

## Chapter 2: Believers, We have a Problem!

“Believers, we have a problem!” This play on the phrase from Apollo 13’s mission in 1970 is the best way for me to describe how it is time for believers to have a reality check and take action. There is a spiritual warfare going on that we must acknowledge and take action in regards to our lives. First let me begin by sharing a bit about the Apollo 13 mission. This is the article that is listed on history.com about the mission.

On April 11, 1970, Apollo 13, the third lunar landing mission, was successfully launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida, carrying astronauts James A. Lovell, John L. Swigert, and Fred W. Haise. The spacecraft’s destination was the Fra Mauro highlands of the moon, where the astronauts were to explore the Imbrium Basin and conduct geological experiments. After an oxygen tank exploded on the evening of April 13, however, the new mission objective became to get the Apollo 13 crew home alive.

At 9:00 p.m. EST on April 13, Apollo 13 was just over 200,000 miles from Earth. The crew had just completed a television broadcast and was inspecting Aquarius, the Landing Module (LM). The next day, Apollo 13 was to enter the moon’s orbit, and soon after, Lovell and Haise would become the fifth and sixth men to walk on the moon. At 9:08 p.m., these plans were shattered when an explosion rocked the spacecraft. Oxygen tank No. 2 had blown up, disabling the normal supply of oxygen, electricity, light, and water. Lovell reported to mission control: “Houston, we’ve had a problem here,” and the crew scrambled to find out what had happened. Several minutes later, Lovell looked out of the left-hand window and saw that the spacecraft was venting a gas, which turned out to be the Command Module’s (CM) oxygen. The landing mission was aborted.

As the CM lost pressure, its fuel cells also died, and one hour after the explosion mission control instructed the crew to move to the LM, which had sufficient oxygen, and use it as a lifeboat. The CM was shut down but would have to be brought back on-line for Earth reentry. The LM was designed to ferry astronauts from the orbiting CM to the moon’s surface and back again; its power supply was meant to support two people for 45 hours. If the crew of Apollo 13 were to make it back to Earth alive, the LM would have to support three men for at least 90 hours and successfully navigate more than 200,000 miles of space. The crew and mission control faced a formidable task.

To complete its long journey, the LM needed energy and cooling water. Both were to be conserved at the cost of the crew, who went on one-fifth water rations and would later endure cabin temperatures that hovered a few degrees above freezing. Removal of carbon dioxide was also a problem, because the square lithium hydroxide canisters from the CM were not compatible with the round openings in the LM environmental system. Mission control built an impromptu adapter out of materials known to be onboard, and the crew successfully copied their model.

Navigation was also a major problem. The LM lacked a sophisticated navigational system, and the astronauts and mission control had to work out by hand the changes in propulsion and direction needed to take the spacecraft home. On April 14, Apollo 13 swung around the moon. Swigert and Haise took pictures, and Lovell talked with mission control about the most difficult maneuver, a five-minute engine burn that would give the LM enough speed to return home before its energy ran out. Two hours after rounding the far side of the moon, the crew, using the sun as an alignment point, fired the LM’s small descent engine. The procedure was a success; Apollo 13 was on its way home.

For the next three days, Lovell, Haise, and Swigert huddled in the freezing lunar module. Haise developed a case of the flu. Mission control spent this time frantically trying to develop a procedure that would allow the astronauts to restart the CM for reentry. On April 17, a last-minute navigational correction was made, this time using Earth as an alignment guide. Then the repressurized CM was successfully powered up after its long, cold sleep. The heavily damaged service module was shed, and one hour before re-entry the LM was disengaged from the CM. Just before 1 p.m., the spacecraft reentered Earth's atmosphere. Mission control feared that the CM's heat shields were damaged in the accident, but after four minutes of radio silence Apollo 13's parachutes were spotted, and the astronauts splashed down safely into the Pacific Ocean

Believers who claim to be followers of Christ need a reality check. As we consider the society in which we live and we consider the immersion into that society, it is time for us to get real. We, just like Apollo 13, have a problem. Our oxygen tank has blown up bringing about a lack of what we need to survive. And what is our oxygen? God's Word. In general, God created our bodies to work in a way that we breathe in oxygen and it filtrates through our bodies so when we breathe out we expel all the waste gases in our body producing carbon dioxide. In this same manner, God's Word is provided for us to take it in and allow it to filtrate through our bodies to get rid of the impurities. It will infiltrate our heart and ultimately filter throughout our whole system to purify our hearts. However, we must first take it in.

Now let's address the tank. What has caused our oxygen tank to blow? Us! Or really our neglecting to breathe in His Word and treasure it in our hearts! Now let's clarify - it isn't the oxygen that has blown up but the tank itself. The oxygen - God's Word - is still pure and it will continue to be pure. But the tank which housed the oxygen - the ones that God has entrusted to house the oxygen - has ignored the need for the purifying and thus, we have allowed ourselves to blow up in the sense that the Word of God is being either ignored, ridiculed, or compromised in our own lives. This is where we are and, just like Apollo 13's cry, "Houston, we've had a problem here," we, too, need to realize that we believers have a problem. Because of this problem we have a formidable task at hand.

When I first decided to share the article about Apollo 13 in this section, I was only going to include part of the article. However, when I got to the part that read, "Mission control built an impromptu adapter out of materials known to be onboard, and the crew successfully copied their model." I knew I needed to share the full article. Because it is in the full article that we see the main step that needs to be taken in solving the problem we have on hand. Mission Control - hmmm, can we say that could be an example of God the Father? Let's not think of God as being one that isn't present with us, but let's consider the fact that He IS with us. However, Mission Control only had verbal contact with the ones on board the Apollo 13 ship. God is not only in contact with us but His Presence is always with us. He tells us many times in His Word that He will never leave us nor forsake us. (see Hebrew 13:5 for the New Testament reference). In addition, God has a model that we need to copy if we are going to survive this problem we have and that model is Jesus Christ. We must continue to stay in contact with Him through His Word and fervent prayer if we are to be more Christ-like.

A navigational system had to be worked out for Apollo 13 and it must be worked out for us as well. If you will note, they had to use the sun and the earth for their alignment to be able to make their way successfully back to earth. In this same way, our navigational system is shot because we have either ignored, ridiculed or compromised God's Word in our lives for so long. It is hard for us to judge how to navigate back to God's truth in the society in which we are immersed. Paul addresses the issue about his and our own judgment in 1 Corinthians 4:4-5. He states,

*"<sup>4</sup> My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.*

*<sup>5</sup> Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God."*

We are so off base that we cannot even judge for our own selves the things that are right. We may have a clear conscience about things of this world; but, at the same time, we are totally off base in regards to God's Word. That is why we must align ourselves to the Father and Son, Who bring light into the hidden, dark places of our hearts. This light reveals the motives of our hearts. This darkness can only be revealed if we allow God's Word into our hearts so He can shine truth upon it. Just as they had to align themselves to a source that was stable - sun and earth - we must align ourselves to the One and Only stability we know - God as He is revealed through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The only way we can do this is to stay in communication with Him through His Word and fervent prayer.

### **Obedience is the ONLY way!**

What if the crew on board Apollo 13 received directions from mission control, but ignored, ridiculed or compromised their direction? They would have been lost in space! Their obedience to the commands that were given to them were what brought them back safely. As we cry to God for help, He is answering with a call for obedience. Believer, step up to the plate and realize you must be obedient to overcome!

Psalm 4 expresses explicitly a cry of help that the Lord answers with a call for obedience. This eight verse Psalm will help us see how we must be obedient.

<sup>1</sup> *Answer me when I call to you, my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer.*

<sup>2</sup> *How long will you people turn my glory into shame? How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?*

<sup>3</sup> *Know that the Lord has set apart his faithful servant for himself; the Lord hears when I call to him.*

<sup>4</sup> *Tremble and do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.*

<sup>5</sup> *Offer the sacrifices of the righteous and trust in the Lord.*

<sup>6</sup> *Many, Lord, are asking, "Who will bring us prosperity?" Let the light of your face shine on us.*

<sup>7</sup> *Fill my heart with joy when their grain and new wine abound.*

<sup>8</sup> *In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety.*

Because we have neglected God's Word for so long we have lost our saltiness, or effectiveness, for Christ. When one realizes this, it seems like the Lord is far from them and they don't feel relief from their stress or mercy from the Father. Recall that mercy means we don't receive from the Father what we truly deserve. When we as believers drift down the wrong path, the Holy Spirit will convict us. However, if we continue to ignore the conviction and to sin - even if we don't realize we are sinning - there develops a part where God's mercy isn't recognized and our distress is intensified. I believe this is where God gives us over to feel the impact of our sin. Once He does that we no longer feel His merciful hand. This causes great distress in our lives and God embraces this distress for one reason only - because He is in hopes we will turn from our sin and repent. When we reach a point of calling out to God "Answer me, God. Relieve my distress be merciful." God will answer us. He does so in Psalm 4:2 with a few questions.

*"How long, O men will you turn My glory into shame?"*

*How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?"*

Why does God answer us with these questions? Because He wants us to realize the state we are in when we no longer feel His mercy and relief of stress in our lives. When we turn His glory into shame, we are distorting Who He truly is

as we represent Him to the world. Claiming to be Christians and followers of Christ, we must take on the true identity of Christ. If we continue in our sinful ways and do not strive to overcome them, then we are bringing shame to God's glory. If we live a life of complacency, then we do not examine our actions regularly. This leads to bringing shame to God's glory because we don't strive to be more Christ-like. Claiming to be a Christian and not striving to be more Christ-like brings a bad representation of Christ through our lives. This is the main reason one loses their saltiness.

A love of delusions and seeking of false gods is what the Lord asks for us to consider as another reason we don't feel His presence of mercy in our lives. Is it another reason or is it connected to us bringing shame to His glory? I would say it is connected. Why do we not live a more Christ-like life? Because we love delusions and seek false gods. A delusion is a distinctive belief or impression that is firmly maintained despite being contradicted by what is reality. Oh, does that hit home in our American lives! We are so deep in a sinful mess that we are struggling to bring ourselves back to the standards God laid out as His original plan for our lives. We look through society driven delusional eyes and we do not see any other way to do things but the way of the world. We consider our circumstances through these same delusional eyes instead of the loving eyes of Christ. We let fear of failure, fear of lost,

fear of \_\_\_\_\_ drive us to not trust in the Lord.  
(fill in the blank. Yes, really! Fill in the blank - that is why it is there.)

Let's get real, believers - we like the delusions - no - we love the delusions. They make us feel secure because we are immersed in a society that has brainwashed our security into being of man instead of God!

Yes, believer, we have a problem. But there is hope through our Savior! Let us navigate to Him by letting His Word be our guide.

### Deepening the Walk

God's Word is essential to a Christian's walk. If we want to return to God, then we must see God's Word as being a necessity. Many times throughout Scripture we are told to meditate upon God's Word (eg. Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2). It is meant to be more than head knowledge. God's Word should penetrate our whole being - our mind, our heart, our soul. When it does, our lives will change because our actions of obedience to Him will become priority. Psalm 119 is the longest Psalm and points us to value of the Word of God. Look at what is written in the following verses and write what you notice about how God's Word penetrates our whole being.

(Note: Some believe that Ezra wrote Psalm 119.)

**Read Psalm 119:25-32.**

**Continue Reading Psalm 119: 33-40.** What are some ways God's guidance is requested?

When we are carnal minded we take God's Word and make it fit to the purpose of our lifestyle. However, when it comes to understanding God's Word the Lord has not left us to our own understanding. He sent His Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth. (John 14:17).

**Read John 16:5-14.** What does Jesus teach us about the Holy Spirit?

Sometimes the Holy Spirit leads in a supernatural way. **Read Romans 8:26-27.**

What does it say about the supernatural ways of the Holy Spirit guiding our prayer life?

In addition, we have been gifted with gifts of the Holy Spirit that help us draw closer to His truths and bring others closer to His truths. **Read 1 Corinthians 12:7-11.** What gifts do you see listed in this Scripture? Have you experienced these gifts in your own life or the lives of those around you? How did they lead you into being more Christ-like?

God's Spirit is an everlasting Spirit. **Write Isaiah 59:21** below and reflect upon the longevity of His Spirit:

Reflect personally, have you been allowing the Lord to lead you through His Word as you have been guided by the Holy Spirit? OR have you been applying parts God's Word to your life while ignoring other parts in a way to justify your lifestyle?

We, like the astronauts, have a model to follow. Jesus Christ is God Who came in human form not only to die on the cross for our sins, but to give us the Father's Words (John 17:8) and bear witness to the truth (John 18:37) .Jesus is our model that leads us to the Father. Just like it was essential that the astronauts on Apollo 13 followed the precise model that was given them, we too must be diligent about following Jesus, Who is God's Word that became flesh. (see Deuteronomy 5:32, 17:11; John 1:1). This is essential because God has predestined us to be Christ-like. When we consider God predestining us to be Christ-like (Romans 8:28-29), it puts into perspective that we must study His Word and apply it to our lives. What are the commands God has given to us in the following Scriptures that help us in keeping this perspective.

**Read Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 5:16-17; Ephesians 2:8-10**

### **Reflect Upon God's Desire:**

Through diligently studying and applying God's Word, His desires stand out in our lives. It is shown in how we respond to His Word when we apply it in truth.

**Read Psalm 119:81-96.**

How is this desire of God reflected in this part of the psalm? (e.g. Hope in God's Word (v. 81))

### **Praise, Repent And Yield:**

Lord, I **praise** You for . . .

I **repent** of . . .

I **yield** to You . . .