



“Quo Vadis”

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Preface

In February of 1997, shortly before we returned to the United States after 13 years of living in South Africa and traveling the country many times over as an itinerant ministry, the Holy Spirit impressed upon me the following words: “Quo Vadis”.

I was familiar with the Latin words as being the title of Henryk Sienkiewicz’s novel (1896), which was later made into a film (1951).¹ But even though I had studied Latin for four years in high school, I actually did not know the translation to English. In my mind I thought of another Latin phrase – “Status Quo”, meaning “the existing state of affairs”. I didn’t know what the word “Vadis” meant, but I wrongly thought it might mean “power” or “the powers that be”. While that is NOT the meaning of “Quo Vadis”, that IS part of what the Holy Spirit wanted to discuss with me. (I’ll get to the meaning of “Quo Vadis” later in this message.) Upon leaving the lifestyle of a foreign missionary living by faith in a foreign country for 13 years, the Holy Spirit wanted to speak to me about THE POWER OF THE THINGS WHICH KEEP US PUT WHEN THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS WANTING TO MOVE US ON.

¹ In Sienkiewicz’s story, the apostle Peter asks the risen Lord “Quo Vadis?”. In my story, the Lord asks me “Quo Vadis?”.

“Quo Vadis”

Introduction

While spiritual change and growth is essentially inward, they cannot really be separated from outward circumstances, for God uses outward circumstances to affect spiritual change and growth.

A good example of this can be found in Deuteronomy 8:1-7a²:

1“All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to give to your forefathers. 2“You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. 3“He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. 4“Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. 5“Thus you are to know in your heart that the LORD your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son. 6“Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. 7“For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land....”

² All scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible*, unless otherwise noted.

To instruct His people that they are to *“live by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord”*, God affected a change which touched the outward circumstances of their lives – a 40-year wilderness journey, in which God humbled and tested them regarding the provision of their daily food and clothing - that is, “the everyday affairs and cares of this life” . Jesus mentioned these “affairs and cares” in His *Parable of the Sower*.¹⁸ *“And others are the ones sown with seed among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word,¹⁹ but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desires for other things enter and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”*³ And Paul referred to these “affairs and cares” in his epistle to Timothy:
⁴*“No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him.”*⁴ “The everyday affairs and cares of this life” are “the powers that be” - THE THINGS WHICH KEEP US PUT WHEN THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS WANTING TO MOVE US ON.

³ Mark 4:18-19; Cf. Matthew 13:22; Luke 8:14

⁴ 2 Timothy 2:4

“I will show you my faith”

Authentic spiritual change and growth is tested, proven, and demonstrated in the outward circumstances of our lives. Does it even sound plausible that we can surrender to the lordship of the Almighty One who created and governs the universe – the Lord of all lords and King of all kings - and there be no visible change in our outward lives?

When Jesus called His disciples to follow Him, *“they left their boats and nets and followed Him”*.⁵ A little later in their walk with the Lord, these same disciples *“left everything”* to continue following Jesus.⁶ What was it that enabled them to break through “the powers that be” and overcome **“the everyday affairs and cares of this life”**? FAITH. *“This is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith.”*⁷ And as James said – *“I will show you my faith by my works”*⁸ - that faith was demonstrated visibly, in their outward lives – not only by what they believed, not only by what they professed, but what they actually did with their lives.

⁵ Matthew 4:18-22

⁶ Luke 5:11

⁷ 1 John 5:4

⁸ James 2:17-18, 22

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Overcoming

the Power of the “Status Quo”

It takes THAT kind of faith and works to overcome the “Status Quo” - THE THINGS WHICH KEEP US PUT WHEN THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS WANTING TO MOVE US ON.

*“Without (this kind of) faith, it is impossible to please God.”⁹ As the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews said of the Israelites: “the word of hearing did not profit them, because it was not united by (this kind of) faith in those who heard.”¹⁰ Too many of us do not have this kind of faith and therefore do not obey and enter into the “newness of life”¹¹ which God has prepared for us.¹² In fact, *without this kind of faith we are insensitive and unaware when the Spirit of God is wanting to move us on.**

13 “Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. 14 In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: ‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. 15 For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. otherwise, they

⁹ Hebrews 11:6

¹⁰ Hebrews 4:2

¹¹ Romans 6:4

¹² Cf. Hebrews 43-13

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might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn, and I would heal them.”¹³

This is a people who are content with the “Status Quo” and assume that God is also content with the “Status Quo”.

¹³ Isaiah 6:9-10; Matthew 13:13-15; Cf. Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10

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“Quo Vadis”?

So then, what does “Quo Vadis” actually mean? It is a question – a question which the Holy Spirit asked me personally. “Quo Vadis?” is Latin for: “Where are you going?”¹⁴ This was the context in our lives: After 13 years of living and traveling in ministry in South Africa,¹⁵ I believed we were to return to the States; and the Holy Spirit was asking: “So, where do you think you are going?” He wasn’t insinuating it was wrong to leave South Africa – in fact, I believe I was at least 2 years late in obeying the Lord’s direction to leave – our time of living and traveling around South Africa was over.¹⁶ No, leaving South Africa was more like *“forsaking of all”*¹⁷ we had known for 13 years – The Beloved Country¹⁸, the precious people,¹⁹ the ministry (occupation), our “home away from home” (the only “home” our children knew) – our whole life as we had come to know it. We were leaving for what? We truly did not know where or what we were going to in

¹⁴ Or: “Where are you marching?”

¹⁵ And also, to a lesser degree in Brazil and the USA.

¹⁶ Via the Internet, I have continued to minister to South Africans for the past 25 years. We did an in-person 5-week tour visiting friends and fellowships all over South Africa in 2015.

¹⁷ Matthew 19:27

¹⁸ Cf. Alan Paton’s novel, “Cry, The Beloved Country”

¹⁹ I cannot put into words the continuing heart connection we have with the people and the country of South Africa.

the States. The fact is, after 13 years, we really did not have “a life” to “go back to”. We would be starting over.²⁰

Looking in the scripture for guidance, I studied Abraham’s physical journey from Haran to Canaan²¹; but in the spirit, I was actually living out Elijah’s journey from being burnt-out under a broom tree in the wilderness outside of Horeb to the Desert of Damascus to anoint Hazel, Jehu, and Elisha.²²

Sharing what was involved in our leaving might serve as *an example* of the struggle with THE POWER OF THE THINGS WHICH KEEP US PUT WHEN THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS WANTING TO MOVE US ON. Our decision to leave South Africa was actually multi-faceted:

- We had concerns about the future for the two children we adopted in South Africa.²³
- I was physically burned out from 13 years of a traveling ministry.

²⁰ I was 51-years-old. My wife, Frances, was 57.

²¹ Genesis 12-25

²² 1 Kings 19

²³ When “affirmative action” started in South Africa in the mid-90s to this day, amidst a wave of emigration of White professionals, White young people also had to begin looking outside of South Africa for education, employment, and careers, eventually “making a life for themselves” in other English-speaking countries like England, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada.

- To my shame, I had allowed the Adversary to plant seeds of doubt in my heart and mind about our Father’s faithful provision. For 13 years, living only on offerings given by those we ministered to, we never had one day without a roof over our head or food on our table. But I could not stop thinking: “When I get too old to travel all over South Africa in my car “watering” house churches and receiving offerings, what will we then live on?” (Our visas were as religious workers – we were not allowed to take secular employment.)
- Yet, I knew without a doubt in my heart and mind that I would not have a traveling ministry in the States, nor would we be “financially supported” in any full-time work of ministry back in the States.²⁴ I knew I would have to find some type of “regular job” at the age of 51.

In a word, I became concerned about “the everyday affairs and cares of this life”. So, the Spirit was asking me: “Now that you are going back to the States, where do you think you are going? Do you think your concern over “the everyday affairs and cares of this life” will somehow disappear in the States?”

²⁴ As a traveling ministry, we did not have financial support from a mission organization, or a “home church”.

Long story, short: Before our financial “retirement”, when we began to live on our U.S. Social Security benefits, for most of our 18 years back in the States both Frances and I worked “secular” employment to support our household. Yet, we did and continue to do the “work of ministry” without regular financial support. My point is this: “the everyday affairs and cares of this life” never goes away for any of us. We must learn to overcome THE POWER OF THE THINGS WHICH KEEP US PUT WHEN THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS WANTING TO MOVE US ON.

But “move on” we did: While our ministry in South Africa was significant and fruitful, and a most memorable season in our lives, our ministry in the States – though very, very different – is just as significant and fruitful, as well as more widespread. I do not want to give the impression that I did not struggle with the transition. Nothing would be further from the truth. I struggled. And I cannot here fully discuss how the Lord used the many struggles for my spiritual growth and formation.

But all this was insinuated in the Holy Spirit’s question to me: “Quo Vadis?” The Lord is a Master of asking questions which cause us to search our hearts: I’ve made mention of Elijah: While

in a cave outside of Horeb, in “a still, small voice” the Holy Spirit asked him: *“What are you doing here?”*²⁵ After His resurrection, appearing to His apostles, Jesus asked Peter a related question: *“Do you love Me?”*²⁶ And then there is the question: **“Quo Vadis?”** – **“Where do you think you are going? To a place where you will no longer need faith to overcome ‘the everyday affairs and cares of this life’?”**

²⁵ 1 Kings 19:9 & 13

²⁶ John 21:15-17

“Quo Vadis”

The Status Quo

As I previously mentioned, the Latin phrase, “Status Quo”, means “The existing state of affairs”. We could say “business as usual”, or “our comfort zone”.

Before she married, my wife, Frances, had worked very hard for many years building a strong clientele in her profession as a hair stylist, purchasing vehicles, homes, pets, and adopting a child as a single parent. Just prior to proposing marriage, I asked her: “What do you want in life?” Her answer was something to this effect: “A husband, children, my home, my pets, sufficient income for certain possessions and a secure, pleasant life.” I then said: “What if it doesn’t turn out quite that way?” She said: “Why are you asking?” My response was: “I am called to serve the Lord in the work of ministry, and I don’t know what that will be like financially.” She accepted my proposal, nonetheless. We married. We had two adopted children – preteens. Frances was making a very good income in her profession. However, my profession as a musician, even supplemented by a variety of part-time jobs, afforded me a not-so-stellar income. After about two years into our marriage, as the “head of the household”, I believed the Lord

directed me to tell Frances to stop working and be at home for our teenagers. We were to trust the Lord to enable us to live solely on my income. This idea was lacking common sense; and Frances' response was to tell me that my idea lacked common sense. However, she agreed to cut the number of days she worked. After a while she was just working Fridays and Saturdays. Ultimately, she stopped working altogether. During that time, we were also given the idea to turn off our natural gas-fueled furnace. We salvaged wood from various places and burned it in our fireplace. We supplemented that with a single paraffin oil heater, on the top of which Frances would cook our meals. At the time we thought we were exercising ourselves to be able to live in the "end times". But, in fact, the Lord was preparing our hearts for "living by faith" in a foreign country. As it was, we moved into our first apartment in South Africa with no furniture, no heaters, a hot plate for cooking and for heating water to bathe in. (After not so long, the Lord provided through a local businessman a whole household of furniture, an electric heater, and an on-demand gas water heater for the bathtub.)

But getting back to Frances progressively being “weaned” from her income: During this season, the Holy Spirit spoke to her through two passages of scripture...

⁹*“My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, he stands behind our wall; He is looking through the windows, gazing through the lattice.*
¹⁰*My beloved spoke, and said to me: ‘Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.”* (Song of Solomon 2:9-10 NKJV)

The Lord was on the other side of the wall which encircled our lives. He was looking in and saying: *“Rise up. Come away, and come run with Me.”*

²*“I sleep, but my heart is awake; it is the voice of my beloved! He knocks, saying, ‘Open for me, my sister, ¹my love, my dove, my perfect one; for my head is covered with dew, my locks with the drops of the night.’ ³I have taken off my robe; how can I put it on again? I have washed my feet; how can I defile them? ⁴My beloved put his hand by the latch of the door, and my heart yearned for him. ⁵I arose to open for my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the lock. ⁶I opened for my beloved, but my beloved had turned away and was gone. My heart leaped up when he spoke. I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.”* (Song of Solomon 5:2-6 NKJV)

Through this passage, Frances understood that the Lord was calling – inviting - her (us) into His kingdom life. We could remain in our “comfort zone” – the “Status Quo” - but He would be moving on with His kingdom plans and purposes with or without us.

Through His word and His Spirit, the Lord did a sovereign and wonderful work in my wife’s heart and life. I can say that she has always had much more faith and rest than myself when it came to the Lord’s material and financial provision in our life.

Of course, these passages from the Song of Solomon are also types of Christ and His Bride, the Church.²⁷ We are to be a people who submissively and eagerly follow our Lord as He moves on in His kingdom plans and purposes.

²⁷ Cf. Ephesians 5:25-27 & 32; Revelation 19:7, 21:2 & 9

Little Children

“Truly I say to you, unless you change and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 18:3

I have often reflected on what little children are like. Carefree and trusting, they are not worrying about **“the everyday affairs and cares of this life”** – they just assume their parents have it covered. Little children also like to *“be about their Father’s business”*²⁸ – the Greek is literally: *“to be about the things of My Father”*.²⁹ And, little children are **a growing people and a going people**. When they go for a walk with their parents, they usually don’t even ask where they are going – they are just happy to be with their parents and walk assuredly along with wide-eyed wonder and excitement about everything they’re seeing along the way. When we “let go” of our lives, and “let God” have His way with our lives, *“He is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly more than all that we dare ask or think [infinitely beyond our greatest prayers, hopes, or dreams], according to His power that is at work within us.”*³⁰

²⁸ Luke 2:49 NKJV

²⁹ Luke 2:49 Apostolic Bible Polyglot

³⁰ Ephesians 3:20 AMP

“Quo Vadis”

From Faith to Faith & From Glory to Glory

“Quo Vadis?” – “Where are you going?” As our Lord, He has a right to ask us that. If we were to ask Him that same question, His answer would always be: *“From glory to glory.”*³¹ God is always moving on in His kingdom plans and purposes. He never moves backward. And for those who love Him, He never stops moving in our lives for His glory.³² **But to continue moving on with God “from glory to glory” requires our living “from faith to faith”.**³³

17 “The good news shows God’s power to make people right with himself. God’s power to be made right with him is given to the person who has faith. It happens by faith from beginning to end. It is written³⁴, “The one who is right with God will live by faith.” Romans 1:17³⁵

It takes an act of faith to begin walking in *“newness of life”*;³⁶ and it will take continuous acts of faith to continue walking in *“newness of life”* – namely, to OVERCOME THE POWER OF THE THINGS WHICH KEEP US PUT WHEN THE SPIRIT OF

³¹ 2 Corinthians 3:18

³² Cf. 1 Corinthians 2:9

³³ Romans 1:17

³⁴ Cf. Habakkuk 2:4

³⁵ *New International Readers Version*

³⁶ Romans 6:4

“Quo Vadis”

GOD IS WANTING TO MOVE US ON. Be advised: This kind of “living by faith” makes us “*strangers and pilgrims on the earth*”.³⁷ But “*blessed is the man whose heart is set on pilgrimage.*”³⁸

⁵ *Blessed is the man whose strength is in You,
Whose heart is set on pilgrimage.*

⁶ *As they pass through the Valley of Baca,
They make it a spring;
The rain also covers it with pools.*

⁷ *They go from strength to strength;
Each one appears before God in Zion.*

⁸ *O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer;
Give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah*

⁹ *O God, behold our shield,
And look upon the face of Your anointed.*

¹⁰ *For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.*

¹¹ *For the Lord God is a sun and shield;
The Lord will give grace and glory;
No good thing will He withhold
From those who walk uprightly.*

¹² *O Lord of hosts,
Blessed is the man who trusts in You!*

Psalm 84:5-12

³⁷ Hebrews 11:13-16

³⁸ Psalm 84:5b NKJV

Bill & Frances Furioso
~ At Christ's Table ~



Bill and Frances have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Being an avid student by nature, Bill has done formal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology. Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years helping to establish churches and train church leaders. Their Bible teaching ministry has taken them throughout the United States, as well as to other countries like Brazil, England, and Zimbabwe. They have pastored several churches, and as an itinerant Bible teacher, Bill has ministered in hundreds of churches on four continents. As a writer, he has authored many publications which are distributed to church leaders worldwide. Bill and Frances have ministered together speaking in churches, leading spiritual formation seminars, personal mentoring, and administrating an international partnership of church leaders. Because of Bill's disabilities resulting from a spinal cord injury, their ministries of writing, recording, distributing, mentoring, and correspondence are now primarily via the Internet... www.AtChristsTable.org

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“... explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.” 1 Corinthians 2:13

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