

# Leadership Lifestyle: Then and Now

## The problem today

There is a shocking divergence in the style of leadership amongst most modern churches from that adopted by Jesus and the apostles; or even many godly leaders in church history. In fact, the picture that most contemporary Christians have in their minds about leaders is radically different from the examples given us in Scripture.

For instance, if a leader today was hounded, slandered and given a bad reputation, betrayed by fellow workers, rejected by many in the religious world, afflicted with illness, impoverished, homeless, beset by severe practical problems and persecuted by the world, no church would accept him. In fact many would state that he was under God's judgment for some sin. Yet these very characteristics were found in both the Lord Jesus<sup>1</sup> and Paul.

Instead, leaders today are honoured when they are rich (or at least affluent). They claim to be free from anxieties and fears and often from all forms of illness. They take copious amounts of money from their flocks and even charge thousands to speak in conferences.<sup>2</sup> They expect a new car every year (for their ministry purposes of course). They live in expensive large houses, usually in posh areas (one chief Charismatic leader in the UK lives in a stately mansion in expensive Esher once owned by Baron Clive of Plassey<sup>3</sup>). Their house was often given to them freely, or at least was partially paid for by their flocks. In many cases they have underlings or administrative staff that take care of all their domestic tasks so that they are freed up for more important matters. In the UK, most of them have Monday off from any work. Many of them are so distant from their people that they do not respond to letters, let alone see anyone. On top of all this, they are treated like princes with great honour in their churches. Some radical Charismatic leaders are as rich as Croesus,<sup>4</sup> owning several huge mansions, fleets of limousines and at least one Lear jet aircraft.<sup>5</sup> All this from fleecing the flock tax-free (in the USA).<sup>6</sup>

We desperately need to bring correction here and establish what genuine church leadership entails. This study will not look at ministry, such as a focus on God's word or pastoring, but will limit itself to lifestyle.

## The example of Jesus

### He was homeless

This needs no explanation; the Lord stated this very clearly:

And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay *His* head.' Matt 8:20; Lk 9:58

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<sup>1</sup> Excepting illness, of course.

<sup>2</sup> Fees of over £5,000 are not uncommon; some charge more. These are not gifts but are fees requested up front before they will even come.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Clive (1725-1774) was made Baron of Plassey (Bengal, India) and was the man who established British rule in India after the Battle of Plassey. He was famous for his great wealth once he returned to England.

<sup>4</sup> Croesus (6th century BC), last king of Lydia c.560–546 BC. Renowned for his great wealth, he subjugated the Greek cities on the coast of Asia Minor before being overthrown by Cyrus the Great.

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth Copeland even has his own airport.

<sup>6</sup> Income filed as for religious purposes is tax free.

### **He had no money at all**

Money undermines the life of faith. As the prime example of living by faith, the Lord Jesus had no money whatsoever; he trusted the Father daily in order to live. Thus when a tax was necessary, Jesus trusted in a miracle to pay for the tax of himself and his disciples (Matt 17:27).

Those health and wealth preachers (Word Faith) who try to deny this state that the seamless robe worn by Christ at his trial was expensive, proving that he was rich. What scurrilous nonsense! It was merely a gift from wealthy supporters, actually proving his poverty since he had no other valuable clothing, money or jewellery on him. No one in history has ever denied the poverty of Christ; indeed many organisations and church movements have sought to copy it.<sup>7</sup>

The Lord was so keen to separate himself from money that the gifts given to his ministry were kept by Judas and not himself (Jn 13:29). When he needed an animal to ride into Jerusalem he did not hire one but trusted in the giving of a man prepared by the Father (Matt 21:1-6).

### **Jesus was repeatedly slandered**

Throughout his ministry the Lord was slandered and lied about by his many enemies. The culmination of this were the lies and misrepresentation presented at his trial (Matt 26:59-60; Mk 14:56).

### **Jesus was not accepted by his local people despite a flawless testimony**

They were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honour except in his own country and in his own house.' Matt 13:57

Then He said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country.' Lk 4:24; Jn 4:44

Jesus had grown up living a righteous life in Nazareth and the surrounding region. Yet the local population derided him. Those that knew him best rejected him, yet they should have loved him most. This sealed their fate.

Every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people. Acts 3:23

### **Jesus was rejected by his own people, who murdered him**

This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' Acts 4:11 (Matt 21:42; Mk 12:10; Lk 20:17)

Rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God *and* precious. 1 Pt 2:4

The chief characteristic of the Messiahship of Jesus was that he was rejected by everyone who should have supported him. The chief priests rejected him. The subordinate priests rejected him. The Levites rejected him. The scribes and teachers of the law rejected him. The local social leaders (elders) rejected him. The leaders of the synagogues rejected him. In fact he was rejected by everyone except the poor of the land (apart from a few exceptions).<sup>8</sup>

In this he followed a divine pattern previously exemplified by the rejection of the prophets:

<sup>7</sup> For example Peter Waldo and the Poor Men of Lyon. Other less evangelical monastic orders did the same.

<sup>8</sup> A very few established figures followed him, such as Zacchaeus (tax-collector), Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews (member of the Sanhedrin), Joseph of Arimathea (member of the Sanhedrin) etc.

*You* stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers *did*, so *do* you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers. Acts 7:51-52

Thus the culmination of his rejection was being murdered by his own people, as he foretold in the parable of the vineyard.

### **Jesus had many sufferings**

For it was fitting for Him, for whom *are* all things and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. Heb 2:10

Jesus was made perfect through sufferings. This is not suggesting that Jesus was imperfect in his person; still less that he had any sin. What it means is that his ministry as a man was made perfect by his perfect obedience despite opposition and suffering. In every circumstance Jesus perfectly fulfilled the moral law in his human nature. His sufferings as a man (e.g. hunger – Matt 4:2, thirst – Jn 19:28, fatigue – Matt 8:24, violent attack – Jn 8:59, attempted arrest - Jn 7:30, and homelessness - Matt 8:20) did not bring him down but he was made a perfect man through victory over them.

For our purposes, it shows that the Lord himself had many sufferings. Indeed, it is impossible to know how difficult it was for a perfect being to suffer being restricted in a human nature and witnessing sin daily all around him; let alone witnessing the suffering of others he loved (e.g. Jn 11:35-36).

### **Jesus had a little flock**

Jesus called his followers a ‘little flock’ (Lk 12:32). Since the Lord cannot lie this has to be true. Out of the thousands who praised him in his ministry only 120 disciples were gathered in Jerusalem waiting according to his command (Acts 1:15).

### **Jesus was forsaken by his own supporters**

Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled. Matt 26:56; Mk 14:50

Despite all the teaching, warnings and predictions by Jesus, the disciples feared their own lives and forsook Jesus, leaving him to die alone. This was except John who stayed for a time (Jn 19:26-27). Three years of divine preparation could not stop the disciples leaving Jesus in his time of need.

### **Jesus was betrayed**

The betrayal of Jesus was worse than all the betrayals suffered by historic church leaders since it resulted in his death and came from someone he had fellowshiped with closely, and provided for, for three years (Judas Iscariot).

### **Interim conclusion**

The life of Jesus does not fit the modern pattern of church leadership by any measure. If leadership is to be modelled on the Lord, then modern ministry is nothing like it. There is something wrong.

## **The example of Paul**

A whole book could be written about Paul’s sufferings alone. How so many modern leaders can aspire to be like Paul in power and yet ignore his many sufferings is beyond me. Modern false ‘apostles’ and ‘prophets’ refer to Paul’s ‘signs of an apostle’ (2 Cor 12:12) and

have miracles in mind because he referred to this here; yet in Paul's other defences of his apostleship he often cited his sufferings as an apostle. In the same letter he says:

But in all *things* we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in sleeplessness, in fastings; by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love.  
2 Cor 6:4-6

For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles. ... we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things. ... Are they ministers of Christ? -- I speak as a fool -- I *am* more: in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods ... 2 Cor 11:5-6, 23-28

Modern leaders want spiritual power like Paul (which they don't have anyway; their healings are false) but they want affluent comfortable lives.

A small sample of Paul's lifestyle follows:

### **Slandered**

The chief example of this is the false evidence given at his trials which resulted in him going to Rome as a prisoner (Acts 24:1, 25:24). Many perjured themselves in order to accuse him. However, he had been repeatedly slandered before this, mostly by Judaising heretics in the church (1 Thess 2:14-15).

### **Abounding in afflictions**

Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears. 2 Cor 2:4

No one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. 1 Thess 3:3

All our affliction and distress. 1 Thess 3:7

Persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra -- what persecutions I endured. 2 Tim 3:11

### **Rejoicing in suffering**

I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation. 2 Cor 7:4

I now rejoice in my sufferings for you. Col 1:24

If I am being poured out *as a drink offering* on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Phil 2:17

### **Filling up the suffering of Christ**

The sufferings of Christ abound in us. 2 Cor 1:5

We who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake. 2 Cor 4:11

The fellowship of His sufferings. Phil 3:10

I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church. Col 1:24

### Continually facing conflict

Some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. Now there were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy. Acts 23:12-13

I want you to know what a great conflict I have. Col 2:1

But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict. 1 Thess 2:2

### Tribulations

I *am* more: in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; *in* journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils of *my own* countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness -- besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. 2 Cor 11:23-28

My tribulations for you. Eph 3:13

### Paul on money

Furthermore Paul, setting an example contrary to modern apostles, mostly paid to serve as an apostle by plying his own trade. Indeed, he often supported his colleagues in the Gospel as well. Though he was entitled to be able to receive gifts in living by faith because he was an itinerant evangelist, he often forsook this to avoid being a burden on the church, particularly the Corinthian church.

Because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers. Acts 18:3 [In Corinth.]

You yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. Acts 20:34 [Addressing the Ephesian elders.]

Do we have no right to eat and drink? ... Or *is it* only Barnabas and I *who* have no right to refrain from working? 1 Cor 9:4-6

We labour, working with our own hands. 1 Cor 4:12

If we have sown spiritual things for you, *is it* a great thing if we reap your material things? If others are partakers of *this* right over you, *are* we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ. 1 Cor 9:11-12

The Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel. But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it *would be* better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void. For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel. 1 Cor 9:14-18

Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? 2 Cor 11:7

And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep *myself*. 2 Cor 11:9

Or what is it in which you were inferior to other churches, except that I myself was not burdensome to you? 2 Cor 12:13

Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. 1 Thess 2:6

Nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labour and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. 2 Thess 3:8-10

The last quote is important because Paul lays down a principle that all men should work to eat. He states that he refrained from receiving gifts from the Thessalonians in order to model the need for men to work.

So we see that, at least in the cases of the Corinthians, the Ephesians and the Thessalonians, Paul worked to support himself (and others) and did not receive gifts from men.

### **Interim conclusion**

Paul's lifestyle was just like the Lord's. He knew many serious sufferings, rejections, slanders and setbacks. He also spurned the idea of gaining riches; indeed he even spurned his reasonable right to received gifts from many churches, paying the costs of his ministry himself.

## **Filling up the sufferings of Christ**

Joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*. Rm 8:17

The sufferings of Christ abound in us. 2 Cor 1:5

We who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake. 2 Cor 4:11

The fellowship of His sufferings. Phil 3:10

I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church. Col 1:24

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings. 1 Pt 4:12-13

We saw earlier that Paul spoke about completing the sufferings of Christ. This requires further comment.

### **What it is not**

This does not mean that Christ is physically suffering in some way in heaven now. Christ is perfect and complete and lives in heaven in glory as God. The Lord's suffering as a man was completed at the cross so that he could say that 'it is finished' (Jn 19:30). His divine nature can never suffer in the way than men suffer.

Neither does it refer to Christ's penal sufferings, his meritorious sufferings in performing the work of atonement. This was finished at the cross. No man's suffering contributes in any meritorious way to the church's salvation.

### **What it is**

In some way the church on earth partakes of the sufferings of Christ and completes what is lacking in them.

The key to understanding this lies in the fact that the visible church is the body of Christ; he is the Head; we are the body on earth. That sufferings were characteristic of Christ on earth has already been established; what we need to determine now is what the current sufferings mean in connection with Christ who is perfected in glory in heaven.

In simple terms, just as Christ was appointed to be perfected through sufferings while on earth, so his body, the church, has been appointed to sufferings as a testimony to Christ. As the Master, so the disciple. Indeed, these sufferings are necessary to personal sanctification; they are used to promote individual growth in grace.

Paul was happy that the more he suffered, the less remained for others to suffer in the future (Col 1:24). 'Fill up' means, to complete what is remaining. 'That which is lacking', means the leftovers; what is remaining.

Note that Christ is afflicted in some empathetic way in his people's afflictions; what happens to the body on earth is an attack on the Head in heaven; when Saul (Paul) persecuted the church on earth, he was persecuting Christ:

**'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'** And he said, **'Who are You, Lord?'** Then the Lord said, **'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.'** Acts 9:4-5

This proves that the sufferings of the church are also the sufferings of Christ (Isa 63:9).<sup>9</sup> He is not actually physically suffering in heaven, but he identifies so much with his people (who are in spiritual union with him) that the afflictions are also nominated as his.

Just as the sufferings endured by the Lord on earth were predestined by God (indeed they were prophesied), so also are the sufferings endured by his body now. As we endure them, we complete them, we fill up what is left.

It is important to stress that the sufferings of the church are not meritorious (unlike Roman Catholic dogma<sup>10</sup>). The only meritorious sufferings were those experienced by Christ in connection to atonement. These sufferings were completed at the cross.

### **The point for us**

In connection with our present study we have to emphasise that the body of Christ is always in a place of suffering in this world before the end comes. Without referring to this specific doctrine under view here (just explained), this point is clearly made many times by the Lord and his apostles, for example:

**They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.** Jn 16:2

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<sup>9</sup> *'The Church is His body in which He is, dwells, lives, and therefore also suffers,'* Campegius Vitringa [1659-1722].

<sup>10</sup> That is, that saints can lay up a store of righteous works (merit) by achieving more than is necessary for personal salvation; i.e. excess merit achieved by great saints over and above God's commands. This store can be accessed by needy souls and is called 'works of supererogation'. This store was then accessed in papal indulgences; the chief error that led directly to the Reformation.

In the world you will have tribulation. Jn 16:33

We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God. Acts 14:22

We told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation. 1 Thess 3:4

Share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God. 2 Tim 1:8

All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 2 Tim 3:12

Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Rev 2:10

The idea that the Christian life is an abundant life full of peace, security, bounty and affluence is a false doctrine. When Jesus promised an abundant life he was referring to eternal life not a bed of roses now.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, we can say that so sure is suffering, and so important is it to Christian development, that if a person has no suffering at all then that person's Christianity is doubtful.

Now this is the very opposite of what many Charismatic preachers are peddling today. These men who promise peace, riches and perpetual health are liars. Do not listen to them. The 'Name it and claim it' Gospel is false and from the pit of hell. This is not just the province of Word of Faith teachers, but many others have adopted such heresies, such as the 'power of positive thinking' mind-science movements<sup>12</sup> or Christian Science, plus many radical Charismatics.

A chief characteristic of all Christians is development through suffering. Teachers and leaders in the church require even deeper suffering in order to be trained in ministry. No decent ministry appears without the teacher having paid his dues in suffering. If Jesus was perfected through suffering, and Paul experienced multiple sufferings, then we can be sure that we need to experience many afflictions. And that is what we are promised.

The quicker we accept this the quicker we will grow and life will make more sense.

## Examples in history

Repeatedly we see that the best and most godly men in history were those who were most like the Lord Jesus Christ and Paul. Just one noteworthy characteristic is that they did not love money and either gave it all away or lived very modestly and gave most of it away. What follows are just a few examples of terrific servants of God who either suffered great afflictions and / or had no desire for riches and possessions.

### Peter Waldo

[d. c. 1205 or 1218] Waldo (or Pierre Valdes) was the founder of a church group known as 'The Waldensians', who were noted for their love of Scripture and voluntary poverty. He was a wealthy French businessman from Lyons who, upon his conversion became a radical, serious believer. When he saw the Lord's contempt of riches, he immediately (1174)

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<sup>11</sup> Jn 10:10, 'I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly'. 'Abundantly' means something more, over and above, exceeding, superior, surpassing. This refers to something super-added to ordinary life to make it full of blessing. It is the gift of eternal life, which is only known potentially in part in this life and is fully consummated at the end when we have a new body. It is possible to explain it as that the New Covenant gives a better type of life than that which was possible under the Mosaic Covenant. But the basis of the New Covenant is eternal life in Christ. '*Life in abundance is eternal life, life without death or fear of death, life and much more.*' (Matthew Henry)

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Unity or New Thought. Also such writers as Agnes Sanford.



committed himself to poverty and preaching, throwing all his money into the street. As well as preaching, he fed the poor during the famine of 1176.

The preaching, shared poverty and a vernacular Bible led to his movement being called, 'The Poor in Spirit' and later, 'The poor men of Lyons'; many of whom became missionaries in poor clothes.

To cut a long story short (a story worth reading) the Roman Catholic Church feared the success of the Waldensians (which exposed the church's hypocrisy) and persecuted them.

Despite many afflictions the movement spread, converting people from all classes of life, including priests and nuns. Yet some of the worst atrocities ever perpetrated were suffered by this group, on more than one occasion; there was even a crusade launched against them. The worst massacre was at Piedmont in 1655. After being forced to leave their homes the Waldensians trekked to the upper valleys with men, women, children, sick and aged wading in icy waters and climbing mountains in the freezing cold of winter. Despite this the Duke of Savoy sent troops after them in April, unleashing a torrent of looting, rape, murder, torture and war crimes, including cannibalism.

For our purposes here we simply note that Valdes did not just have a love for God and his word, but felt the need to avoid riches and live poor. He was also a man full of problems, afflictions and persecutions, much like Paul the apostle.

### **Martin Luther**

[1483-1546] Luther was a man of many problems and afflictions. After the Diet of Worms a price was put on his head and he was fair game for assassination by anyone. For his own safety, a prince arranged for him to be kidnapped by knights and kept in the Wartburg Castle for months. During his ministry he was constantly attacked, slandered, vilified and libelled. He had problems from without by Catholic enemies plus diatribes from philosophical humanists, and problems from within by religious extremists. He also had to help the rulers sort out their political problems year after year right up to his death. He was beset by tribulations.

In addition to this he worked tirelessly to establish the Protestant church and drag the people up from their former Biblical ignorance, translating the Bible into German along the way. Yet he did all this in the face of multiple illnesses. Whole articles have been written about these various ailments that caused him great pain throughout his life. Though he lived longer than Calvin, he still died young at 63.<sup>13</sup> Like Calvin he lived a simple, modest life and gave much to charitable causes. Indeed, his home was constantly filled with students who discussed important issues with him; these being transcribed as the published *Table Talk*.

Luther's life was so full and important that more books have been written about him than any other person except Jesus Christ; yet it was a life filled with suffering and problems. He famously stated that his sufferings were more important in forming his ministry than all his prodigious learning in university.

### **John Calvin**

[1509-1564] I don't know of any modern church leader that ever asked for a reduction in salary, but Calvin did. The city leaders at Geneva gave him a raise, which he refused to

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<sup>13</sup> Many men in that time lived until their mid-80s, as biographies show. However, in general, life expectancy was shorter than now (especially for the very poor), mainly due to wars, poor sanitation, brigand attacks, famines, invasions and pestilence.

accept. This is typical of Calvin's humility. Though portrayed by ignorant fools as a dominating despot, in fact Calvin was an unlikely major leader because of his shy, retiring nature.

Calvin, like Luther, was also sick from one thing and another his entire life (such as stomach ulcers). Ignoring his various illnesses, he continued to work in his study, which only made the conditions worse. Like others he had to suffer the death of his beloved wife, Idellete de Bure, after a short time (in 1549) and never remarried. His only child had died after a few days.

Also, like others, Calvin should have been rich from his many printed books. But, following Christ, he gave his money away. He supported refugee ministers seeking shelter in Geneva from persecution and also sent money to struggling churches and individuals in foreign lands. He financially underwrote missionary endeavours, including the first missionaries to Brazil. In addition he established schools, a training university and almshouses plus support for the poor and aged

Calvin had also, in his early years, suffered persecution causing him to be on the run throughout Europe to avoid arrest. In Strasbourg he was plagued with poverty. His trials, tribulations and hard work finally led to an early death at 54. His bank account was found to have little in it. His humility continued after his death when his will stipulated that he be buried in an unmarked grave to avoid unnecessary attention.

### **Ezekiel Rogers**

[1590-1660] Rogers was a notable preacher in Yorkshire bringing the Gospel to many, so that people streamed to the town of Rowley to hear him speak. The awakening there lasted twenty years. However, under the evil Archbishop Laud, Rogers (with many other evangelicals) lost his ministry and emigrated to New England in 1638 with the entire village following him. They established a township they called Rowley where they encountered hardship upon hardship: disease, Indian attacks, failed crops etc. However, they persevered and before long people were again flocking to hear him preach.

Yet Rogers himself was beset by troubles and illness. Rogers was frequently sick and preaching exhausted him. He learned medicine because he did not trust doctors and was able to give good medical advice to his people. His wife, Joan, died, followed by all his children. Feeling lonely, he remarried, but his new wife also died shortly afterwards as well as his newborn child. Marrying a third time, the night after the wedding his house caught fire totally destroying all his furniture, clothes and books brought from England. To top it all, he fell from a horse dislocating his right arm, paralysing it. From then on he had to write with his left hand. In all this he knew the consolation of God and could even be cheerful. Asthmatic and approaching 70, he wrote to a friend:

I am hastening home, and grow very asthmatical and short-breathed. O, good brother, I thank God I am near home, and you too are not far. O the weight of glory that is ready waiting for us, God's poor exiles! We will sit next to the martyrs and confessors. O, the embraces wherewith Christ will embrace us! Cheer up your spirits in the thoughts thereof, and let us be zealous for our God and for Christ and make a conclusion. Now the Lord bring us well through our poor pilgrimage.

He died shortly afterwards.

### **AW Tozer**

[1897-1963] Tozer was a famous and greatly beloved American preacher who spent thirty years leading a church in Chicago, plus serving in other places. However, he is best known

for his many books, which are still best sellers today. What fewer people know is that instead of becoming a millionaire from his book royalties, he gave most of it away. He so spurned possessions that he refused to buy a car and travelled on his many preaching tours on buses and trains with his wife.

### **John G Paton**

[1824-1907] Famous for being a pioneer missionary to the New Hebrides where he faced many forms of tribulations, even from warlike cannibals, on a daily basis. His wife died in childbirth soon after his arrival. His life story is thrilling and edifying, including miraculous rescues from attacks. However, for our purposes here I want to draw attention to his views about money and stewardship.

Paton was tireless and went on many preaching tours, especially of America, to raise money for his missionary association. He was so careful that this money should go entirely to missionary works that he often refused to sleep in hotels but slept outside in parks and gardens so that he did not waste the Lord's money.

### **CT Studd**

[1862-1931] Charles Studd was also a pioneer missionary, first with the China Inland Mission and then in Africa, as well as pastoring a church in India. A former England cricketer, he gave up more than fame to serve the Lord. His story is remarkable and a must read for young Christians. However, I wish to draw attention to one thing only. His father had been a very wealthy planter and Charles was worth a small fortune. After his conversion, and his pledging to be a missionary as one of the Cambridge Seven, he decided that he must give all his fortune away. So before he sailed to China in 1885 he first gave all his inheritance away to Christian causes, despite the pleading of his parents. From then he lived by faith.

### **AN (Anthony Norris) Groves**

[1795-1853] Groves was a very godly man who was a pioneer leader in the Brethren Movement, though he opposed the growing authoritarianism of John Darby. He advocated the principle of complete dependence upon God for all temporal needs in his writing, *Christian Devotedness* (1825) and lived his life, serving God in many capacities, by this principle. Indeed, he greatly influenced George Muller in living by faith. Groves served as a missionary for many years, and in doing so lost his wife to plague in Baghdad. But he remarried and continued to serve in India. Being unwell he returned to England and died in Muller's house (Muller was his brother-in-law). His biography shows him to be a man in the familiar pattern, beset by tribulations, afflicted by problems and illnesses, suffering grievous loss and refusing to drum up money.

### **George Muller**

[1805-1898] Muller is the leader of faith par excellence. Everyone knows about his establishment of an orphanage in Bristol based entirely on faith. Muller's meticulous bookkeeping shows every single gift (equivalent to millions today) and how it was spent. Muller's faith was tested to the limits, such as all the children being sat at tables and giving thanks for breakfast when there was no food, then both bread and milk arrived at the door in miraculous circumstances. But Muller lived by faith for his whole life, leading a church and being involved in worldwide preaching tours.

### **CH Spurgeon**

[1834-1892] Spurgeon could have been a multi-millionaire if he had so chosen. His sermons were syndicated in national newspapers and then collated into best-selling books,

sales that continue to this day. He also wrote other books that sold well. Royalties alone should have made him rich; but Spurgeon lived modestly as a middle-class Victorian.

In fact, Spurgeon gave most of his money away. For the first fifteen years Spurgeon bore the entire cost of his training college for pastors, which was later Spurgeon's College in South London. He also established an orphanage in Stockwell, London (Spurgeon's Homes) as well as other charitable organisations.

In addition he was no stranger to suffering of various sorts. He suffered bouts of illness his entire life and died young in his fifties. He was frequently depressed, calling it, 'the Black Dog'. He was often slandered and lampooned, even in the press. He fought to defend Calvinism both from Hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism, as well as attacking errors in the Church of England, all of which resulted in personal attacks and suffering. His greatest affliction was during the Baptist Union 'Downgrade Controversy', where his own colleagues betrayed him and ruined his health, resulting in his early death.

### **Interim conclusion**

We could continue in this vein if space permitted. The best leaders the church ever had do not fit the modern pattern; the world is not worthy of them. They did not live peaceful, quiet, affluent, trouble-free lives. There were often far from popular but were the butt of many attacks and slanders. They knew physical illness; in fact many were constantly ill and some of the best died very young (David Brainerd at 29; Robert Murray M'Cheyne at 30; Augustus Toplady at 38). Many suffered grievous slanders from their own brethren and were sometimes even criminally attacked by other supposed Christian leaders (such as Toplady by John Wesley<sup>14</sup>). None of them were rich, and when they had money they tended to give it all away.

The modern church leader is a far cry from these men of God.

In fact, we can safely say that, in the last 50 years, evangelical church leaders have, by stealth, completely twisted around the way that people think about practicalities of leadership life. Once it was considered normal for churches to be small flocks with the focus on serving the flock. Now leaders strive for larger and larger numbers to feel authenticated and the focus is on the leader not the flock. Once it was fairly normal for leaders to live by faith, trusting in gifts from others, or to be employed. Now that is seen as outdated and leaders demand salaries plus many perks (several weeks holiday; health insurance; new cars annually or bi-annually; assistance with house maintenance etc.). Once it was seen as wicked to ask for money from the pulpit, now it happens almost weekly in certain churches. In the past the leader's pay was considered to be on a par with the average of his congregation; now leadership pay is pegged to professionals (such as a headmaster); some peg it to a managing director.<sup>15</sup> Historic pastors used to visit the congregation; home discipleship was vital.<sup>16</sup> Now leaders rarely go to people's homes and delegate it to lower ranks, such as house group leaders (an unbiblical job); yet these have

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<sup>14</sup> Wesley lied about Toplady and slandered him; but worse, he was involved in a scandal whereby he forged a document purporting it to be by Toplady (fraud). He also plagiarised authors in attacking Toplady. Some of these offences were capital crimes in their time.

<sup>15</sup> Gerald Coates has compared himself to a CEO and says he deserves his significant pay because the services he provides are like a CEO! Whatever one thinks about high salaries, the significant thing is that he sees church leaders in worldly terms; a manager not a server. This is a big change from the historic perspective. Coates' view is now commonplace in America and big Charismatic churches elsewhere. By the way, if the church leader is a CEO, then the members are shareholders and should demand to see the financial accounts.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Baxter saw revival in Kidderminster based on this fact alone.

little time and much pressure.<sup>17</sup> In fact, I am repeatedly told that leaders don't even answer letters to them.<sup>18</sup>

## Characteristics of NT church leadership

For those not familiar with my work, I will summarise the chief practical characteristics of church leadership.

### **An apostolic hermeneutic**

It is vital that people follow Scriptural principles of interpretation and stop cherry picking what appeals to them from the OT and NT. For instance, those who allow leadership vestments to distinguish and honour such men above the rest can only do so by appealing to the Old Covenant worship system. But if you ask why they, therefore, do not also sacrifice bulls and goats for atonement, they say that that is clearly wrong. But the two are absolutely bound together and cannot be separated. The same applies to those (everyone) who use musical instruments in church services; these are cancelled along with sacrificial offerings and vestments.<sup>19</sup> If leaders cannot see this simple hermeneutic contradiction, then they are not fit to teach on weightier doctrines.

The vital hermeneutic is that what is new and clear overrules that which is earlier and obscure. Church life is to be determined (as all doctrines) by apostolic teaching, not personal interpretations of the Old Covenant. The apostles had the final revelation of the risen Christ that he promised (Jn 16:12, 14) as well as the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Jn 16:13). This marks the final authority of revelation. All must be interpreted by this.

### **The church foundation**

Church leadership can only operate in a normal church foundation. This is a small meeting in a house. There is no other precedent in the early church; all churches met in homes and were restricted to small numbers. No amount of sophistry can overturn this; there is no other example.<sup>20</sup> This is to preserve the atmosphere of being a family so that the principle of mutual edification can prevail, impossible in large meetings.

### **No authoritarian leader**

Consequently, elders were fathers in the church family; there are no other governing officers at all (deacons are administrative servants). All churches had a small team of male

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<sup>17</sup> One of the reasons why mature believers crack up and burn out in Charismatic churches is that unreasonable pressures are put upon them by the leaders who abrogate their own responsibilities. Pastoring the flock in home visitation is the responsibility of elders, not house-group leaders, cell-group leaders etc.

<sup>18</sup> For example, I have been told, several times, that leaders (senior pastor and elders) of the largest Charismatic church in the south of England have failed to reply to urgent letters sent to them by members. Letters were sent because the person could not get to see the leader. This separation of leaders from their congregants is historically novel.

<sup>19</sup> Before anyone accuses me of extremism, one should note that musical instruments were not in general use in the Catholic church until after 1250 and the first thing the Reformers did was get rid of organs in church services. The Puritans did the same. Reformed churches rarely had any instruments until the late 1800s. Spurgeon had no musical instruments in his church. The focus upon singing and instruments came with the Arminian campaign evangelists with Moody and followers.

<sup>20</sup> The Hall of Tyrannus was only hired by Paul for evangelistic purposes (debates) in Ephesus. The gatherings in Solomon's porch were temporary for prayer until churches were formed. Temple police would not have allowed a sect to worship Jesus in the temple precincts.

elders who were all equal; there is no such thing as a senior pastor in the NT.<sup>21</sup> Single dominating leaders are unknown. The only examples of such are heretics who are condemned.<sup>22</sup>

### **No salary**

It is clear NT teaching that leaders must live by faith. No church leader ever had a salary in the early church but either worked or relied upon gifts. Under normal circumstances elders do not need to be full-time and should be employed normally.<sup>23</sup> Only those who preach continually or are itinerant evangelists need to be supported, and then by unsolicited faith gifts.

### **No separation of clergy and laity**

Mutual submission of all to each other characterised the early church.<sup>24</sup> There was no special elevation of those who ministered. Indeed, all were called to minister as they were gifted by God.<sup>25</sup> Thus all were one with no division of leaders from laity. The idea of elevating leaders on a pulpit or a platform above the people is anathema.

## **Conclusion**

While there are a great many failings of modern church leadership, not least being apostasy from God's word with the many resultant errors, one practical factor that always damages God's testimony is the focus and dependence upon money. This is not just the fault of Word Faith (Health & Wealth) preachers, nor just American TV evangelists, but almost all churches that have a dedicated building and layers of leadership hierarchy. These unbiblical factors (church buildings and false leadership structures) require feeding with large amounts of money and this immediately misdirects the church. It is my view that as soon as these exist, the church cannot spiritually succeed.<sup>26</sup>

Jesus is noteworthy for excoriating the rich, affirming the poor and driving the businessmen out of the temple. Even non-Christians relate to this and admire it. The modern church has reversed this by bringing money-generating businesses back into the temple and making money a chief focus of its ministry. I know of famous large churches that make demands for money almost weekly (this is on top of demands for tithes). They even have gift-aid forms on every chair.

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<sup>21</sup> Thus the hundreds of other officers in modern churches (e.g. vicars, priests, cardinals, popes, deans, bishops, curates, archbishops, apostles, prophets, house-groups leaders, cell-group leaders, youth leaders, worship leaders, counsellors, healers, women leaders, administrators, etc.) are all unbiblical.

<sup>22</sup> 3 Jn 1:9, 'Diotrephes, who loves to have the pre-eminence'.

<sup>23</sup> If the church is small, meeting in a house and having at least two elders, there is no need for full-time ministry.

<sup>24</sup> 1 Pt 5:5, 'all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility'.

<sup>25</sup> Rm 12:6; 1 Cor 12:7, 14:26; Eph 4:7; 1 Pt 4:10-11.

<sup>26</sup> I have expounded why many times in many papers. For instance, the church is a family with interdependent ministries, where people serve in mutual encouragement, according to their gifts, under the leadership of a small team of equal elders. This cannot operate in large numbers and this is why God established all NT churches in houses where numbers are manageable and mutual edification can exist easily. As soon as numbers increase in a dedicated church building, multiple new factors emerge: demanding lots of money for capital and maintenance building work; PA systems; the silencing of the congregation; platform ministry; facilitating jobs (often full-time); multiple layers of new leaders and so on. The focus then becomes gaining new members in a bigger meeting, thus requiring new and bigger premises – and so it goes on. Mega-churches in America and Asia have congregations of many thousands. This is not Biblical Christianity but worldliness.

This centring on money is a great evil and God hates it. The greatest men used by God in history were wise enough to know that avoiding any reliance upon gaining money was the first strand of good stewardship. Today, modern church leaders have fooled the people into behaving exactly the opposite. People only fail to realise this because they are so ignorant of a) Scripture and b) church history. Shame on them!

Modern church leaders are, in the main, nothing like the leadership modelled by Jesus, the apostles and the great leaders of church history.

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