

March 2024 Report from Gary Henry

Dear brethren,

As I write, it is February 29 — the “extra” day we get every four years. I hope that 2024 has been good for you so far.

Week after next, I will be in Greenwood, Indiana (March 10-15), and then on Sunday, March 17, I will be with the 25th Street congregation in Columbus, Indiana. If you live near either of these locations, I would love to see you. Given the physical challenges that make it difficult for me to do this kind of work, I would appreciate it if you would pray for me to be able to do what these two churches have asked me to come and do. It has become harder with each year that passes, so when I return from this trip, I am planning to pray about it fervently and decide whether I should even attempt to accept invitations to speak for more than a Sunday, or perhaps a weekend. I hope that I can tell you in my May report what decision I have made.

As many of you know, in addition to the physical limitations that have hindered me, I have also been limited by a mental/emotional depression that has grown much worse over the last few years. Early this year, I began receiving treatments in a fairly new therapy called TMS (transcranial magnetic stimulation). Developed primarily in Israel, this technology requires the patient to receive 35 treatments (once a day, Monday-Friday, for seven weeks). At each session, the patient is fitted with a “helmet” that sends short bursts of magnetic impulses into the frontal lobe of the brain. The bursts last for just a few seconds, followed by 20 seconds of rest, and this pattern repeats for a total of 20 minutes. The idea is to stimulate the part of the brain that handles our emotions, and wake it up from the dormancy that is involved in severe depression.

Since its innovation, TMS has been remarkably successful in helping many patients. Since no two patients are the same, however, I was cautioned not to have high expectations but simply to cooperate with the process and see what the result might be. Unfortunately, about half-way through the seven weeks, I came down with covid-19 and was very sick. Before the covid hit me, I had had 10 consecutive days with no depression at all and was becoming optimistic. As I began to recover from covid, however, it became obvious that I was back to square one with my depression, and since then we’ve been trying to get back to where I was. The doctor decided to add 5 more treatments to the plan, and the process is scheduled to be completed a week from today.

I awoke from sleep in the wee hours this morning and spent several hours praying about my depression. I am having some good days right now, but I had become discouraged that *every* day is not good. I don’t know how things will stand this time next week, but I crossed an important bridge in the pre-dawn hours this morning: *it would, I believe, be unrealistic to expect every day to provide an emotional high. That is just not how our emotions work. Our feelings were meant to ebb and flow, like nearly everything else that our Father has created. So if the “uneven” situation I have right now is all I will ever have in this life, I am content and grateful. In Christ, what we are promised right now is help in dealing with the difficulties, not the complete removal of them.* To emphasize that point, I’m attaching to this report a piece I recently wrote for the new book, *Walking in Christ*. I hope you’ll read it . . . and ponder it.

Please remember me when you pray, and know that I love every one of you who help me so graciously.

Brotherly,



Writing Goals . . . pray with me that I will be given the ability to finish these works

- *Walking in Christ* — Book 6 in the WordPoints Daybook Series. *Target: November 2025.*
- *Going Home* — Book 7 in the WordPoints Daybook Series. *Target: November 2028.*
- *Seeking God in the Psalms* — a 52-lesson study — theme for each week, studies for Monday-Friday.
- *Ecclesiastes* — a full-scale commentary on the text of Ecclesiastes.
- *Encountering Christ* — what the Scriptures teach about Jesus Christ . . . and why we should believe it.

Strength for the Journey

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

John 16:33

JESUS KNEW THAT HIS APOSTLES WOULD FACE GREAT HARDSHIP AS HIS AMBASSADORS TO THE WORLD. On the night before His humiliation and death, He wanted to encourage them: “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace.” The peace Jesus offered, however, was not exactly what they might have wished. It would not come from the *removal* of their hardships, but from the strength to go *through* them. And He did not even say He would give *them* the strength; He simply said they should rejoice knowing of *His* strength: “In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” While you and I are not apostles, I believe the Lord would say the same thing to us. Whatever may trouble us, our joy should come from knowing that He has overcome the *source* of that trouble and will one day crush the enemy completely (1 Corinthians 15:24-26; Revelation 21:4).

There is, of course, no better example of this mindset than Jesus Himself. As He prayed in Gethsemane, He prayed that He might not have to suffer the death of the cross, but His greater desire was that His Father’s will would be done (Mark 14:35,36). Similarly, Paul prayed that his “thorn in the flesh” might be removed, but God’s answer was, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul’s response was admirable: “Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

From the Lord’s example, and also Paul’s, we learn that our Father wants us to ask Him honestly for what we desire. But if He answers in terms of “endurance” more than “deliverance,” we can accept His wisdom gratefully, knowing “there’s a great day coming by and by” when our enemy will be overthrown and imprisoned forever, never again to afflict God’s people. ***Let us, then, adjust our prayer life.*** May we pray less for “all these things” and more for “the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33).

The purpose of Christianity is not to avoid difficulty, but to produce a character adequate to meet it when it comes. It does not make life easy; rather it tries to make us great enough for life.

JAMES L. CHRISTENSEN

Writing Goals . . . pray with me that I will be given the ability to finish these works

- ***Walking in Christ*** — Book 6 in the WordPoints Daybook Series. *Target: November 2025.*
- ***Going Home*** — Book 7 in the WordPoints Daybook Series. *Target: November 2028.*
- ***Seeking God in the Psalms*** — a 52-lesson study — theme for each week, studies for Monday-Friday.
- ***Ecclesiastes*** — a full-scale commentary on the text of Ecclesiastes.
- ***Encountering Christ*** — what the Scriptures teach about Jesus Christ . . . and why we should believe it.