

The Rise, Fall, Recovery of People of Destiny/Sovereign Grace Ministry, Part 3

This is the third part of an article covering the nearly 50-year history of a ministry that impacted hundreds of thousands, but then sadly veered off the “straight and narrow.” If you missed Parts 1 & 2 it’s essential reading to familiarize yourself with how things got started and three lessons we learn before continuing the never before published story.

God’s Redemption

Celebrating God’s faithfulness in 49 years of marriage, we look back and honor Him being trustworthy in every season. Starting over was painful but He guided and provided. One example was when an apostolic leader from England sent \$2,000 a month for a year stating, “This is what covenant is all about!”

God plunged us into the life-changing Brownsville Revival (five million came and hundreds of thousands were converted!) letting me teach 1,100 students (two of my children!) for five-years plus enabled me to write 10 books from my experiences in decades of ministry.

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The adventure unfolded as God had me plant a church in the Atlanta area that my son leads today. He later gave me the assignment I fulfill today of a cultural commentator doing weekly videos and articles from a Biblically informed perspective on today’s “hot button” issues ().

I've been privileged to serve as a public policy advisor for Liberty Counsel and be on the board of Intercessors for America national prayer ministry (established by Derek Prince) for almost 50 years. Last year God brought 2 billion online viewings, 80 million engagements and 100 million emails to our site. People want to pray!

Hidden Hand of God

It's been said, "The wheels of justice grind slowly, but surely." I found this true after I'd departed and prayed during the decade for God's intervention.

For over a decade I tried repeatedly to come together with my friend a second time after he'd abruptly ended an initial meeting in which I tried to "plead my case." I played part of a legal tape-recording exposing what the leaders had done but he was not interested. Then one day I was stunned when he requested to meet! He immediately took three trips to humbly ask forgiveness of me, my wife and family! God's dealings resulted in a redemptive and God-glorifying time of reconciliation. What prompted this event?

I became aware of "shakings" in the flagship church, including lawsuits, with attendance allegedly falling from 3,000 to 500 and pastoral staff from 20 to five. Additionally, infighting among the apostolic team basically caused its collapse (one former leader recently publicly confessed very serious sin). The church network saw 30 churches depart, including the largest ones and eventually even the flagship one. Revenue dropped 46% with ministry assets falling from \$6.2 to \$2.8 million.

Character issues were raised about my yokefellow friend so he

resigned his positions in the church (2004), the network of churches (2013) and “Together for the Gospel” coalition (2014). Later one of the most influential leaders in the Southern Baptist denomination came out publicly saying he was severing personal ties with him and erred in supporting him as a local publication did a cover story on the tragic story of what happened.

Over the years, three of the leaders called me (one in tears) and asked forgiveness for their sins, especially abuse of spiritual authority.

It took 13 years. I was amazed as I saw the period of time between Joseph’s betrayal by his brothers and their reconciliation – exactly 13 years! “What they intended for evil, God intended for good” (Gen. 50:20).

Lesson #3: Persevere with your God-given vision but recalibrate along the way.

A spokesman for Gateway Church stated they’ve repented for what he called “The defining problem in the Church today – moving from God’s focus on relational” to numerical/financial (even doctrinal) emphasis in measuring the health of a church. “We drifted away, paid a price but are in reset to be family doing life together as God intends.”

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Here’s the deal: Confessing our sins and calling out to God for His mercy can result in a comeback. If we can stand the pull, He can pull us through! “Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning” (Ps. 30:5).

From that initial group of friends who gathered 50+ years ago, here’s good news and “fruit that remains” that honors God and has the current leader filled with hope that they’ll not just

“survive” (as he feared) but succeed as indicated by his recent report:

- Churches & ministries now in 47 countries
- 95 “Partner” churches in Africa, Latin America, Asia, Canada and the Caribbean
- 40 churches in “adoption” process
- Plans to plant 15 churches in coming years
- Pastors College equipping leaders to serve gospel centered churches

Finally, I’m happy to share that my gifted yokefellow leads a vibrant church he planted with his family and long-time friends in Kentucky! I still enjoy his sermons and keep his original plaque here on my study wall.

“This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes!” (Ps. 118:23).

It’s been said: “Those who fail to learn the lessons of history are bound to repeat them” (George Santayana). May we all go forward humbly expressing gratitude to God for His ongoing guidance and mercy, enjoying His sovereign grace as a people of destiny proclaiming Jesus, the gospel and truth for God’s glory.

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