The Law of Inertia

By Dennis Pollock

As we read through the Bible and contrast the old and new covenants we notice a number of parallels between physical and spiritual realities. Israelites were marked by circumcision in the flesh, but Christians today are to be characterized by transformed hearts. Abundance of rain and healthy crop harvests were the result of prayer and obedience under the old covenant, but under the new covenant the rain that is emphasized is the outpoured Holy Spirit in response to the prayers and faith of God's people. Israel fought against very tangible enemies such as the Philistines and the Canaanites with swords and spears, but today our fight is with "principalities and powers" using the weapons of faith, prayer, the name of Jesus, and the word of God.

In this brief teaching I would like us to consider the law of inertia as it applies first in the natural, and then in the spiritual realm. In the physical, the law of inertia essentially says that objects that are at rest will resist efforts to set them in motion. To be inert means to be still, to lack the ability or strength to move. A boulder resting on flat ground is inert; it isn't moving and will not easily start moving. A corollary of the law of inertia is that it takes far more energy to set an object in motion than it does to keep it in motion once it has started to move.

This is the reason our car transmissions have different gears. It takes far more energy (and thus gasoline) to get a car moving from a dead stop, than it does to keep it moving once it is rolling along smoothly. This is why gas mileage is always better for highway driving than it is for stop and go city driving. And this is why first gear always provides the greatest amount of power but the least amount of speed. From a dead stop power is needed; once the vehicle is moving along it takes far less energy to keep things going, and therefore fourth gear is going to provide much more speed and much less power than first gear. Fourth gear works great at sixty but wouldn't do much for you at all when the car is stopped at a light.

Not only is this a physical law; it is a psychological law as well. It is far more difficult to get started in some new direction of your life than it is to continue in that direction once you've begun. Half the battle is won, once you've started that new diet and begun to see some positive results. How many people plan to start exercising "one of these days" but can't quite bring themselves to make today "one of these days." They put it off and put it off and never do set themselves in motion. Like the boulder on the flat ground they remain locked in their present course, utterly inert, unwilling and unable to launch out into a new and healthier lifestyle.

What is true in the physical and psychological is also true in the realm of the spirit. Every new spiritual direction, change, or movement forward will always face it toughest time in its early days. Here is where the most spiritual energy is required; here is where the challenges and spiritual resistance are always toughest. Stopping a work of God in its infancy will always be Satan's first choice. Let the work of Christ in an individual, church, or nation gain momentum and a few years maturity and the devil will have his hands full; it cannot easily be shut down. But if Satan can throw a monkey wrench into the movement at its inception and bring about dissension, doubt, or compromise early, he can snuff it out with little trouble.

God is not ignorant of these things of course. He is fully aware that new beginnings require extra energy and additional power to succeed, and is more than willing to fully provide this every time He calls His children to a new step forward, or leads them in a new direction. Spiritually, the answer to the law of inertia is the Holy Spirit. This is perfectly illustrated at the beginning of the church of Jesus Christ.
After Jesus' death, the work of God seems to reach a state of inertia. The disciples are confused and have no idea where the whole movement is to go from here. They go fishing, because fishing is what they know, and they can't think of anything else to do. Their Leader is gone, they have no further instructions, and they feel weak, perplexed, and helpless. It was so simple when Jesus was around. They could always go to Him with all their problems and their questions, but now they are on their own. Even after Jesus' resurrection and appearances to them, they don't feel like world-changers. The task before them is a daunting one. They are supposed to take the message of Jesus Christ to their own people and eventually the world, and make disciples of all the nations. The job is too big, the opposition will be too great, and their own talents and abilities seem far too puny for such a gigantic task.

Jesus knows full well that they are going to need some extra power and energy to move from their inert state into a place of power and world-changing ministry. He wisely tells them not to begin immediately, saying: "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). To tarry is to wait, to hold off, to delay your plans and efforts until some designated time. Jesus informs them that they must not go out with their tracts and start canvassing door to door throughout Jerusalem, but to wait until they experience that power that will turn their inertia into dynamic motion, and fully equip them to do what they have been called and commissioned to do.

The disciples are smart enough to follow Jesus' instructions to the letter. There is no evangelistic campaign, no flyers are posted on the streets of Jerusalem, and all seminars are put on hold. Instead they gather for a prayer meeting. The Bible tells us, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers" (Acts 1:14). They wisely wait in the place of prayer, not knowing exactly how their prayers will be answered, or what this "Promise of the Father" will look like, but knowing their need, they pray and they wait. Just as cars and boulders require some extra power to start moving from a dead stop, so the church of the living God needed power as well.

It happened on the Day of Pentecost, one of the major Jewish annual celebrations. As the prayer meeting went on a sound suddenly filled their ears. It reminded them of a hurricane, but this was no meteorological phenomenon. This was the Promise of the Father! The Holy Spirit had come to fill and empower them. They spoke with new tongues and proclaimed to the astonished onlookers who quickly gathered "the wonderful works of God." When accused of being drunk by some mockers, Peter rose to his feet and preached an impromptu sermon, declaring that Jesus Christ had died, was now risen, and was the fulfillment of the ancient Messianic prophecies. Three thousand souls gave their lives to Christ on the spot, and the church was off and running. Inertia was overcome by the power of God's Spirit, and it took very little time for the church to move through second, third, and fourth gear, and get up to top speed.

**Principles of Inertia**

Not only is the law of inertia a factor in large scale works of God, it is an important factor for us to consider in our own lives. Satan will always challenge us at every new phase of Christ's work in our lives. When Moses was born, Satan was apparently aware that a deliverer would be born, and moved Pharaoh to have the baby boys killed at birth. Only by God's intervention was Moses spared, that he might grow to become God's chosen instrument for Israel's deliverance. When Christ was born a similar thing happened. Herod ordered all the male babies in Bethlehem to be killed, that the promised King might be eliminated before He ever had a chance to rule. Again God intervened, Joseph had a dream, and took baby Jesus far from danger. Satan knows well that his best chances at stopping any good plan of God is to stop it in its infancy, before it can ever take root and become mature.
We must take new ventures in Christ very seriously. Every new season of our lives, every new ministry, every new step of faith, every change of situation should be bathed in prayer. As with the disciples as they awaited the Holy Spirit's power in their lives, prayer is called for as we look to break into new territory and take new ground in Jesus' name. Those who study revival quickly find an intriguing association. Wherever you find revival and the outpoured Holy Spirit, you can almost always trace this to someone or some group of people that were earnestly praying beforehand. The Holy Spirit is God's antidote to the law of inertia, and His manifestation and moving are especially granted to people who pray — not just short little "Thank you Lord for this hamburger," or "Help me, Lord, to find a good parking place" prayers, but lengthy, faith-filled, fervent, persistent, Bible-quoting, Christ-exalting, God-honoring prayers that are carefully recorded and stored up in heaven, and answered in God's perfect time.

One of the saddest experiences a woman will ever face is a miscarriage. After the joy of learning she is carrying a precious new life, after dreaming and planning for the arrival of the baby something goes wrong and her hope is extinguished. The baby was never brought to birth. Satan is in the spiritual miscarriage business. How many times he has poured his filthy water on the flames of a new vision from God, a new dream, a new direction that held such promise and such hope. But something went wrong. Prayer was lacking, or perhaps the dream wasn't watched over carefully enough, and it died before it could ever live.

This does not have to be our lot! The law of inertia holds no fear for our Lord Jesus. He is more than able to overcome every obstacle, thwart every wicked scheme, and overpower every trace of resistance by the power of His Spirit. When the prophet Ezekiel saw a vision of a valley full of dry bones, he was asked whether these bones could live. Talk about inertia. What could be more inert than a field of dead men whose death was so long ago they were nothing but bones, and dry bones at that? CPR might do the job on someone who has died a few minutes ago, but no one in their right mind would try CPR on a bunch of bones. Yet with God and with our Lord Jesus Christ all things are possible.

Ezekiel was told to prophesy to the bones. As he did, there was a loud sound made by the bones coming together and forming skeletons all over the field. Flesh covered the bones, and the figures began to look like men, but they were not breathing. Ezekiel was told to prophesy once more, breath now entered them, and they became living men. Such is the power of the God we serve. Jesus Christ has declared, "I am the resurrection and the life." He that has power over death is more than able to empower you to move from your inert state, and start you moving in God's direction.

The Holy Spirit must be in our every beginning. At the creation of the earth we learn "And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2). He who was present and active at the creation of the world must also be present and active at the creation of every new step of faith, every new ministry, and every new phase of the lives of God's children.

Our Lord Jesus Christ died on a cross and rose again the third day that we might be forgiven, and that we might be indwelt and empowered by this amazing Holy Spirit. No obstacle and no state of inertia can thwart us from becoming all God wants us to be and doing all He wants us to do, as we abide in Jesus. Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.