

# *Al Stahl (1926-2011)*

With Excerpts from His Writings

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*God, indeed, placed in the ecclesia ... teachers (I Corinthians 12:28).*

n October 1<sup>st</sup>, a friend and spiritual mentor of mine, Al Stahl, passed away.

Al was and is responsible for the biggest change in my understanding of the Scriptures. He was the man who showed me, from the Scriptures, how God will reconcile all to Himself.

Al worked part time with us back in the late eighties. He was a man who loved the Scriptures and studied and searched for truth. He and I would talk for hours. He would bring me a book to read that went totally opposite to what I believed at the time.

He would say, “Take it and read it along with your Bible.”

I would read it and lights would start going on, then he would give me another book to read. I won’t say that I agreed with everything that Al believed, and I didn’t agree with everything that I read; but the foundational teachings in them were what started me on a journey into truth that is still being built on.

He would often say, “If you don’t see some of these things to be so, don’t discard them; put them in the back of your mind. The problem with most Christians is that they stay in one camp and believe only what they are told to believe; everything else, they are told, is heresy.”

I remember a story he told me when, I think, he belonged to the Brethren Church. He was starting to see the truths of God reconciling all to Himself and that hell wasn’t in the Scriptures. I’m not

sure of church structure in the Brethren organization, but during the service the Pastor, who heard that there were some who didn't adhere to the Brethren teachings, and were telling others of these new-found truths, asked those who believed these teachings to stand and renounce this teaching, if they didn't they would have to leave. Some sat down, but Al left. He was willing to leave his so-called church family and follow what he believed was truth. That to me spoke volumes about Al.

He told me that once you begin to see these truths, of God reconciling all to Himself, as well as many other truths that totally oppose those traditional teachings taught by the churches, you will find yourself on a very lonely walk when it comes to fellowshiping with Christians.

I asked him if he ever had any regrets. "No, I felt and feel nothing but freedom," he answered.

When I moved to the Okanagan, Al and I would correspond by letter, later by email. His letters to me were sometimes ten or twelve pages long, and filled with teachings out of the Scriptures. Al also had written several articles. I still reread them on occasion; the depth of truth in his writings and letters stand far above what is being taught now in most circles. One of the many truths that Al and I totally agreed on was God's Sovereignty and His Omnipotence.

I'm going to quote a few sections of some of Al's writings. This one is from his article, *They That Have Ears To Hear, Let Them Hear*.

The mystery of iniquity is a total enigma to most, especially its relation to God. Is our beneficent, omnipotent and righteous Father, the Author and Maker of *all things*, also the Author and Maker of iniquity? How does one explain and justify this perplexing puzzle? How can evil be present in the Lord's domain? How can we on the one hand exonerate Him from any responsibility for evil's existence, and yet on the other hand hail Him as absolute Sovereign, totally Omnipotent and Maker of *all things*? The words "Sovereignty" and "Omnipotence" denote absolute power. God cannot be in control 99% and yet be Sovereign, or relinquish any part of universal power and still be considered omnipotent. It is 100% or nothing. Either He is Lord of ALL or He is not Lord at all! "*He would have all men to be saved and come into the knowledge of the truth ...*" [Y]et orthodoxy concedes that, according to their own doctrine, their Devil is siphoning off the majority of mankind and is responsible for their alleged eternal destiny of hellfire and brimstone.

To consider God as having nothing to do with the origin of evil, or to view Him as being totally apart from the mysterious evil incursion, is to see Him as impotent and helpless to prevent or terminate both the cause and the continuing presence of this apparent scourge of both earth and its people. Did evil really come upon the scene against the will and loving and holy character of God? If God is truly sovereign and omnipotent, how could this possibly have happened?

This one is from his article, *That I Might Know Him*.

I have at times been super critical of the "false doctrines" and self-absorbed condition of the church system (Revelation 3:17), but I have come to the conclusion that to criticize the doctrines of the organized church is to flog a dead horse (metaphorically speaking), a colossal waste of time and energy. It is not on God's current agenda! And it certainly is not our job! He will deal with religious man in another age, yet to come.

This one is from one of the questions I asked, many years ago, about seeming contradictions in the four Gospel Accounts.

As often occurs in the bible, a particular event and its explanation, is, on the surface, vague and puzzling, and its content ultimately is more notable for what is NOT said rather than for what IS said ... I suspect the Lord has done this more to actually hide truth than reveal it. If every one of His mysteries were understood by mere logic, or surface reading, or making up material to fill in the blanks, there would be no need for a revelation by the Spirit of God. We could then learn truth by our own efforts and clever ability. However, *truth is not earned or learned* – TRUTH IS REVEALED – in His way, His time, by His prerogative, and not to everyone but just to whom He chooses. That is in itself a mystery, which for now only ... He knows fully ... It's not that these gospel accounts are contradictory, they are just partial narratives, and the fact that something is left out of each gospel treatise makes it look questionable. However, when all are put together, and overlaid, the time segments and factual pieces all fit together nicely to make one complete story.

This one is from his article, *Don't Waste Trouble: Use It!*

Trouble is our servant, not our master-don't pray it away: use it!

The first natural reaction to trouble is to ask God to take it away, immediately. How many desperate, tear stained hours of pleading have been spent before God, blaming the devil for our troubles and quoting Bible verses, holding God to His "promises." Many teeter on the brink of losing their faith when no answer comes and when the trouble seems as virulent as ever. In our humanity we are so impatient, so self-centered and so presumptive. We want immediate results, we want our pain and inconvenience relieved first, and we presume that God is there at our beck and call just because our favorite Bible verses seem to indicate we have a right to expect healing, protection and prosperity, without a lot of anxious waiting ... God has never been in a hurry. With Him a day is a thousand years and a thousand years is a day ... Perhaps it can be said that if the God of all patience is ever in a hurry, it is when He is transforming us into sons during our exceedingly short life span ... If we are one of His (John 17:9-10) we will, sooner or later, know about trouble and failure ... "*Tribulation worketh patience.*" The golden grain of patience, long suffering, and kindness come from this process. The divine alchemy that turns crass and ordinary human nature into mercy, love and wisdom, is the transforming power of the Spirit of God that makes trouble a servant and brings forth the best in us.

This is from his article, *The Way Home*

Knowing Him and knowing about Him are as far removed from each other as the spiritual is from the natural and the flesh from the spirit ... It is in God's great Plan to reconcile the world to Himself. Every human being He has ever created in His Own image will one day make the complete journey back to the Father's house as an "*heir of God, joint heir with Christ*" (Romans 8:17). NO ONE will end up in the fictional, man-made place called "hell" (translation fiasco), with all of its sadistic possibilities that are used by Orthodoxy to threaten and intimidate sincere Christians; it was never in the mind of God (Jeremiah 19:5), and it has absolutely no place in the Plan of God.

This is from his three-part article; *The Mystery of Love*. Al was the first person (believer) I had read who dealt with the subject of God's unconditional love, a love for all people [regardless] of their present spiritual, religious or moral condition.

I suspect that most of us, at best, practice selective love, not unconditional love. We love those who are "normal," without stigma, socially acceptable, sober, professing Christians (we liberally allow a little latitude here), without embarrassing or loathsome tendencies toward sin, crime and social aberration. ... What about the rest of God's creation? Do we have scriptural sanction to despise and to turn our backs totally on, for instance, those of the homosexual lifestyle?

Now, before I go any further along this vein, I want to state that I am fully aware that by referring to the subject of homosexuality I am putting myself out there as a target for "homophobia." So be it. I would like to think that God's chosen, called, elect, Spirit-enlightened people are wiser than that.

Orthodox, fundamentalist religion has long preached vehemently against homosexuality ... and that their ultimate destination is hell ... I know they say they only hate the sinner's sin and love the sinner, but why do "they" (the sinner) have to go to hell forever? Why not just their sin (if that's all we hate)? Confusing, isn't it?

Nowhere is there justification in the Scriptures for making enemies of those sins "we" consider vile and evil. Our real enemy is the sin and evil. People, no matter who they are, are all the same in God's eyes, and He sees them from the view of ultimate reconciliation and restoration: part of God's family.

Divine love is our surety, backed by the omnipotent, sovereign, everlasting God ... Not one of His human creation, from the moment He said, "*Let us make man in our image*," will ever need fear that he can't find his way home ... All of the differences we find so detestable and questionable in humanity (such as homosexuality) are of God. Yes, they are! But they are only passing ... Will the homosexual who believes in God (and there are lots of them that profess a faith in Christ), even as he struggles with his abnormality and the estrangement from family and friends in his loneliness, also receive his reward and praise from God and an explanation as to why the Lord chose him to take that route through the classroom of life? All things are of God. God has a reason and a purpose for all things. We only see the obvious ... Man's mind simply cannot discern the spiritual truth of the sovereignty of God, and therefore he feebly attempts to explain the Scriptures through human reasoning and the logic of natural thinking and in this process vainly creates and shapes his own doctrines and "*makes God in his own image*."

The work of the cross is a finished work for all, for all time. Therefore all will have access to the Father's house, but "*every man in his own order*" (I Corinthians 15:23), in his own time, in God's way, according to the Plan of the Ages. When all is said and done, He will do it His way, through The Way (Christ Jesus).

This is from Al's first article, *The Still Small Voice*.

For years I lived under the stifling and suffocating thought that God was austere, far off, to be

feared; and to converse with Him, and His Son, intimately as friend to friend, was unthinkable, irreverent and sacrilegious. This religious assumed piety did nothing but establish a “safe” distance from God (Exodus 20:19) and destroyed any intimate relationship I could ever have had with Him. The more we hear the still, small voice, the more we grow, and the more we grow the more we hear His voice; it is a compounding principle. Eventually it becomes a two-way conversation; I talk to the Lord and fully expect to hear Him answer, in His Own way and time. He’s not out there somewhere in deep space, He’s at home in His temple, my body, as near to me as my thoughts. We carry on a running conversation like good friends should and do, without religious formality and liturgical protocol.

This is from Al’s last article, *But for a Moment*.

The suffering of the saints has long been a mystery and the Lord’s people have been given varying reasons by their well-meaning teachers, many of whom have been blind leaders of the blind. “Why do the righteous suffer?” has been an enigma that has stumbled many a Christian. The naïve and childish teaching that the Christian life should be without problems, and that all Christians have been promised the best of all good things that the world affords, has been a poison and a stumbling block put out there by the televangelists of the visible church system as they troll for “prayer partners and tithers” to help them build their little kingdoms. The truth is, *“In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33). ... [W]e will need to overcome the world likewise, and “work out our salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13).

May we, by the power of His Spirit, be led to see beyond the veil, and beyond our light afflictions which are but for a moment, and understand our divine connection with Christ, and identify ourselves with His sufferings, His death, His burial, HIS RESURRECTION. We now stand in His resurrection, as children of the resurrection. Everything we were in Adam, and had in Adam, died with Him, was buried with Him, and remained in the grave, and we now walk with Him in newness of life, His risen Life. May God by His spirit give us spiritual sight.

Al often ended his letters to me with, “Keep digging and mining brother.”

He would also say, “Don’t take anything for granted and don’t take anybody’s word for it; keep searching to see if these things are really so. Remember, Truth doesn’t come from man, and it isn’t learned, IT’S REVEALED!”

I emailed his son to give my condolences. At the end of the email I included this portion of scripture,

*I believe, wherefore I speak also, we also are believing, wherefore we are speaking also, being aware that He Who rouses the Lord Jesus will be rousing us also, through Jesus, and will be presenting us together with you. ... And He will be brushing away every tear from their eyes. And death will be no more, nor mourning, nor clamor, nor misery; they will be no more, for these former things are passed away. ... So that, console one another with these words.*

I may have never believed these words to their fullest if it wasn't for God bringing Al into my life.

E.W. Bullinger wrote,

Very few care to be thought peculiar ... But this is the very reason why the mists of tradition have been allowed to take the place of independent research. Tradition is like the leash which prevents an animal from getting a blade of grass beyond the length of that leash. We thankfully acknowledge that there are a few who have been delivered from that bondage, and have given us the results of their labors ... We claim only one thing: an earnest desire to believe God and to receive what He has said, regardless alike of the praise of man or the fear of man; and quite apart from all traditional beliefs or interpretations.

Al was one of the few.

The ultimate message of the Scriptures is not, "How to stay out of the clutches of the devil long enough so we can avoid hell and make it to heaven"; but rather, the grand message and theme in the Scriptures is "The Absolute Sovereignty, Mercy and Love of God," and the ultimate perfection, purification and restoration of His entire human family – everyone He has ever created from the time He said "Let Us make man in Our image," to the day when God is All and in all, and we truly are heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ. [Then] when we all return home, the sons of God will once again shout for joy (Job 38:7). — *Al Stahl*

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