

GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH ~ MAKING DISCIPLES ~ EQUIPPING THE SAINTS FOR MINISTRY

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The Odyssey

Part 3

FACING MY GREATEST ENEMY

By Rayola Kelley

I am so thankful that the Lord saved me. When I ask people what they were saved from, the most popular answer is hell. I rejoice that Jesus took my place on the cross so that I would not die in my sins and spend eternity separated from my Creator in a place of utter torment. No doubt the torment of hell will manifest itself in different ways, but the truth is there is no greater torment than that which comes from the hopelessness that surely abounds in hell. I have come face-to-face with this torment many times in my life. And, I for one am glad that the hopelessness has been replaced with the anchor of joy as I have learned to come to rest on that which inspires and sustains all my hope: The Lord Jesus Christ.

When I ask believers, who they consider to be their greatest enemy, they will often say Satan. I have encountered this enemy in different ways through the years. I have learned never to underestimate his tricks, and as the Apostle Paul stated in *2 Corinthians 2:11* we must not be ignorant of his devices for he will gain advantage in our lives. However, I have learned that Satan can only do so much because he is limited by two boundaries.

One boundary is God Himself. As a believer, I belong to the Lord. Granted, He uses Satan to test and sift His people at different times as He did in the lives of Job and Peter, but He is the One who determines how far this enemy can advance into the midst of each of us. It is for this reason that I am aware that Satan is part of my process and is used to bring spiritual maturity to my life.

The second boundary is the

believer. Satan must gain inroads into our lives. There are three avenues that he is very successful in using to gain advantage into our lives, homes, and sanctuaries. They are: ignorance of God's Word, sin, and pride.

Pride is a sin that operates in the shadows of ignorance and the shroud of delusion, blinding a person to its personal working in his or her life. Very few people recognize their pride. They do not realize that it is often cloaked in self-pity (victim syndrome), has an attitude of arrogance, a haughty look that unmercifully judges, a false appearance (fake nobility) to hide its hideous tentacles of jealousy and malice, a bitter taste that others must swallow, cruel mannerisms, and an indifferent pose.

It took some doing on God's part to show me my pride. It cleverly hung in the shadows of fake nobility and was masked by what I considered "good intentions," but when such intentions were stripped of their pious presentation, all of it proved to be nothing more than selfishness.

I often share how God first began to deal with my pride one spoonful at a time. He took a spoonful from my self-confidence to get my attention about the foolishness that often lurked behind my pious presentations. He took a spoonful of my conceit to bring my high opinions down to a more lowly perspective so that I could be reasoned with. He took a spoonful of my fake nobility and caused me to question the motives behind my pursuits. However, there came a time when He took a backhoe to my pride. When He finished with me there was not one area of my life that had not been unearthed to reveal the extent this illustrious idol had on me. I remember the whole matter left me raw and vulnerable. I realized that I could not even trust my actions because of the self-centered hidden motive or agenda behind them. I begin to understand why the Bible states that even my best would prove to be filthy rags

before God because actions are often defiled by a person's motive or intent towards something. The reality of it was my whole disposition (inner man) needed to be transformed by the power of the Spirit. I recognized that it was only the life of Christ in me that I could trust.

It was during this purging of my pride that I came face-to-face with my real enemy in actuality. As someone once said, "Look in the mirror and you will meet your real enemy." We can talk about how God saves us from hell and how He has given us power to overcome the kingdom of darkness, but the reality that has produced the greatest humility in me was the fact that I really needed to be saved from myself.

How many times have you "shot yourself in the foot" by what you have said or done? How many times have you "cut off the limb that you were sitting on" by how you have handled a situation? How many times have you burned "valuable bridges" behind you because of anger and bitterness? Although these terms are considered idioms in our language, they leave a very good picture of how great an enemy we often become to ourselves.

As I came face-to-face with myself I had to realize the depth of the fallen disposition in me. We often just look at what we do. Many of my past actions showed rebellion against God, but I had to learn that it is not what I do that speaks of who I really am; rather, it is the type of disposition I possess within that determines the type of person I am.

To understand what disposition is we must realize that it is the inner state of our person. What influences our state will determine how we think. Our thought process will be steered by our attitude towards a matter. Our attitude reflects the state of our heart, and will determine how we approach something. Our approach will reveal our emphasis or what is important to us. It will also



determine how we handle a matter.

Everything I do is motivated by my inward disposition. It is for this reason that the Lord stated in *Ezekiel 36:26-27*, that the new covenant would entail Him giving His people a new heart and spirit to ensure the work of regeneration. When the Bible states that the old passes away and all things must become new, it is talking about the work of regeneration. Regeneration can be compared to spring time, where new life comes forth to reveal its glory (*2 Corinthians 5:17; Titus 3:5*).

Pastor Paul Washer made this statement about regeneration, "In modern day evangelism, this precious doctrine [of regeneration] has been reduced to nothing more than a human decision to raise one's hand, walk an aisle, or pray a 'sinner's prayer.' As a result, the majority of Americans believe that they've been 'born again' even though their thoughts, words, and deeds are a continual contradiction to the nature and will of God."

Teacher/author William MacDonald talked about regeneration when he addressed how Christians shy away from using the word "religion" to describe their life in Christ. MacDonald acknowledged that they want to stipulate that Christianity is not about religion, but a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. However, there is a bit of religion to Christianity, but it is not based on religious affiliation or activities, but on the transforming life of Christ within. MacDonald went on to say this in regard to this subject, "We mean that we are not asking (a person) to join a church or denomination but to enter into a relationship with the Lord Jesus. We are not pushing a creed but a Person. We are not advocating reformation but regeneration, not a new suit on the man but a new man in the suit."

It was obvious that there were areas in my life that spoke of the "old life". As a result, my life was a contradiction and I needed to get down to the reason and source of it. It was at this time that I began to understand that I had been trying to rehabilitate the "old" disposition in me. Inner change can only come from a heart change, and God is the only

One who can give a new heart or enlarge it to embrace the matters of His kingdom, but I could not change who I was. In my initial years of Christianity, I simply had managed to reform the outer man to take on a certain religious stance, but I had failed to let the Holy Spirit transform the inner person in me by bringing forth the life of Christ in greater measure.

I knew there were areas that had not been transformed in my attitude; and, such areas would prove to be untrustworthy and deceptive. In every delusion there is a disconnect between what is and the reality the person is adopting about him or herself. To come to terms with my inner person, I had to examine my attitude about matters that were affecting my spiritual walk. This was the only way I could get a sense of the overall picture of my heart condition.

As a Christian, God had given me a new heart, but I was not walking according to a new life. The Spirit was trying to bring conviction to me about certain attitudes and aspects of my lifestyle, but instead of repenting, I tried to reform my outward actions to silence the indictment of my conscience. When I thought I was on top of my conduct, something would come along and trip me up once again, revealing that I harbored the same heart attitude.

I cannot tell you how many times I ran around the mountain on the path of reformation instead of coming to a place of true repentance where transformation would occur. Subsequently, the scenery and end results never changed. Even though I did not like the fruit that was manifesting in my life, I was willing to ignore it as I consoled myself that I would do better next time. Eventually, I finally came to the same conclusion the Apostle Paul came to in *Romans 7:15-19*; "*For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.*"

It was as I humbled myself before

the Lord that He could finally reason with me about my sin. *Isaiah 1:18* tells us that God wants to reason with us, but so many have adopted the present-day false gospel that Jesus loves them and wants them to be happy. However, God does not want to reason with us about our happiness, but about our sin. Jesus did not come to save us *in* our sin; rather, He came to save us *from* our sin. He became the solution to our sin instead of providing us with a ticket to sin while avoiding the consequences that come with such deviant actions.

The truth is that there are Christians who want their sin, while secretly hoping that they will get to heaven in spite of the various warnings and instructions of the Word of God. They ask God to help them, but they do not ask Him to change their mind by giving them a hatred for their sin. Instead of their heart being broken over their sin by coming into agreement with God's evaluation about it, they harden their heart towards the truth while claiming their right to the sin on such a basis as that it is natural to the flesh or too powerful to overcome. Such logic downplays or does away with the fact that the Bible has declared such conduct as being an affront against God. In the end, these individuals settle for a feel-good religion that allows them to wallow in the same wretched stench of their piggens as they drown in the cesspool of endless excuses. Meanwhile, they maintain a religious pose that allows them to feel good about the Christianity they are putting forth. I am quite aware of this cycle because I have been entangled in it in the past.

The culprit that keeps us from the way of humility and repentance is our pride. Pride is what will sit on the throne of our hearts when we are giving way to the "old self-life." Whether the pride is that of ego or vanity, it refuses to come to a place of humility to seek mercy. In some cases, this personal enemy declares that it will take care of the matter. In others, it will not concede its erroneous way of thinking and take responsibility for the attitude it has adopted towards a matter. Ultimately, it will show contempt towards God's commandments, silently mocking and declaring that they are unfair, unrealistic, and not applicable in the present situation.

Continued Pg. 5, Column 1

THE GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

By Jeannette Haley

The older I get, and the more I see the world growing increasingly troubled and wicked, the more thankful I am for the wonderful childhood I had. I was truly fortunate to grow up in a safe and clean environment, in a decent neighborhood in north Seattle. The neighbors, for the most part, were friendly, hospitable and helpful to one another. My dad started his own automobile tune up shop, and my mother was a full-time homemaker. The kids I played with were as full of imagination and creativity as I was, so there was no end to the fun and games we played. I can still see in my mind's eye all the home made stick horses "tethered" to our fence, the Bedouin "tent" we made out of the lawn swing, the collection of little toys we collected out of a gum machine that served as buried "treasure" (which we waited three weeks to "discover" and unearth) and the roads, tunnels and dirt "cities" we created in a section of Mom's flower bed for our toy cars (made of metal, I might add. No plastic junk in those days!) I can still recall the sound of a child's voice, calling out, "Ready or not, here I come" while playing hide n' seek. Scenes from the dozens of television Westerns that my generation grew up with were reenacted as we played cowboys and Indians, "bad guys," "good guys," and, my all-time favorite, Zorro.

While decent childhood make-believe games are an important part of a child's early development, they become an entirely different matter in adulthood. Children learn how to play "people" games by watching others, especially their parents. They quickly learn how to subtly manipulate and control both people and situations to benefit their own selfish desires. Such games eventually lead to broken promises, broken relationships, broken dreams, and broken hearts. The Apostle Paul wrote, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

One of the things that makes the world such a frightening place is the games people play. Who can you

really trust? Who is telling the truth? Who genuinely cares about you? Therefore, it becomes natural for people to develop games for self-serving purposes whether it be to attract the opposite sex or to con others into doing things their way such as give them certain things they want. People play games to gain attention, come across as a "good old boy," or exalt themselves into positions of power. Driven by fear, people with a street mentality, *i.e. I must survive at any cost*, are experts at game playing. In addition, let's not overlook those who are driven by demons—and make no mistake, demons are great game players.

When I was young and way too naive, I had a romantic idea that the one place on this earth that would be safe and secure from all the unsavory elements and dangers of the world could be found in a church. All you had to do to escape the howling storm and terrible blast of sin, temptation, and its horrifying result, was to run to a church, fling open the door, step into the sanctuary and there, at last, with sunshine streaming through the windows heavenly music would flood your soul with peace, hope, joy and love while God's people warmly welcomed you into their paradise on earth. (You can stop laughing now.) Maybe the longing for such a place, or *such a feeling*, is one reason the paintings of Thomas Kincade have been so extremely popular as they invite you into another world of peace and beauty where there is no need for games.

As for the Church, is it not the Body of Christ and not any particular building or denomination? Paul wrote, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning of the firstborn from the dead: that in all things he might have the preeminence" *Colossians 1:18*. The Church of Jesus Christ is made up of members of His Body, wherever they may be. But, our place of true refuge is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast..." *Hebrews 6:18, 19a*.

If we are truly born again, there is no greater comfort than to know that

we do have a secure, eternal place of refuge in Jesus. He never plays cruel games with our minds or hearts. He is holy, immutable (unchanging), all powerful, all knowing, everywhere present, and faithful. Therefore, when we "go to church" on Sunday, or any other time, we must seek Him and His presence above all else. Yes, we are to love, encourage, exhort, and edify one another, fellowshiping in the Lord, but if His presence is not manifest in our meeting place, in the teaching, worship, and message, then how can we be built up in Him? Our desire should be that of the Greeks who came to worship at the feast in Jerusalem, and who came to Philip and said, "Sir, we would see Jesus."

It would be a wonderful thing if in every gathering or body of Christians there were none who played games. Unfortunately, this is not reality. The Lord Jesus distinguished four dispositions of people that we need to discern, not only outwardly, but inwardly as we examine ourselves. They are as follows: Goats, (*Matthew 25:32, 33*); swine, (*Matthew 7:6*); wolves, (*Matthew 7:15*) and sheep (*Matthew 9:36*).

I realize that the content of this article is not "politically correct" nor is it "ear tickling" nor is it a "feel good" message. The bottom line is this: truth and the Word of God are not politically correct, and when all the so-called "politically correct" Marxist-Communist nonsense is consumed in the fire of God's wrath, truth and the Word of God will remain standing. Therefore, we need to choose what we believe: either God's Word and His truth, regardless of how it makes us feel, or Satan's lies. The truth of the Word of God is powerful. Consider what *Hebrews 4:12, 13* tells us, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

We can't play games with God and get away with it. Remember, Adam and Eve were the first to play

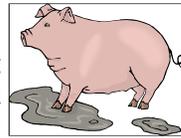
“Hide n’ Seek” with God in the Garden of Eden. The Lord knows our disposition, and attitudes towards sin. Therefore, it is natural for the fallen disposition to hide from the searchlight of God’s truth. We have all been there. So, with that in mind, may the Lord give us a willing heart and open mind to consider what Jesus wants us to understand about these four dispositions for our own benefit, both in our own personal relationship with Him, and as a discerning Christian in the Body of Christ. It can’t be emphasized enough that it is our attitude towards sin that determines the position we take at any given time. Following is a brief overview of the four categories:

Goats: Goats can be likeable, decent, hard working, generous people, full of good works and helpful to others. They mingle with the sheep, which can make it hard to distinguish that they are, in fact, goats. However, goats have certain traits that characterize them. One such trait is independence, and strong determination to only let people, and God, in so far. They feel threatened and uncomfortable if you intimidate their independent way of thinking and doing. The reason for this is that they have not truly repented of some sin, nor have they totally consecrated their lives to God. Goats like to perch on their “pinnacle” of self-sufficiency, where they view themselves as being somewhat “above and beyond” the boundaries of God’s Word. They want to maintain their “king of the hill” stance, picking and choosing their own area of service, and will balk at “going the extra mile” for somebody because they usually have other interests. Goats, even though they have many good works, won’t go so far as to lay down their life for someone, and they will throw up a wall if challenged to deny self, pick up their cross, and follow Christ. If confronted along these lines, the “b-u-u-u-t-s” began to be heard. “B-u-u-u-t, I believe in God. B-u-u-u-t, I am a good person. B-u-u-u-t, I have my own way of doing things. B-u-u-u-t, God loves me. B-u-u-u-t, I don’t ‘interpret the Bible’ the way you do! B-u-u-u-t....!” Goats may claim to believe in Jesus, but they play a dangerous performance-oriented game that allows them to maintain their

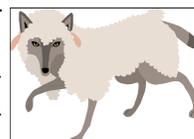


prideful independence, instead of submitting to God and allowing Him to truly transform them from the inside out. The fruit of their lives may resemble the fruit of the Holy Spirit outwardly, but it is void of the anointing that only a touch from heaven can give.

Swine: Swine play a game of outward conformity, but their lives remain a moral and spiritual pigpen. They are like the old wineskins that cannot hold new wine, merely tacking Christ on to their old life, and claiming that they are “okay.” They have no desire whatsoever to change by getting real with God, and allow the Holy Spirit to transform them into the image of Christ. Instead, they believe that God’s love will save them *in* their pigpen, never considering that Jesus came to save them *from* their pigpen *if* they stir themselves up to repent and make the right decisions. Swine are blissfully unmindful of the fact that the father of the prodigal son did not chase him down and drag him out of the pigpen; instead, he waited until the wayward son humbled himself in genuine repentance, returned home, seeking forgiveness. Swine are deluded, complacent, and unregenerate people who talk the talk, but who don’t walk the walk. They are complacent about their sin, complacent in their life in Christ, complacent in their dealings with others, and complacent about the things of God. They expect people to either enter into their pigpen with them, or else leave them alone, and accept them right where they are. Otherwise, if confronted on the slightest issue, they become angry and annoyed, “trampling your pearls underfoot.” After all, they may be lonely and miserable, but they are comfortable in their pigpen and have no desire to put forth the effort to leave it, repent, take responsibility for their spiritual life, and humbly allow the work of regeneration to take place.

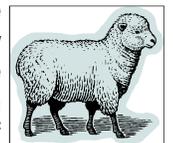


Wolves: Wolves among the flock play the religious game (with the help of religious spirits) because they have their own agenda for self-aggrandizement, recognition, dominance, power, and a



following. Therefore, you usually find them in visible positions of “importance.” Wolves should be the easiest to discern among the flock in spite of their “sheep’s clothing.” However, they are good game players, subtly working in darkness, looking for those who are vulnerable, while eliciting sympathy for themselves on the one hand, while using flattery on the other. They do not possess a servant’s heart, but instead desire to be looked up to, and served themselves. Wolves like to seat themselves at the “head of the table,” are usually first in line, and love to be seen, and heard. Because they have such a high opinion of themselves and want all the “glory,” (praise of men) you won’t find wolves volunteering for menial work, nor are they the type to “give their alms” (good works) in secret. Their fruit will eventually tell on them because wolves have no genuine, unfeigned love for others. Wolves are touchy, jealous, unforgiving, and prideful. Being predators, they are where they are to get what they can get, even splitting churches simply to get a following. Wolves do not care who gets hurt by their wicked games because in their mind they are right. It goes without saying that they are not truly born again, and are dangerous and destructive.

Sheep: Finally there are the sheep. These are the people who do know their God. They are the people who have been truly broken at the foot of the cross over their sinful state, and who have received with joy the forgiveness and salvation of the Lord. Real sheep have no plea other than this: “God forgive me, a sinner.” These people have truly been born again, and have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. (See *Galatians 5:24*.) They walk after the Spirit, and their fruits bear witness of their life in Christ, and His life in them. Such people are not merely playing games to conform, perform, or reform, but have been transformed, “*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost*” *Titus 3:5*. They are not perfect,



Continued Pg. 5, Column 2

"Facing" Con't from pg. 2

Today there are people who are angry with God because He will not change His way of thinking. They accuse Him of being unrealistic or behind the times because He will not stoop down and accept the stench of their worldly pigpens of compromise or become bogged down in their cesspool of excuses.

It was as I came to terms with what was reigning in my heart that I became acquainted with a divided heart. A divided heart is an idolatrous heart because the pride of the self-life often sits on the throne, while it adjusts religion to its worldly preferences. It is a heart that has experienced the intervention of God, but it maintains a worldly attitude. Since it is divided in loyalties, it is fickle. It is hard to say which way it will go as the different tides of life roll in. One moment it is a heart that is in line with the things of God, but in the next moment it can be in step with the attitudes of the world.

In order to bring the idol of pride down, I had to repent and agree with God about the matters of heaven. I had to change my mind and line up to the unchanging truths of His Word. This required me to give way to the mind of Christ by submitting to the work of the Holy Spirit. Whether He was convicting me of unacceptable attitudes and godless actions, or bringing the contrast of Christ as to what stipulated true righteousness, I had to avoid personal justification and bring attitudes and actions into line with His Word. If something was wrong to God, it had to become wrong to me. If God considered an attitude unbecoming, an action profane, and a particular way perverse, then I had to agree and change my attitude and direction.

The inward change entailed one right decision after the other, giving the Holy Spirit freedom to regenerate those areas that had remained in the shadows of carnality. It required me to put one foot in front of the next in simple faith and obedience to what I knew was right and acceptable to the Lord. At first the changes seemed strange to me. It was then that I had to recognize just how much of my present ways remained fleshly and worldly, and how much of me had to line up to that which was good. As time went along, I began

to notice the ways of righteousness were becoming more natural to my way of thinking and the worldly ways and influence were becoming perverse, causing a welcoming discomfort in my soul towards them.

The heart condition was just one aspect of coming face-to-face with my main enemy. The journey I found myself taking in this particular matter did not end up bringing me the full sense of myself; rather, it brought a greater revelation of who God is. It was the revelation that confirmed what I knew all along. He alone is the One who knows how to save, change, and preserve the souls of His people. He knew what kind of pressure He had to put on me and the right times to do it in order to bring about the necessary changes in my life.

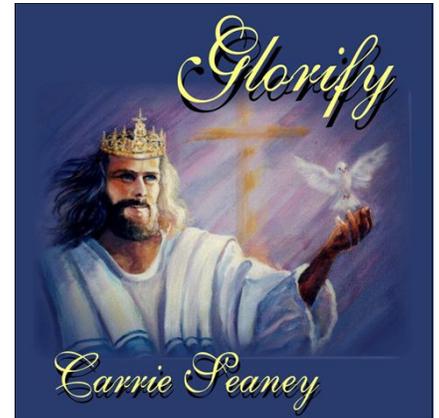
Next month I will elaborate more on this part of my odyssey, but meanwhile how about you? Do you find yourself running around on the same mountain trail, seeing the same old scenery and hitting the same frustrating walls? Although it all seems hopeless, you need to know that God has provided a way out of the endless cycle. It is called repentance. Honestly evaluate where your path leads you and realize that to get on the right path, you must stop walking on the present one. Seek God's perspective about your plight and then be sure to agree with what He shows you. Ask Him to give you the right attitude about it because your best intentions are void of having the power to change your heart, transform your mind, and correct your ways. †

"Games" Con't. from pg. 4

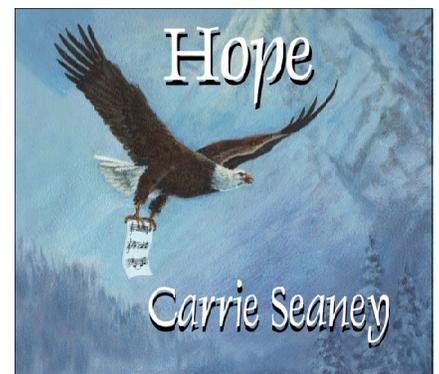
but they do know the voice of the Shepherd, and follow Him.

As I consider my own life, I can see times when I was a goat, doing my own thing instead of coming under Jesus' yoke. There were times when I found myself in the stench of a pigpen, until I embraced the cross in shame and repentance, and received the cleansing that only Jesus' blood can give. As Rayola says, God wants us to discern our own disposition so we can get out of the way and really follow God. Time is short! Are you willing to take up the challenge, and allow the Lord to change your disposition? †

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RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

WHO ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD?

Q: *The Freemasons have a saying, "The Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man" and the modernist churches seem to teach that everybody is a child of God, both saved and unsaved. This is confusing to me because in the Old Testament you read about the "children or sons of Belial" and in the New Testament Jesus told the Pharisees that their father was the devil. Can you please sort this out for me? Thank you.*

A: The rule of thumb is if something is not in the Bible, it is probably not correct or true. The first two terms mentioned in your question appeal to the intellect as being logical and politically correct, as well as to the senses as being sound, but they have no Scriptural basis. As for the scriptural term, "child of God" there is criterion as to what it means to be a child of God.

The truth of the matter is that mankind falls into two categories: children of God or those who are under the spirit of the world, making Satan their father. It is true that God loves the entire world, but, due to sin, man has been separated from God, alienated from His eternal life. Out of love for His creation (man) He sent His Son to die on the cross. It is only upon receiving the Son as the solution and antidote to one's fallen, depraved spiritual condition, can a person be born again into His kingdom. It is this new birth or new disposition within that identifies a person as being an adopted "child of God" and part of the Lord's heavenly family. Until a new birth experience has taken place, a person is an enemy of God (John 1:12; 3:5; 11:52; Romans 8:16; Galatians 4:5-6; Ephesians 1:5; 1 John 3:1-10).

Children of God are also sealed by the Holy Spirit, identifying them to an eternal inheritance. Their lives are to manifest the fruit of the Spirit and show forth the image and glory of Christ. Even though believers are in this world, the world knows them not because they do not belong to it. In fact, we are told the world will hate the saints of God because it hated our

Lord (Ephesians 1:11-14; Galatians 5:22-23; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; John 15:18-19).

It is true that Jesus identified the Pharisees as being children of the devil in John 8:44; but, we are told in Ephesians 2:2-3, that before believers were children of God, they were children of wrath because the spirit of the world had worked in them, making them children of disobedience. In Matthew 7:21-23, we read the sober warning about those individuals who do good works in the name of the Lord, but fail to do the will of the Father. Their works were not only counted as iniquity, but they were commanded to depart from the presence of the Lord.

Obviously, regardless of how religious they may be, some individuals have been imitating their father, Satan. Before salvation all people are under God's abiding wrath. This brings us to the "sons of Belial." You can only find this term in the Old Testament, but the word "Belial" is used once in the New Testament in the matter of coming into agreement with the demonic (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). "Belial" points to that which is worthless, evil, naughty, and ungodly. It is another name for Satan. Clearly, there is no profit found in being associated with this unprofitable state or association.

This brings us back to who we will ultimately be identified to. Certain groups can use all the flowery terms they want to cover up the dire situation mankind is in. They can emphasize that God is a Father when it comes to humanity and they can talk about the brotherhood of man. However, such rhetoric does not change what is. Not every person is a child of God, and a child of God is not part of the brotherhood of man. Even though such ideas can even lead back to heretical beliefs such as "Universalism" (where everyone will be saved in the end), the Bible is clear that many will strive to enter into the kingdom of heaven but few will (Luke 13:24). It is appointed for man to die once then judgment (Hebrews 9:27). If a person does not leave this present world with the seal of being born again from above by the power of God, he or she will come face-to-face with his or her real father, the

devil, and he or she will taste the bitterness of his or her true master (sin) as he or she pays the price of death with his or her very soul in the bowels of hell. †

MUSIC THAT GLORIFIES GOD

No people have as much to sing about as Christians, and no people have such a rich heritage of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Our hymns express in majestic language what we so often feel but cannot express. Some hymns express thoughts that may be beyond our own experience—hymns of total commitment such as "All to Jesus I Surrender." In such cases, we can sing them as the aspiration of our hearts.

In spiritual singing, it is not the rhythm or the melody or the harmony that counts. The important thing is that the message comes from the heart and rises to God in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of God can use singing just as He can use the reading of the Word. The mother of Grattan Guinness heard a farmer singing as he plowed his field, and she decided not to commit suicide by drowning in the river. Dr. Guinness said later, "All that I am for God, I owe to a humble Christian plowman singing the praises of the Lord as he did his lowly task."

Those who engage in the ministry of Christian music have to guard against two perils. One is the danger of self creeping in. As with other forms of public ministry, it is easy to embark on a giant ego trip. There is always the temptation to try to impress people with one's talent rather than singing to the glory of God and for the blessing of His people.

The other is the danger of entertaining rather than edifying. It is all too possible to sing words with great musical skill and yet not convey the message to the hearts of the listeners. And it is possible to excite people emotionally with songs that are frothy, frivolous, and quite unworthy of the Lord we love.

Different cultures have different tastes in music, but in all cultures the songs should be doctrinally sound, uniformly reverent, and spiritually edifying." — William MacDonald