

The Miraculous Guidance and Restoration Of a Once Backslidden Christian Made Whole

In Letter Format

By: Cory James McLaughlin

Foreword:

Initially, this letter from a man of integrity and true uprightness before God and men, Cory James McLaughlin, was written to a godly Christian individual. It has been modified in a measure to apply to a general audience for the sake of this post, though it has been preserved in the format of a letter. It was purposely written to testify of his journey to this local church; namely, the Church of Wells, wherein he is happily abiding in the beauty of true holiness; viz. growing in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, charity, love for the brethren, love for the lost, heavenly-mindedness, broken-hearted honesty, and vulnerable transparency of accountability with a local church and those abiding therein, and, above all, ever growing more in love for his holy and beloved Lord Jesus Christ. He further explains in the following letter the depth of his near destructive fall from God's true grace in his formerly backslidden state of compromise and God's blessed recovery from that estate through His people, Spirit, and the chastening hand of his God upon him. As it is written, "*Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins*" (James 5:19-20). Finally, Brother Cory shares of the climactic consummation of many years praying for a biblical church in this land, which has all but forsaken the New Testament standard of Christianity, when he was led to this needy, yet scriptural, lampstand. May the Lord bless the reader thereby and lead you to do His blessed will for your life as this dear man of God is set to do for the rest of his, lest the reader, through disobedience to Jesus Christ, be found naked and without a mediator on the day of God's glory.

For the sake of the Truth,

Ryan Ringnald

Dear Reader, beloved of the Lord,

I pray that this letter finds you well and abiding in the Saviour. I am writing you because I believe, firstly, that the Lord would have me do so. Secondly, because I love you; I care deeply for your soul. I trust that you will read this letter with a willing, hopeful and expectant heart, having ears to hear what the Spirit would say unto you this day my dear friend. I have prayed whether or not to share the following with you and I am persuaded that it is the will of the Lord to do so. "*Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences*" (2 Corinthians 5:11). Truly, beloved, my bowels of compassion in Christ for you are swelling to overflowing

that my heart and burden in the Holy Ghost might be made manifest to you in your mind and heart. In our generation, we are all very much backslidden from the church that was first birthed through the Apostles. We must therefore give diligence when the Lord Jesus shines through this dark and dismal time, giving us light, that we might prove ourselves unto God as an acceptable sacrifice on that day. *“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand”* (Ephesians 6:13).

And so it was with me, my friend, that a little over a year ago now I found myself pressed by the Lord to turn from my present situation. I had just been married to my wife who had just been converted in September, now two years ago. I was seeking God with a fresh zeal upon my heart yet I could not, it seemed, break through to God in the measure I once had. I had a seemingly thriving ministry in which I preached to dozens of hurting, broken, degenerate teenagers. I saw the power of God move in a measure. Yet there was something that I couldn't quite put my finger on that just wasn't what it ought to be. *So if you will so kindly bear with me for a while, I'd like to take you through a bit of how I got here, and how God quite simply saved me from Sodom.* I will be as concise as the Lord will allow.

Let me begin a number of years ago. I have been walking with the Lord for just over eight years now, and for the first five, I found that, for the most part, I was blazing hot on fire for the Lord Jesus Christ. I was doing judgment in the land, seeing revival among youth that I would preach to, seeing signs and wonders, healings and miracles, devils fleeing and the Lord moving with power on the streets of Houston, TX. I was walking in closeness to the Lord, as one intimately acquainted with his Master. However, many things were in the works leading to my ultimate demise. Subtle compromises so clouded and darkened my understanding that I was unable to any longer walk with God as I ought. Now, please don't misunderstand me, I was still more “on fire” than most anyone I knew, yet God knew my compromises, and His word condemned me. As it were, however, I went on unaware of my fallen, blamable condition as one no longer able to receive wisdom from the Lord.

During this time about three years ago, I met a woman who is presently my wife. Over the course of the next year, my dear friend, I would embark on the darkest most painful year of my Christian life. I would compromise in ways I said and thought I never would. I began to be more carefree in my Christianity and began spending foolish careless time with my girlfriend who I intended to marry. Consequently, I would listen to false prophets like Mark Driscoll who would satisfy my itching ears and comfort me in my sin. Again, don't misunderstand me here, the Lord in His mercy did not allow me to fall headlong into deep blatant immorality of the sort that is against the body, but I was still giving way to the lusts of my flesh in many ways. Because of this, all manner of compromise and worldliness crept into my life. Secular entertainment began to find its way back in, and I was quite simply sitting at ease in Zion. There was no longer any fresh revelation from heaven. My love had waxed cold and I was lukewarm in the mouth of my Lord. My weeping was no longer for souls, but from a grief of soul in agony over straying from the living God. I saw my sin but was losing all power to overcome it as God began to draw back His covering from me. It seemed darkness was ever pervading my life and I was stuck forever to depart from the One whom I had loved so deeply before. Even so, there was a glimmer of hope: for, as it is written, *“The steps a good man are ordered by the Lord: And he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand”* (Psalm 37:23-24). And in His divine and unfeigned love for this wretched man, He began to move upon me again and I consecrated a fast unto the Lord, humbling myself that He might help me get out of the shroud of darkness that was swallowing me down to hell, pulling me out of the miry clay, if you will.

I had at this point (about two-and-a-half years ago now) just recently come back in contact with Sean, Jake and Ryan; they had come to visit me down in Houston. I was greatly moved in the Holy Ghost by their presence. By this time, the Lord had stripped me of all my ministries. It seemed that he had altogether hidden His face from me. And so as I fasted and prayed, the Lord, in His mercy, opened up a way of escape to start my own ministry down in a rough part of town south of Houston. I was working with troubled teenagers as a type of youth pastor to an entire community of people and churches. It was then that the Lord began to pour out His Spirit upon me again; my sin was ever before me, and I began to cry out day and night for Him to show back up. Most earnestly I prayed that He would rip my girlfriend and I apart and help me to end our relationship, for I knew by this time that she was indeed unconverted. I confessed to the Lord that I was unable of my own strength to do so in the weakness of my flesh (for I loved her so) unless He interfered in the kindness of His mercy. As it is written, 'God is faithful', and He answered by way of shattering my life and crushing my heart, taking me lower than I have ever been in my life. God did what I asked, and in His lovingkindness He tore us apart, and broke me in pieces. This would ultimately lead to her salvation and essentially to mine too, though I was born again. Not long after this I found myself in Arlington, Texas with my cousins and brothers in the Lord, Sean and Jesse, weeping with them over my present situation. Not so long after that, as I returned to my ministry in Houston, my girlfriend, by His grace, found herself in Arlington as well, seeking the Lord for salvation. She was soon saved and I quickly found repentance before God again. I was able, by His grace, to root out every idol and abomination I could find in my home and heart so much as I could see that it was displeasing to the Lord at that time. As I began to take heed to the command of the Lord to repent, He began to open my eyes again to His word and pour out rain from heaven and fresh Manna upon the ground. As it is written, "*Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you*" (Proverbs 1:23). Not to mention He saved for me a wife. O what a glorious day indeed! I could go on and on about that testimony alone, but perhaps another time would be more fitting.

During this time of being reconciled to God, my heart began to cry within me, again, for the church of God to be established; I had wept for so many years before that God would raise up a church in the land that was after His own heart. Soon enough, I found myself traveling to Arlington to see the brethren up there and to see my soon to be wife, who had moved there to be with the church. God had revealed that we were to be married by many supernatural means. God was certainly changing my heart and preparing me to flee from the wrath to come.

Now, as I began going back and forth between Dallas and Houston, the Spirit was burning within my bones as He revealed to me more and more concerning the state of the so-called church that surrounded me. I pursued Him in the secret place and I began to ask Him, "What if you did bring revival among all these youth to whom I am preaching? What would happen to them?" The answer He gave me was this, "They would all die." As I heard this I asked Him, "Why?" The Lord said unto me, "Because they have no one to lead them, no pastor to shepherd them." He said, "It would be like pouring new wine into old wine skins." The churches are all filled with unsaved or backslidden men who serve not God but rather their own lusts; consequently, they would not in such a state be able to handle a revival of souls. So I began to ask the Lord what I should do and He began to give me a greater measure of grace to preach to many of these fallen heads and wicked men that do corrupt the word of God. Yet, it seemed that after I had seemingly exhausted my efforts to save Sodom, to convert the kingdom of Saul, I found myself unable to do any such thing.

As the Lord would have it, I found myself back in Arlington to meet with Sean and discuss our doctrinal differences. As we met together, the Lord showed up and poured out His love and mercy and removed the scales from mine eyes. His word was made clear again as in the days of old before compromise and vain ambition darkened my counsel. All things, it seemed, were made new again. So, upon my return to Houston, I sought the Lord the very next morning rising early to find Him. The Holy Ghost spoke to me as clearly that morning as He ever has before. He first moved upon my heart to read a devotional I had beside my bed by Charles Spurgeon. I opened up to that morning's reading for Monday, February 7th, and it read as follows: "Arise, and depart." – Micah 2:10 "The hour is approaching when the message will come to us, as it comes to all – 'Arise, and go forth from the home in which thou hast dwelt, from the city in which thou hast done thy business, from thy family, from thy friends. Arise, and take thy last journey.'" As I read these words, they were as a sharp two-edged sword piercing the very depths of my soul. I began to hold all things before me, and ask, "Am I willing? Willing to lay it all down, and depart to serve God in a biblical church? Willing to no longer 'do what seemed right in my own eyes' as in the days of the Judges?" Then, I was moved to actually read the fullness of the scripture from Micah 2:10, which was only partially written at the top of the devotional. It reads, "*Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: Because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction.*" That was all I needed to hear, friend, and the fear of the Lord came upon me and gripped my soul. I was terrified by the Lord that if I continued to dwell in that "land" (corrupting friends, pastors and other influences), surely I would be destroyed, and that with a sore and everlasting destruction, as it is written: "*He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed*" (Prov 13:20). I purposed in my heart to seek God with everything in me concerning what to do next.

As I sought the Lord, He began to open up the scriptures to me like, 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1, Hebrews 3 and 4, and passages like these. They left me no option but to depart from such a place and go to be a part of the Bride of Christ that is being made pure and white as snow, without spot or wrinkle and without rebuke on that day. It became evident to me that sometimes the only hope is to come out from among them. And so, by His grace I did, but it was not with any great ease, nor was it without great sorrow that I made it out. It was only by the hand of the Lord with His mercy upon me. Everyone and everything it seemed was against me. I was leaving a multitude of kids whom I loved dearly and had laid down my life for; I was leaving the comforts of steady pay and a home; I was leaving the city that I had shed so many tears for, and I was leaving my friends and family for whom I would die to see saved. All of these things, it seemed, were at some rate rising up against me. Yea, even those who I counted very dear to me in the ministry began to come against me.

Finally, the devil so came against me in this time just before my departure to Arlington. My wife and I were just married in the end of May and had planned to come back from our honeymoon and move the following week, which is what we did, but not without much travail of my soul. This last week, it seemed, was just enough room for the devil to give one last charge to sway my weak flesh from departing to be with a true church of God; it came from the most unlikely of suspects. Truly, beloved, the only thing I had to cling to through it all was that one word from God, Micah 2:10; if it were not for that word to cleave to with all that in me was, I would not have made it. But, by His grace, I submitted unto God and resisted the devil! Surely, the reward was as sweet as the honeycomb is to the taste. As we arrived into the open arms of our dear brethren, yea, as though into the rest of our dear Saviour and reigning King, I cannot begin to describe the rejoicing of my heart to finally be abiding in the reality of a biblical church: a true church evinced by the Holy Ghost's overwhelming presence, by the conviction of

sin, by the sweetness of true fellowship in the Spirit, and many such like things for which I had wept these past eight years to see. O! to sit under the preaching of God's word, and to be washed by the soothing, cleaning waters of His Spirit. O! to have a covering for my beloved wife, to see her submitting in the fear of God and following me as her head. I can hardly forbear to weep over the sanctifying power of grace upon, not only my soul, but my wife's soul as well. My dear reader, taste and see that the Lord He is good! "*And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*" (Revelation 22:11). I'll end with this, a poem by C.T. Studd by the title of "Only One Life":

*"Two little lines I heard one day, Traveling along life's busy way;
Bringing conviction to my heart, And from my mind would not depart;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last.*

*Only one life, yes only one, Soon will its fleeting hours be done;
Then, in 'that day' my Lord to meet, And stand before His Judgment seat;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last.*

*Only one life, the still small voice, Gently pleads for a better choice
Bidding me selfish aims to leave, And to God's holy will to cleave;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last.*

*Only one life, a few brief years, Each with its burdens, hopes, and fears;
Each with its clays I must fulfill, living for self or in His will;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last.*

*When this bright world would tempt me sore, When Satan would a victory score;
When self would seek to have its way, Then help me Lord with joy to say;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last.*

*Give me Father, a purpose deep, In joy or sorrow Thy word to keep;
Faithful and true what e'er the strife, Pleasing Thee in my daily life;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last.*

*Oh let my love with fervor burn, And from the world now let me turn;
Living for Thee, and Thee alone, Bringing Thee pleasure on Thy throne;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last.*

*Only one life, yes only one, Now let me say, "Thy will be done";
And when at last I'll hear the call, I know I'll say "twas worth it all";
Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last.*

*Only one life, 'twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last.
And when I am dying, how happy I'll be, if the lamp of my life has been burned out for Thee."*

Truly, there is only one life, and as I bring this letter to a close I can't help but rejoice in my heart with thanksgiving. God has been so kind to me these years, so long suffering, given so much grace that I deserve not, and after all that I had done, He brought me here to a place where the milk flows and the honey is sweet. The question is not really, "What is the will of God for you?", my friend, but rather, "Are you willing to go through with Him and to do His will no matter what it costs?" I will be praying, and I know that all of us here at the church of Wells will also be. Surely, it is our desire to see your shining face and to behold the Lord Jesus Christ in you once again. May the Spirit have His will and way in you. To God be the glory, and power, and dominion, forever and ever, amen and amen.

*In hope of His glorious appearing, because of the cross,
Brother Cory*