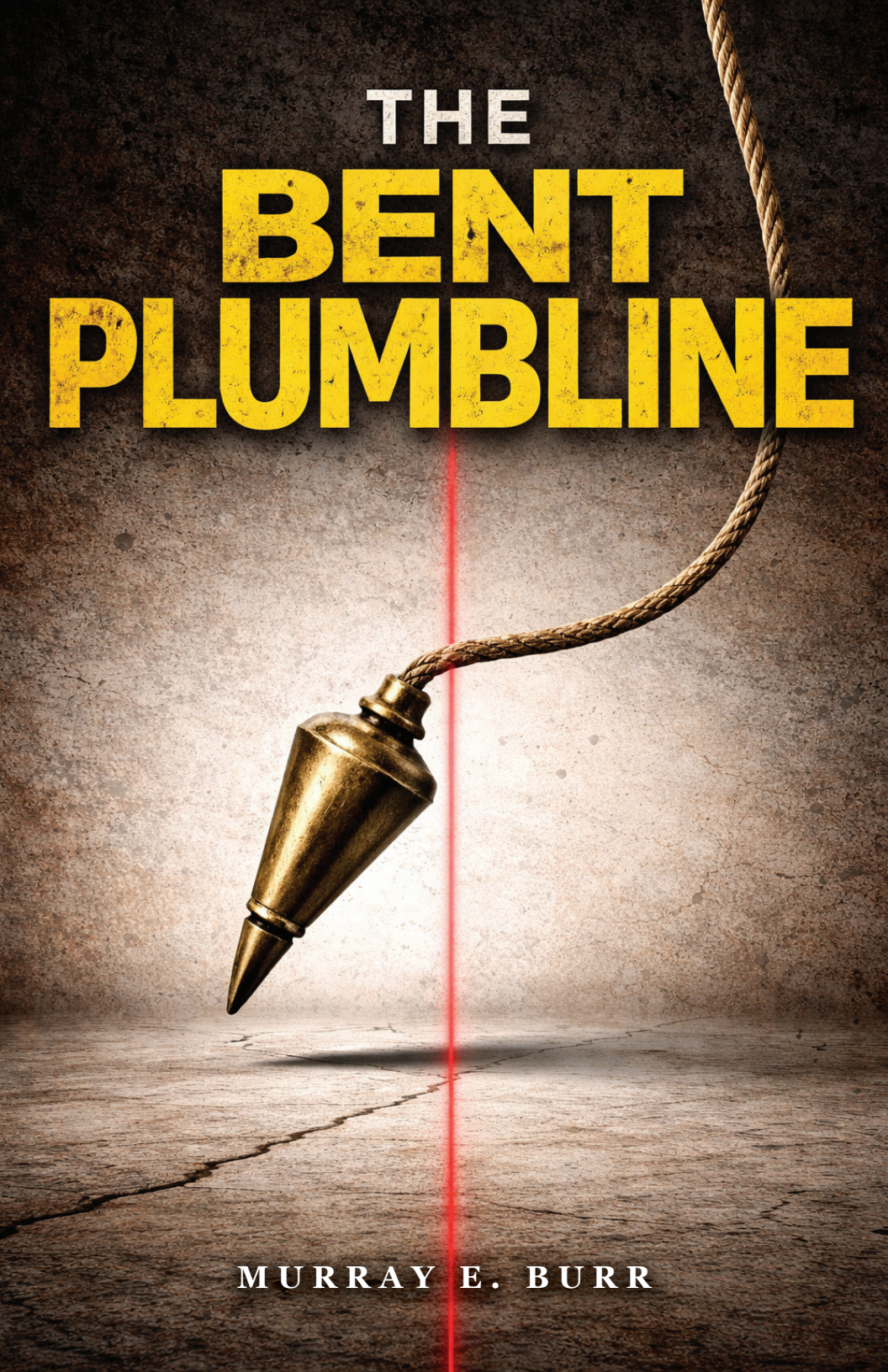


# THE BENT PLUMBLINE



MURRAY E. BURR

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Text: Amos 7:7-8 — “Thus he shewed me: And behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumb-line in His hand. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel; I will not again pass by them anymore.”

## Foreword

I write with the intensity of one who has watched a movement he loves drift from the standards that once defined it. Over decades I have stood for doctrinal purity, spiritual holiness, and moral integrity in the Pentecostal movement. That fight has often been uphill, sometimes lonely, but never in vain. This booklet is not a detailed rebuttal to any single lecture or speaker; rather, it is an introduction to an answer — a clarion call to measure ourselves again by the plumbline of Scripture.

There is a spirit abroad calling for an “end-time revival” that is, in my judgment, neither true revival nor apostolic in character. It borrows the language of God’s work while reshaping the boundaries of doctrine and holiness. It promises fruit without the necessary purging, numbers without repentance, and unity without truth. That is a dangerous mixture. The Lord’s plumbline still measures the walls of His house, and He will not pass by forever.

## Introduction — The Plumbline and the Crisis

The prophet Amos saw the Lord standing with a plumbline — a tool of measurement and judgement. A plumbline exposes crookedness; it marks what is straight and what has deviated. God’s Word is that plumbline for His people. When a movement or generation shifts its standards, when leaders begin to accommodate novelty in the name of revival, the plumbline exposes the deviation.

Over recent decades we have seen successive waves of teaching and practice test the boundaries of apostolic Pentecostalism. “Latter Rain” doctrines, ecumenical gestures, and various charismatic emphases have reappeared in new forms. These movements promise spiritual renewal, open doors, and rapid growth. But I ask: by what measurement do we accept these things? If the plumbline of Scripture is bent to fit these trends, then we have replaced divine measurement with human preference.

I have watched ministers once known for conservative, careful theology move far from the Apostolic message. That turn is not always sudden; often it is a slow erosion, justified by pragmatic concerns—bigness, prominence, cultural acceptance, and the desire to “make it happen.” But true revival is never produced by gimmicks or expediency. It is

birthed from repentance, purity, and a return to the whole counsel of God.

## Chapter 1 — What Is True Revival?

True revival restores the fear of God, zeal for truth, and a hunger for holiness. It is not merely ecstatic experiences or numerical growth. The book of Acts records how sanctification, repentance, and doctrinal clarity accompanied the outpouring of the Spirit. When the early church purged sin, when the Word was proclaimed, then signs and wonders followed and multitudes were added.

Several characteristics mark genuine, apostolic revival:

- Repentance and confession of sin;
- A return to the authority and teaching of Scripture;
- A magnified, unafraid ministry that calls people to holiness;
- Genuine fruit: changed lives, not merely shows;
- Spiritual discernment distinguishing true moves of God from counterfeits.

Any suggested revival that minimizes repentance, excuses sin, or trades doctrine for numbers must be examined and tested by the plumbline of God's Word.

## Chapter 2 — The Fallacy of “No Doctrine”

Some claim to preach “no doctrine,” as if doctrine is a hindrance to the Spirit. But “no doctrine” is itself a doctrine. To abandon defined, revealed truth in the name of openness is to open the door to error. Biblical doctrine is not a mere academic exercise; it protects the church from deception and shepherds the flock toward maturity.

The contemporary shift often hides behind ecumenical language—“unity,” “gathering,” “harvest.” But unity without truth becomes compromise. We must beware movements that emphasize fellowship across all lines while watering down the essentials of the faith. The plumbline discerns differences. The Apostle Paul warned sharply against any gospel other than the one he preached (Galatians 1:8). That standard still stands.

## Chapter 3 — Fruitfulness Without Purging Is False Fruit

One of the gravest errors spreading today is the idea that fruitfulness can be achieved without purging. “Make it happen” has become a church slogan — pursue methods, remove barriers to growth, accept all manifestations, and numbers will come. But

Scripture teaches the opposite: fruitfulness follows cleansing.

Consider Acts 5. Ananias and Sapphira lied and were struck down. The result was a godly fear, clear testimony to the holiness of God, and a fresh outpouring evidenced by signs, wonders, and great additions to the church. Paul's counsel to the Corinthians (I Corinthians 5) commands the church to remove immoral influence so leaven does not infect the whole lump. John 15 teaches that fruitful branches are pruned so they may bear more fruit.

Revival is not an event apart from holiness. When a people repent and purge what is contrary to God, God responds. When the church tolerates sin or substitutes spectacle for sanctification, the seeds yielded are not of the true vine.

## Chapter 4 — Signs, Wonders, and the Deception of Counterfeits

Scripture warns that in the last days there will be those who resist the truth with counterfeit signs and wonders (2 Timothy 3:8; Matthew 24:24). The history of Israel and of apostolic times gives examples of those who mimicked the supernatural for their own ends. Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses with signs

from the power that was not of God. Today, similar dangers appear when signs are accepted as the final authentication of ministry while doctrine and holiness are sidelined.

Signs and wonders can accompany either God's work or deception. They are not a foolproof seal. Jesus' final words about those who performed miracles in His name yet were not known by Him (Matthew 7:22-23) must be taken seriously. We must evaluate manifestations by their fruit and by their conformity to God's Word. Any movement that emphasizes phenomena while excusing sin or denying core doctrines demands rigorous discernment.

## Chapter 5 — The Structural Question: Revival and Organization

Some have proposed a “structured revival within a structured society” — the idea that organized systems and centralized polity can foster or guarantee revival. But organization without spiritual pedigree is not the solution. The New Testament model centers on the five-fold ministry operating under the authority of the Word and empowered by the Spirit.

When organizational polity substitutes for prophetic, anointed ministry, the result is often compromise,

protection of position, and fear of rocking the boat. Politically driven structures may promote stability, but they too easily repel the prophetic zeal required to confront sin and call for repentance. The plumbline of Scripture requires that order in the church be rooted in holiness and biblical authority, not merely in managerial efficiency or institutional preservation.

## Chapter 6 — Signs of the Last Days: A Call to Watchfulness

The New Testament instructs us to expect perilous times before the Lord's return. Consider a few sobering passages:

- Luke 18:8 — “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”
- Matthew 25 (Ten Virgins) — many will be unready, lamps unfilled.
- 2 Thessalonians 2:3 — a falling away must come first.
- Matthew 24:12 — iniquity will abound; the love of many will grow cold.
- 2 Timothy 3 — men will have a form of godliness but deny its power.

These passages do not paint a picture of mass, clean revival just prior to the Lord's coming. Rather,

they warn of deception, dormancy, and decline — conditions that demand vigilance, clarity of doctrine, and an uncompromising call to holiness.

## Chapter 7 — A Charge to the Remnant

If the plumbline is true, and we are tempted to bend it, what should we do? First, we must reassert the primacy of repentance. Without it, any enthusiasm is hollow. Second, we must recover an uncompromising love for truth. Doctrine matters because souls are at stake. Third, we must restore the ministry gifts to their intended function — prophetic, apostolic, pastoral leadership that will call the church to purity even when it's costly.

Purging is painful. It alienates friends. It can cost positions and pension plans. But the Scriptures repeatedly convey that the Lord's care for His bride includes judgment against that which defiles her. Those who truly love the church will be willing to endure the conflict necessary to preserve her purity.

## Conclusion — The Plumbline Still Hangs

The Lord's plumbline has not been lost, and He will use it. We are called to measure ourselves again

against God’s Word, not to bend divine standards to fit our agendas. If we are to see true, apostolic revival, it will be the by-product of cleansing, repentance, returning to doctrine, and a holy fear of the Lord. Signs without sanctity are not the promised harvest; they are a dangerous show.

To my fellow ministers and leaders, I say: do not trade the truth for impression. Be wary of the seduction of large numbers that cost the soul of your church. To all who love Jesus and His Word, I urge a return to the plumbline — speak, pray, and act as if the life of the church depends upon it, for indeed it does.

### Appendix — Key Scriptures for Study and Meditation

- Amos 7:7-8 — The plumbline of the Lord
- Acts 2 — The pattern of Pentecost (repentance, baptism, Spirit)
- Acts 5 — Ananias and Sapphira; the result of purging
- I Corinthians 5 — Purge the evil so it does not infect the whole
- John 15:1-2 — Pruning for fruitfulness
- Galatians 1:8 — Warning against any other gospel
- Matthew 7:21-23; Matthew 24 — Warnings about false signs and deception

- 2 Thessalonians 2:3 — The falling away before the day of the Lord
- 2 Timothy 3 — Perilous times and resisting truth

## A Final Word

This booklet is a summons back to the plumbline. My plea is not to nostalgia or mere conservatism for its own sake, but to faithfulness to the apostolic gospel that birthed us. Let us be measured by God's standard. Let us refuse to bend the plumbline. Let us prepare the way for a people cleansed, humbled, doctrinally sound, and alive with the power of God — a people upon whom true revival may rest.

— Murray E. Burr (edited)

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