am against the shepherds: and I will require My sheep at their hand, and cause them to cease feeding the sheep; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves anymore. I will rescue My sheep from their mouths that they may not be food for them.

Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I Myself will search for My sheep, and will seek them out.

As a shepherd seeks out his sheep in the day that he is among his flock that are scattered, so will I seek out My sheep, and I will rescue them out of all places where they have been scattered in the days of clouds and thick darkness.

.....I will feed My sheep, and I will cause them to lie down, says the Lord God.

I will seek that which was lost, and bring back that which has strayed and I will bandage the hurt and the crippled, and will strengthen the weak and the sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong (become hardhearted and perverse); I will feed them with judgment and punishment.

Zechariah 10:2 says ".....Therefore the people go their way like sheep, they are afflicted and hurt because there is no shepherd".

John 10:3 ".....and the sheep listen to his voice and heed it, and He calls his own sheep by name and brings (leads) them out."

John 10:11, 12 ..."I am the Good Shepherd. The good shepherd risks and lays down his own life for the sheep. But the hired servant – he who merely serves for wages – Who is neither the shepherd nor the owner of the sheep, when he sees the wolf coming deserts the flock and runs away. And the wolf chases and snatches them and scatters the flock. Now the hireling flees because he merely serves for wages and is not himself concerned about the sheep – cares nothing for them." Now I don't think it takes a rocket scientist to figure out what God is saying in these verses. He is clearly upset about the lack of the right, God anointed people, in the position of pastor (shepherd). John is brutally honest in verse 12 saying many people have taken on the role of a shepherd when in fact they are only a servant or hireling in that position only for wages and care little about the sheep, especially when they are under attack. I believe we have too many people in churches today filling the position of pastor or shepherd when that is clearly not their calling; and in Ezekiel 34 we see how dangerous that is. Many church leaders must evaluate their own hearts today and see if the position they are in is where they should be. Are the sheep being scattered? To answer that question let's do some self-evaluation using God's Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit as a guideline. Finally, Jesus is so concerned about the sheep that in John 10:15, 16 He says, "....I am giving My very own life and laying it down in behalf of the sheep.

And I have other sheep (beside these), that are not of this fold. I must bring and impel those also, and they will listen to My voice and heed My call, and so there will be one flock under one Shepherd.

It is a matter of life and death according to Jesus. Should we and especially pastors (shepherds) see it as anything less?

Now for those fulfilling God's anointing for you as a shepherd of His sheep, may God bless you greatly. You have taken on a very difficult and challenging task, but with God in it you will succeed. PRAYER AND INTERCESSION

Now that we have taken a closer look at the key role leaders play in a church, we need to discuss the importance of prayer and intercession.

Zondervan tells us the Hebrew word palal – to pray means :a call to God to assess a need presented and act on it the dependence and humility of the one praying an appeal for a divine decision.

The word *atar* means to pray or entreat. It stresses the earnestness of the one praying and the intensity with which the request is made. Sometimes the word is associated with sacrifice. Moses prayed, the Lord did. Moses entreated, the Lord was entreated by.

*Saal* means to ask or inquire – to ask someone for something. This word is often used in the Old Testament of "inquiring of the Lord." Israel experienced many difficulties because the people failed to "inquire of the Lord". An attitude of dependence on the Lord, is important to God. Prayer in the Old Testament is an expression of personal relationship. This relationship is initiated by God who is recognized as Creator and Redeemer.

In the New Testament *proseuchomai* – to pray or entreat is used of prayer to God in general. *Aiteo* means to ask for or request.

*Deomai* means to ask, request or beseech used in specific spoken requests to God.

*Erotao* – to ask or request Both Old and New Testament show that prayer grows out of one's personal relationship with God. It is the spontaneous, heartfelt sharing by needy people with God, who is able to, and wants to help. Prayer is a continuous expression of the personal relationship established with God through Jesus.. The content of our prayer grows out of our intimate relationship with others in the church or church body.

The Bible provides indicators that bring our attention back to the quality of our personal relationship with God. The unjust, the unconcerned, and the disobedient have one basis on which to expect prayers to be heard by God. But one who has a growing relationship with God evidenced by trust (faith), obedience, love, and harmony with other believers and a growing commitment to God are assured. God does hear the prayers of those close to Him. He hears and answers in His own time.

I felt it necessary to talk a bit about prayer and what it really is. But prayer is not just man communicating or talking to God. Prayer is also God talking to man. This is done in many ways. He communicates with man in dreams, visions, thought, a knowing in one's spirit, through someone else, through written Word, music, signs and wonders, and much more. Our responsibility is to listen and hear what He says. God loves to visit with and spend time with His people. He said He inhabits the praises of His people. Most of what we have talked about is individual praying. Corporate praying is also very important and powerful. This is praying as a unit, as a group, but is not used much in today's churches with the exception of some of the more traditional churches. Having said all of this let me ask; are the churches in this city covered in prayer? Are the church leaders individually covered in genuine prayer? Are ordinary church goers challenged to pray? Have they been taught how to pray?

Are the church leaders of this city aware of the spiritual attacks against them continually? Satan and his hordes are always trying to neutralize or destroy the effectiveness of individual Christians as well as their churches. In some cases they have succeeded – some people leave their churches disillusioned, some churches fail and close their doors. Why? Could any of these things happen if committed prayer groups had done their part? I guess this begs the question, why do we need to pray if God knows what we have need of even before we ask? Basically, He gave man a free will and waits for us to give Him permission to act on our behalf. So it is always our turn.

Examples of intercessory prayer are found in Gen. 18:16-33 where Abraham prayed for the inhabitants of Sodom. Numbers 14:10-19 Moses prayed for a sinning Israel. In the New Testament the word *entynchano*, used in 5 occurrences means "to plead on behalf of someone." It can be found in Romans 8:27, 34, Hebrews 7:25, Acts 25:24, Romans 11:2 (Elijah's appeal to God against a sinning Israel). Vines Expository Dictionary says the word *enfeuyis* as used in 1 Tim. 4:5 and 2:1 means to seek the presence and hearing of God on behalf of others. *Entunchana* means to make petition, to make intercession, plead with a person, either for or against others.

In Romans 11:2 Elijah pleads with God (makes intercession), Rom 8:27 shows the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit for the saints and in verse 34 is similar intercessory work of Christ.

I would venture to say that if Elijah, Paul, the Holy Spirit and others found it necessary to do intercessory work or prayers, it is safe to say that interceding on behalf of others or the churches is of paramount importance.

In John 17:9 Jesus' prayer of compassion is for self destroying sinners. His pleading as advocate is for His believing people, claiming their justification as a matter of right, on the grounds of His righteousness. He died once for all, atoning for all sin; but "He ever liveth to make intercession for them that come unto God by Him," and for them alone. (Heb. 7:25)

Does your church seek for intercessors and encourage them to function? In fact, you may consider intercessory prayer so vital that you already have or will be arranging for teaching in this area. If such giants as Elijah or Paul interceded for others and Jesus is still interceding to the Father on our behalf, it is quite apparent that the prayer of intercession is vitally important.

One other thing must be mentioned here. The life of these men mentioned set a good example of what God expects. Intercessors must have clean, committed lives. Sin in one's life will keep them from being able to intercede for others. Remember, God cannot look on sin. An effective prayer warrior becomes ineffective because of sin. We all need to be continually cleansed and set free by the Blood of Jesus. The whole church must be cleansed, starting with the leadership. Do you dare look into a mirror and challenge that person to come clean before an omniscient God? Out beyond the church walls and the church organization is a world dying in their sin. They have looked to the church for help, for direction, for salvation, but many have turned away after seeing lying, dishonesty, manipulation, and all the things found in the world system. They see many of us, and especially church leaders as hypocrites – saying one thing while doing the other.

I want to challenge every church leader in this city to examine their own personal lives. Are you displaying humility, God's love, honesty, an interest for the lost, faith, obedience to God's commandments and His Word? Are you willing to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and body, and your neighbour as yourself?" Are the pastors of these city churches really shepherds?

The third thing that the city churches are having problems with is the demonic activity. Vines Dictionary tells us demons disseminate errors among men and seek to seduce believers. (1Tim. 4:1). Acting under Satan (Rev. 16:13, 14) demons are permitted to afflict with bodily diseases. (Luke 13:16). They differ in degrees of wickedness (Math. 12:45), some being more powerful than others. Just as we have a prime minister, a premier, a mayor and a pastor – all leaders, but the most powerful leaders the prime minister, then the premier, etc. So the powers of darkness have degrees of power, some over nations, some over cities, some over churches, etc. Assignments have been given demons to oppress a church, a pastor or a Christian. But a person who walks in humility and obedience with Jesus need not fear. 1 John 4:4 tells us "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world."

To illustrate the need for intercession and the power of intercession, about 3 years ago, 1998 a group of us were gathered to intercede for our city and the churches. Just as we began that night, God gave me what I would call a vision. As clearly as could be I saw a familiar part of the city. In this part of the city stood one of the largest, most influential churches. I felt deep concern as I watched a very large Being straddle this large church, with one foot on the north side of the church and the other on the south side. It stood upright for a few moments, facing eastward, then bent over and thrust its right hand down into the church building and began to try to manipulate the church leaders, probably the pastors, or even the board members. It seemed to be able to do this without any fears. As I watched this scene the building was dark as was this large figure, but I knew instantly this figure was a demon or devil. I also was impressed that this being was intent on immobilizing or destroy this church.

After sharing this vision with the group, we were able to pray fervently for each of the Churches in the City. But I believe this vision illustrated the weak state that many churches are in today, and without prayer groups and real intercessors, a church is virtually defenceless against the onslaughts of the enemy. Many pastors and church leaders are sitting ducks for the enemy to take pot shots at.

It is time for God's army to put on the whole armor of God and take back what the enemy has stolen. Here I wish to suggest that the Leviathan Spirit (Job. 41) the Jezebel Spirit (1 Kings 18, 19) and many other spirits including that of Freemasonry are functioning freely in many churches in this city. If God is to move powerfully and bring revival, these things must be exposed and dealt with. God will not tolerate those evil things in His churches.

I appeal to all church leaders to take a closer look at themselves through God's eyes and be bold enough to begin to change those things that are contrary to God's Word; to cut off anything from your life that would give the powers of darkness a legal entry point to continue with their oppression and weakening of the church. In closing, many churches and Christians in this city seem oppressed and powerless. They seem to be spinning their wheels and getting nowhere, while people's lives are hanging in the balance wondering which way to go. Church leaders are coming under a heavier attack and some are failing. Society in general is wondering what to do.

Guess what! We have the answer. It is found in God's Word. Let's set the church government in right order with real shepherds as pastors. Let's teach, believe and live the whole Word of God. Let's work toward signs and wonders happening in churches and homes. Let's bind up demonic activity in our city, blast out the powers of darkness in high places with intercession and warfare prayer. And let's loose the Holy Spirit to move across this city and do what God has already said He would do.

Are we up for it? God is if we are. Have you seen a cloud of darkness over your church or even in it? Do you feel an oppression? Have you noticed unusual behaviour in some people? Do you feel under attack and can't seem to find out what it is or where it is coming from? If so, it is time to begin to use your heavy artillery. The greatest power on earth is found in the name of Jesus. Call together your intercessors and prayer warriors. If your church doesn't have such weapons, now would be a good time to raise them up. There are probably people with just such a calling from God, just waiting to be mobilized. What an opportunity for in-depth teaching on intercession and warfare prayer. (Eph. 1:21)

There is no reason why our churches should be experiencing defeat – problems, yes – but not defeat. God's Church! I call you to rise up into the authority and government God has given you, then be ready to do His bidding. Time is of the essence. Now is the time. God is doing a shaking in His church. The incident that occurred September 11, 2001 in New York City seemed to have ushered in changes in many areas of the world. One of the major changes has been in the spiritual realm. The hunt for the Taliban and terrorists, world wide, has opened up many countries to the gospel that otherwise were closed. People here at home have been evaluating their own relationship with God and their relationship with their church. There seems to be a greater urgency among Christians to not only get the gospel out, but to deal with the inequities of the church, and the local church leadership and to prepare a bride without spot or wrinkle.

A major shift is taking place and has been ongoing for some time now. For many years Christians have been praying for revival, praying for the salvation of souls, praying for renewal, etc. These prayers are being answered. As I stated earlier, the pastors and leadership seem to be under pressure. Some may feel almost snowed under by the problems and cares of their office. They feel pressed in from every side and may be looking for some way to relieve the pressure. Some leaders may even question their calling of pastor, or worship leader, or choir director, or treasurer or whatever. Many of these leaders may feel they are under attack.

But let me share an interesting thought. Perhaps God is doing a shift in His church. He is definitely saying to the churches, "Time for a change. I'm beginning to take you in another direction, to another level. I have only one church in this city, in this area. All the church leaders are to function as brothers and sisters. All pastors and ministers are to work together and pray together as a close knit unit. These pastors are called to shepherd the sheep and all their time must be used to commune with Me and tend the sheep. The business of each church is to be done by business people in each local church. Apostles placed in the local body are to function in that capacity freely under My anointing. They must be free to go where I send them to, to begin or to encourage a new church.

I have also placed prophets in the church body to work closely with the apostles. These prophets must be listened to and their word prayerfully considered. Evangelists have been sent to bring an excitement and to bring the truth of My Word to the church as well as the unchurched. Then I have placed in your midst teachers to teach My Word to all peoples. As they teach My people, they will find new revelations of what My Word really is saying.

I am making it abundantly clear that this five-fold ministry is My idea and as My churches recognize and use these ministries, then am I able to use them and function among them and these churches will be My people and I will dwell among them and I will be their God."

I believe God is shifting His church into a new level or into a higher gear. Just as we shift the gears of the car from low gear to second gear then to third gear, each shift propelling the car to a greater speed. God is probably shifting His church today into the last and final gear. In this shift He will take His church on up when the time is right. This new shift seems to be propelling beyond any speed we have ever experienced. The shift is difficult because the church must come out of the gear it has been familiar with and be in neutral momentarily as God prepares to put us into the new set of gears unfamiliar to us. It can be unsettling and create fear, anxiety, and anger. This new shift will take some getting used to, but, if we know God is doing it, we can shape up and get with whatever He wants to do in each of our lives. We will soon become familiar with the new gears, the new speed and be able to relax knowing that as long as God is the driver of the church, we will be doing the right thing, being obedient to Him.

Getting back to the local church, I believe the apostle should be instrumental in establishing a church and helping to make it function successfully. A pastor must be part of this church, shepherding the sheep and daily seeking God's wishes for the church. Business people should be a part of establishing this church – dealing with many issues, a church building, equipment needed, and all paper work and legal matters. Then evangelists and leaders must be allowed to function as God calls them. Every office should work on an equal basis as led by the Holy Spirit. Intercessors have a vital purpose interceding on behalf of the God-given visions of the apostles to bring those visions into manifestation. Sometimes prayer warriors may be needed to do some warfare praying in conjunction with the intercessors. The vision an apostle has for his church is vitally important. The Bible says that without a vision the people perish. That places a heavy responsibility on the apostle, so heavy in fact that he must have the help of the prayer warriors and intercessors and the prophet. They must work in unison and in respect for each others office. The apostle is a leader of leaders. Those filling the office of pastor must really be sure this is where God wants them. Dealing with the cares and problems of the people of the church is a huge responsibility that should never be taken lightly. Sick people needing prayer, funerals, marriages, giving advice, helping, visiting, etc. are just a few of the things a pastor must be prepared to do today. Are you men ready for this? It is time we turned our women loose to take on the role of pastor if called. They are generally the care-givers in the home, why not the church?

Pastors must spend time, daily, communing with God and seeking His directions and His wisdom.

Are today's churches able to or willing to follow God as He shifts us to this new level that we all know is happening? If the gears in the car resist the shifting to a new gear, there will be grinding, noise, vibrations, a slowing down, a frustration, a feeling of failure, but if we keep trying again – checking to find out why there is a problem – What are we doing wrong, what are we not doing right? As we assess the situation carefully then

we are usually able to get to the next gear – to the next level and when we get to the new shift or level, following God’s leading, we will experience wonderful success, traveling at the new speed, traveling in the new direction with renewed vigor and determination.

What is God doing? Do you want to find out? Dare you find out? You can be sure this shifting of God will be completed. Father, we pray for the leaders of the churches in the city today that they will have a greater desire to seek your wisdom, your direction for them. Protect them, Father, from the onslaught of the enemy to try to discredit, disrupt and ultimately destroy their ministry. Give each one new revelation of Your Word and a greater measure of your anointing. Bring your five-fold ministries into their rightful place in your churches. Then Lord, give your apostles, evangelists and pastors a fresh fire in their hearts; the fire of the Holy Ghost that will scatter the powers of darkness and bring salvation, signs and wonders to the lost, the unchurched, as well as a fresh cleansing of all your people.

In Jesus Name! Amen.

### **THERE IS A FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN**

There it was, flames shooting high into the air and lighting up the sky covered in dark clouds. What was it? I brought my car to a stop to get a closer look. The flames were not only shooting skyward, they seemed to be going to the east, to the west, north and south. I pulled my cell phone out to dial the fire department. But as I watched the flames something grabbed my attention. There was no smoke! Why not? If someone was clearing land there would be smoke. It seemed to be on the mountain top. The flames seemed to be a different color. As I watched, nothing was being consumed, just large bright flames. Then the thought came to me – God is on the mountain. The fire of God has shown up on the mountain overlooking the city. No one else seemed to see it as they drove by.

Was it only me that saw the flames? An excitement began to build as I watched the fire reaching out in all directions. Why was it there? I must have a closer look. Winding my way up the hill I finally arrived at what looked like the spot where the fire was. Nothing was burning, no ashes anywhere, not even the smell of smoke.

As I walked around the mountain top, I could find absolutely no sign of fire. Now my heart began to really thump. I was on the mountain where God had been. I waited to hear His deep rumbling voice. I looked between the trees and over the next hilltop – nothing. I just stood on the mountain peak overlooking the city, raised my hands and began to worship God. His presence was so real, so thick, so warm. Being engulfed by His presence, His power, His Glory was the most humbling yet exhilarating experience anyone could have.

Now I wanted everything He had for me – just to stay in His presence forever, with His love, His acceptance, His peace, His beauty. Now I knew for sure the fire on the mountain was a visitation of God. Just as I was really enjoying myself and wanting to stay there forever, a cloud began to engulf me. I had never seen any cloud like this before. It was God’s Glory. I tried to shout praises and to worship Him, but couldn’t seem to get anything out. Then I woke up, what a let down. I didn’t want it to end. As I contemplated the meaning of this dream I had to do some research on fire, fire of God, flame of God.

Both the Old Testament and New Testament linked fire with worship and associated fire with judgment. Zondervan tells us the word "fire" was used in four theologically significant ideas in the Old Testament. God’s revelation of himself to fallen humanity. God spoke to Moses from a burning bush (Ex. 3:2).

Flames encompassed Sinai’s peak or mountain top (Ex. 19:18, 19; 24:15 - 18).The prophet’s visions often portray God as a burning glory (Ez. 1)The fiery image communicates the holiness of God in which humans could only gaze on in wonder and awe (Det. 4:24; Isa. 33:14)

Fire is associated with the sacrifices offered when people approached God. The offering made by fire, is found sixty-four times in the Old Testament.

Fire is associated with divine judgment. God used fire to destroy Sodom (Gen. 19:24). Fire shot out to destroy those who approached the tabernacle for unauthorized worship (Num. 11:1-3) (Isa. 9:19, 26:11, 66:15; Jer. 4:4, 15:14; Eze. 15:7, 19:14)

Fire is associated with the purification of God's own people. A burning coal from the altar cleanses Isaiah (Isa. 6:6, 7). God's breath is a fire that consumes the wicked (Isa. 33:11). The divine fire heals and refines God's own people (Mal. 3:2-4). The consuming fire that terrifies others is transformed by personal relationship with God to be experienced as a love that warms, and transforms the Christian.

#### Fire in the New Testament

Fire is a sign of God's glory, linked with His appearance and His Works (Acts 7:30, Rev. 1:14, Acts 2:3). We are impressed with His awesomeness (Heb. 12:18, 19). Fire is a portrait of divine judgment (Matt. 3:10, 12) as preached by John the Baptist. When the judgment involves believers, it is applied as a test of the quality of their works. (John 15:6; 1 Cor. 3:13 - 15). Fire also refers to the eternal judgment of individuals who persist in unbelief (Mark 9:43, Luke 16:24).

Fire is associated with the purification of believers (1 Peter 1:7, Rev. 3:18). The product of God's purifying fires, though painful, are a character of Gold. (Job 23:10). Some unusual expressions using "fire".

Baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matt. 3:11, Luke 3:16) (1 Cor. 12:13). The visible flames were outward signs of the Holy Spirit's activity within.

Heb. 1:7 calls angels God's servants and "flames of fire". Fausset's Bible Dictionary says that "fire", by its penetrating, all consuming agency, symbolizes the holiness of God which consumes sin as a thing that cannot abide in His presence (Heb. 10:27, 12:29). Jesus' eyes are like a flame of fire (Rev. 2:18, 19) "searching the veins and hearts. Fire also symbolizes the purifying of believers by testing dealings (Mal. 3:2) also the holy zeal kindled in them as at Pentecost (Acts 2, Isa. 4:4).

God really wants His church, His people cleaned up and as stated above, it will be done by "fire". We know Him to be a God of mercy and love, but He also hates sin.

The fire on the mountain was in the area of the T.V. tower for NOW television located overlooking the Fraser Valley, Mission and Abbotsford. Could it be that God is giving His church a message, in the final days? Are we listening to what He is saying, or are we listening but not hearing what He is saying?

Perhaps it is time for us to recognize the "fire on the mountain" as the presence of God, the Glory of God, come to show us the way to freedom from the ruts and problems of today's churches including the church government. Perhaps we in the church are to look within, pay attention to what God is pointing out to us, then be bold enough to deal with anything that we know needs dealing with. Each church leader must set an example by allowing the Holy Spirit to shine His bright light on each heart to expose those things He wants them to be loosed from. Then the sheep will see the good example and will want the same. God is determined to build His church and the Gates of Hell cannot prevail. Besides, it is so much fun to experience His Glory.

Now let me tell you that God is prepared to bring His fire down from the mountain into His churches in this valley, this area. This fire, God's power and Glory, is about to come to His people. Those churches ready to accept God on His terms and His commandments are the churches He will visit with His "fire". He always deals with His church leaders first, then His people.

The apostles and pastors of this area must prepare themselves quickly. They must spend quality time alone with Him and let Him do what is needed with each individual leader. God is ready to put His fire in each of their hearts to do a cleansing and re-firing. From there God will send His fire among His people, His Church. When this happens, those dark clouds of evil that seemed to hang over or in the Church building will be gone. The Fire of God will cause these demons to flee in terror, and with them will go depression, fear, anxiety, sickness, lack, deception, etc. to be replaced with God's awesome love, peace, truth, prosperity in all things and a greater desire for a closer, more personal relationship with this magnificent God. Now they will have something exciting to share with the unchurched and unsaved.

What I mentioned here is just the beginning. Are we ready for change, for God's shift to the next level? You can be sure He is searching for a people obedient to His call and willing to follow Him and seek for His direction. Lord bring your cleansing and empowering fire into every church in this area that has a desire for reconciliation, restoration, cleansing and a Holy Ghost boldness to come upon them and let them experience Your fire and Your Glory. Then Lord, we ask for a greater anointing to take your good news to the lost world. Amen.

This word was written in 1998.

I know there is a powerful stronghold over my city and area. An evil stronghold from which much destruction rains down on the entire community. Attacks include young people, the church body, families and in particular – fathers, sexual and physical abuse, illness, distress – even among God's people, weakening of the church body because of murmurings, pastors doing too much, lack of a battle plan and building plan within the church, concern about personal gain, apathy within the church, none or few signs and wonders following, watered down teaching of God's Word, etc. For our own church bodies we need a group of people who are aware of this stronghold problem and will agree together – as a unit – that this stronghold be pulled down – daily. There is power in agreement and in faith that God will pull down these destructive forces that are controlling this area like puppets. Next we must be sure our church leaders are in the positions God has prepared them for and are given the tools to do the job. Now a powerful prayer covering is needed over them continually. This is not a place for the lazy, unmotivated or the faint-hearted. Prayer, Prayer, Prayer is a must.

Then will we be free as a church and as Godly people to be blessed and in turn bless others. Free to grow, mature, become winners – to become what God intended us to be and have fun doing it, to be that light in the neighbourhood that is so badly needed, to be victorious in our daily comings and goings.