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

FINDING HOPE IN GREAT DARKNESS

By Rayola Kelley

Obviously, the recent events surrounding our nation should remind us we are living in precarious times. In the last couple of months, we have witnessed the strength of America being shaken as the stock market has been brought to its knees, followed by many losing their jobs. The blessings that America has experienced are ebbing away with each economic tidal wave that hits our financial and job markets. The financial investments of many hard-working Americans have fallen through the holes of the pockets of greedy politicians and heads of banking institutions. Many of these innocent investors are now tasting the bitterness of betrayal, the sorrow of loss, and the disillusionment of hopelessness. We collectively find ourselves holding our breath, as we wonder how far down we must go financially before we hit bottom, and try to second guess what will be the affects of it.

Great darkness has surely come upon us as a nation. However, the darkness of this time reminds me of another time in history. It was a time that God's people were subject to a tyrannical government. Many of His people found themselves in a balancing act between their devotion to Him and enduring the bondage of the religious and government systems they were subject too. Many were clinging to the promise that their Messiah would come at any moment; however, there was no sign of His appearance.

They had cried in desperation, waited in hopeful expectation, and lamented their fate as they held tightly to what seemed impossible and hopeless.



In the midst of this grave political and spiritual vacuum of darkness, a child was born and a son was given to the world. His name was Jesus. This child would prove to be the light that would break through the spiritual darkness of the people's oppression, offering deliverance, hope, healing, and salvation.

Even though many of these people claimed they were looking for Jesus, some refused to recognize Him when He stood before them, and others became insulted by His truth, while some followed and embraced Him as the Promised One. Those who followed Him had been looking for the hope of the Messiah in the midst of darkness. As a result, their eyes were prepared to behold Jesus as the Promised One.

Twenty centuries later, God's people once again are looking for Jesus. Only this time they are not looking for Him to return. Different prophets spoke of the time in which He would return to gather His people and to fulfill all of the promises God made to Abraham. Before Jesus was offered up on the cross, He also addressed this time in which He would return. The Apostles Paul and Peter recorded some of the events that would come upon the world surrounding His second coming, and the Apostle John also gave a detailed list of events that would take place prior to Jesus' return.

The Bible identifies that the countdown for His return started at Pentecost, when the Spirit came down on those in the upper room (Acts 2:16-17). The term to describe this time is the "last days." Therefore, for the last two thousand years God's people have been part the "last days" which is also known as the Church age, the dispensation of grace, or the times of the Gentiles. For centuries, this age has been winding down to the climatic event of Armageddon. Like the Thessalonians, each age or generation of people has witnessed certain events that would possibly

identify their particular time as being the very end days of the last days. However, we are still here, proving that God will determine the times we live in.

There are some clear signs that we could be living in what is known as the last generation. This generation will see all the events come together that will signal Jesus' return. You might wonder what could possibly distinguish this period as being different from other ages that have witnessed similar events. There are three main factors coming together at the same time that could very well signal that Jesus' return is close at hand. 1) The political events and challenges facing Israel is one of the biggest signs that the age of the Gentiles is coming to a close; 2) the world is now capable of bringing all mankind under a one-world government, economic and religious system; 3); and finally the number of scoffers towards Jesus' return has greatly escalated. These scoffers are not only found in the world, but also in the visible Church.

For years, watchmen throughout the ages have warned the Church to be prepared for Jesus' coming. Christians have been exhorted to live in light of this one great hope or expectation. In the 1970's and 80's, many in the Christian Church were joyfully waiting in expectation for His return. However, in 1990 the trend among Christians digressed from living in expectation of Jesus' coming, to securing blessings and security in this present world.

Proverbs 13:12 best explains what happened to some of these people who had put their hope in the timing rather than in the actual event: "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick; but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life." The unrequited expectation of Jesus' return took on a mythical status for these individuals. From this point on, many of these individuals turned their focus from the skies and put it on the world to secure their future. The greater their involvement became with the world, the more they succumbed to a mocking attitude.

This brings us to the present day. How much of the present Church is ready for Jesus' possible return? As believers, we must examine the attitude that resonates in us, as well as the rest of the Church in regard to this fundamental belief. We need to evaluate and discern the environment of this present age to confront the darkness that is taking hold of the hearts and minds of many.

It is easy to point out the problems we are facing in light of the economic and moral decline of this nation. We, as a nation, are clearly facing bankruptcy and ruin at every level. As fear and uncertainty grips the hearts of many, we as believers, must not only make sure our stake is firmly in the Rock, but we must be ready to allow our light to point others to the solution. In order to gain our bearings, we as a people and a nation need to get back to basics, as we honestly evaluate our values, agendas, and purpose. Consider what it would take for people and this nation to get back on course.

Come back to center: Coming back to center means to come back to God and line up to His righteous Word and ways. The pilgrims first came to these shores to establish their life in God. These people experienced tremendous hardships to secure their life in God, but their steadfast faith and determination to make God a center of their lives is recorded in our history books.

History, along with the constitution and the laws that were established set forth in the infancy of this nation, reveal that in spite of their various beliefs, the founding fathers of this nation also understood the necessity of basing the laws, principles and rights on God and His Law. They knew that without the righteous principles and just laws of the true God serving as the moral conscience of this nation, that this nation would be void of real strength or protection. Without His righteous commandments serving as just boundaries to fortify against evil attacks on the sanctity of life (abortions), marriage (abominable practices), family (redefining it according to wicked agendas), property (government spreading the wealth), and inheri-

tance (devaluing it), a nation would lack the moral fiber to stand.

Never too late: Some people may be wondering if it is too late for our country to turn around. My answer to this question is that it is never too late for the people of a nation to repent. Repentance is turning away from the destructive ways of sin and the path of death to embrace the life God has ordained. However, such repentance must begin with God's people.

As ambassadors of the kingdom of heaven, we as believers must consider the type of light we are emitting in the present darkness, as well as the quality of salt we are offering people (*Matthew 5:13-16*). Even though Daniel was not party to the idolatrous sins of the people of Israel, he became identified with their sins in order to intercede on their behalf as recorded in *Daniel 9*. Before the different financial tsunamis can be rectified, we must first humble ourselves, identify both personal and national sins, confess them, repent of our ways, and intercede for our nation.

Point of reliance: One of this nation's greatest sins has to do with its point of reliance and strength, which has been its wealth. This point of strength has recently been brought down, causing the confidence of many Americans to become shipwrecked on the rocks of broken dreams. Such misdirected confidence is understandable, but to God it is idolatrous, and He will not share His place or glory with any other god.

God is the only sure source that will never let any of us down. As Christians, we are told that our faith must be towards God. It must be founded on Him to be able to stand when all else is being shaken; and we can be assured that all will be shaken according to *Hebrews 12:27*. We can also be assured that what is not of God will be brought to utter ruin. Clearly, our complete assurance must rest in our Lord to avoid the despair of betrayal, our trust must be hidden in Him to avoid being consumed by the sorrow of great loss, and our confidence must take root in Him to avoid falling into the consuming dark pit of vanity and hopelessness.

Self-sufficiency: Americans appear to forgotten that it is God who blesses and who can also dry up such blessings. How many of us have taken credit for the blessings that have been

bestowed upon this country, rather than honor God for giving us these blessings, and recognizing our need for Him to be in our midst as supreme ruler? How many of us have become self-sufficient in our own failing strength, while allowing God to be kicked out of schools, courts buildings, government, and churches? How many of us have ignored or placated the wickedness that has threatened the sanctity of all that is dear to our Creator, instead of mourning the sin of our nation, repenting for the ignorance and foolishness of wickedness, and interceding on behalf of it?

Responsible stewards: God blesses people so that they can in turn bless others in the furtherance of His kingdom. However, many Americans have become greedy, as they hoard the world's goods for their own self-serving purposes. The more these people have heaped upon their selfishness, the more indifferent they have become towards the needs of others, often shutting up any conscience of compassion or benevolence (*1 John 3:13-18*). When you consider that in America, women spend more on makeup products than is spent on the eternal work of God's kingdom, is it any wonder that God is shaking our economic system? Many in America have become like the Dead Sea, taking in God's many blessings, in order to lavish them on the vanity of self, while supporting overindulgent, worldly lifestyles.

For believers, God is our true portion or inheritance. Our greatest desire should be to possess the fullness of Jesus in our lives. We must diligently pursue after this heavenly inheritance. Like Paul, we must be willing to count the things of this world as dung as we prepare to offer the best to our God. However, in all honesty, how many of us have thrown the leftovers, or the crumbs, to God, while heaping the best upon ourselves? Granted, God may not keep the best for Himself, as He offers it back to the person as a blessing. Nevertheless, it should be His choice to choose what He will do with the best offering. According to the Bible these offerings should include our bodies (for consecration), our lives (to be sanctified by the Spirit), our talents (to be offered up instead of buried),

WHAT DO YOU DREAM? By Jeannette Haley

This is the time of the year when we'll most likely hear the old song, "I'm Dreaming of a



White Christmas." It seems that there is something wonderful about snow at Christmas time. Of course, if you live in a warmer, snowless climate, all you can do is try to imagine what it would be like. I remember the one Christmas I spent in Arizona, many years ago. Somehow, to me, lights on a cactus just did not quite measure up to beautiful lights on frosty evergreen boughs.

Most of my life, except for some "rough patches," Christmas, with all commercialism aside, has been a special time of the year. If you are one of those Christians who sees Christmas as pagan and diabolical, then ignore it. After all, if those who hate everything and anything that even remotely suggests that there is a God in heaven, who sent His Son into the world (whether in December or some other unknown time) have their way in the near future, Christmas will become illegal. In all probability, so will your Bible (unless it is one of the politically correct newer so-called "versions.")

Even though Christmas is loaded with commercialism, the true meaning of Christmas, like a garland woven through the branches of a tree, remains. Therefore, Satan will never give up trying to snuff out all remembrance of Christ's incarnation and advent from the face of the earth. The battle between light and darkness, truth and falsehood, morality and immorality, true Christianity and pseudo Christianity has been raging for over 2,000 years. The outcome will be a perverted, pseudo faith that fits in nicely with the antichrist spirit that we see in operation today.

Now that those in high places, along with their choice for President, are dreaming of a one-world government, economy, and religion modeled after the original Babylon of Genesis 11, God's people may begin to "dream" of the day Christ returns to set up His kingdom instead of

"dreaming" of how to store up for themselves treasures on this earth. Currently, millions of poor souls in America have tasted the bitter and sad realization that earthly riches can evaporate overnight. The dream of many Americans of a safe and secure future has suddenly turned into a frightening nightmare. On the other hand, those who have invested in eternal riches can rest assured that their treasure is secure in heaven. This spiritual treasure is priceless, and one which is incalculable by earthly standards. (*Matthew 6:20*)

There is another kind of dream, however, and that is the dreams that originate with God. If you have ever experienced a dream given by God, you will not only *know* without a doubt that it is of God, but you will never forget it. Dreams from the Lord are for the purpose of instruction or direction, to reveal or expose something hidden, to serve as a warning, or to make known future events.

As we read the account of the birth of Jesus Christ in Matthew's Gospel, one of the things that stands out are the many times the Lord used dreams to speak to Joseph. *Matthew 1:19 and 20* give us insight into the excellent character of this remarkable man. Verse 19 says that he was a "just" man. "Just" means equitable in character or act; innocent; holy, and righteous. Such a righteous man would not react to the news of Mary's pregnancy with rancor, threats or accusations, nor would he publicly humiliate her. In fact, Joseph thought about these events in order to make a wise and godly decision as to what to do. At this point, the Lord intervened. We read in *verse 20*, "*But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.*"

Imagine Joseph's wonder and joy as the angel of the Lord explained: "*And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.*" Who but God alone could save people from their sins? What a wondrous and amazing proclamation this was! The angel of the Lord continued: "*Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled*

which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name, Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." Can you begin to fathom what a powerful, earth-shaking revelation this was? The Lord Himself was introducing Jesus as God Incarnate before He was even born into the world!

While still in Mary's womb, Jesus was identified as a child (not a "fetus" or blob of tissue). God gave Him His name and identity. In addition, God proclaimed His plan and purpose for His life. The fact that God knows every unborn child, from conception to death, and has a plan for their life, holds true with other unborn children mentioned in the Scriptures such as John the Baptist. Psalm 139 makes it clear that God knows every child conceived in the womb. He is the one who fashions us, loves us, provides for us and longs for us to give our lives unreservedly to Him. No man, or woman, has the right to determine if a child has the right to live or die. That decision belongs to our Creator God alone.

Yet, in spite of inwardly knowing God's heart in this matter, there are some who, while professing Christianity, agree with the murder of innocent and helpless babies, both born (survivors of abortion) and unborn. This subject is hard to write about for mere words are inadequate to express the horror of this atrocity. America, along with the rest of the world, will face the wrath of God because of the shedding of innocent blood, along with her many other transgressions and iniquities (moral deviance). May the Lord have mercy on His remnant, which faithfully stands for all that is righteousness. Thank God Mary and Joseph did not opt to destroy the wonderful thing that God was bringing forth. God, have mercy upon this wicked nation, and send forth a mighty spirit of prayer and repentance! As God delivered His people from the wickedness of the Pharaohs who commanded the murder of the little Jewish boys, may He deliver His people from this wicked "death culture" in America.

Now, let's see how Joseph responded to the instructions given him

in the dream: *“Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS”* verses 24, 25. Praise God for Joseph! He did not argue with the Lord, nor did he whine about the great responsibility God put upon his shoulders. He did not hesitate, waiting for somebody else to come along and make his job easier. He did not look at the difficult circumstances and balk, nor did he cave in to some sort of “political correctness.” No! Rather, he rose up and *did* what the angel of the Lord had commanded. Joseph walked out his *faith* through *obedience*.

How many Christians today would instantly obey the Lord in such a situation? The truth is, if we neglect to walk in obedience daily to Jesus’ commandments, we will not be prepared to obey as Joseph did when the big tests of life come our way. Obedience must become a daily exercise in our lives so that whenever God speaks, instant obedience is natural for us.

When the wise men arrived in Jerusalem seeking for the King of the Jews, and learned that He would be born in Bethlehem, they continued to search for Him, following the star, until they came to the house where the young Jesus lived with Mary and Joseph. After falling down and worshipping Him, they gave him their treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Here again we recognize the deity of Jesus, for only God is to be worshipped. Neither Mary nor Joseph prevented them from worshipping Jesus, and both of them, being devout Jews, knew well the first commandment. The wise men knew that He was no ordinary king, but that He was the Promised One—the King of the Jews, and the King of kings.

The gifts the wise men brought also revealed their knowledge of who He was. Gold represented His divine origin, again pointing to His deity. Frankincense, which is the most important of the aromatic gums, was regarded as a precious perfume and pointed to Christ being pierced in order for His fragrance to come forth. Concerning the Myrrh, Ruth Lascelle wrote: “Through the power of the Eter-

nal Spirit, Christ gave Himself freely. He was made sin or “bitter”, but from His bruising came forth the sweetness of the Holy Ghost. He is our purification (Heb. 9:13, 14). His life He gave was sweet to God, sweet to the saints, and His life is a healing medicine for those who are sick in spirit, soul, or body.”

Not only were these men wise because they knew who Christ was and traveled from afar to worship Him, but they were also wise because they heeded the warning God gave them in a dream that they should not return to King Herod; thus, they obeyed and returned home another way. Thank God, these men obeyed His warning!

When they had departed, the Lord again appeared to Joseph in a dream and instructed him to take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt. Joseph did not waste any time in obeying the Lord, for we read that he arose, and *“took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt”* Matthew 2:14. One can only speculate what would have been the outcome if Joseph had ignored the Lord’s instructions, shrugging it off as “just a dream.” How many of us would have lingered on in order to figure out how to keep our worldly possessions, or take time to say “good bye” to friends and family? Maybe we would wait around to see what would happen. Perhaps we would complain that we did not want to move to such and such a place. How thankful we should be that Joseph was a godly, responsible and obedient man.

Joseph remained in Egypt in obedience to the Lord until, in another dream, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, saying, *“Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child’s life”* Matthew 2:20. Thus, yet again, once inside the border of Israel, God guided Joseph in a dream to dwell in Galilee. (Verse 22)

What we learn through this sequence of dreams surrounding the birth and early life of Christ is the faithfulness of God to guide and protect His own. In the tumultuous times in which we live, fear can creep up upon the most stalwart in heart. Now

is not the time to try and “pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps” as the mind-science people would have us believe, but to “cast all our cares upon the Lord.” Now is the time to seek the Lord through His eternal Word and prayer. Now is the time to fall on our faces in true repentance and mourning. Now is the time to examine ourselves to see if we really are in the faith. Now is the time because there may be no tomorrow, for who can deny that we live in uncertain and perilous times?

King David gives us insight into what we are to do in times such as these. In 1 Samuel 30:6 we read: *“And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.”*

To be encouraged in the Lord, we must first believe that He is. Hebrews 11:6: *“But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* It is impossible to encourage yourself in the Lord if you do not truly believe that He is, and that He is who He says He is. You must know Him by His character and attributes—that He is God Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and that He is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient and immutable. Who else can you run to who is all-powerful, everywhere present, all-knowing and unchangeable? *“Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord”* Jeremiah 17:5.

Psalms 119:52 says, *“I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD; and have comforted myself.”* Through God’s Word, we find hope. Consider Abraham *“Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be”* Romans 4:18. Romans 8:24 tells us this about the saving element in life: *“For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?”* The Scriptures, now largely forsaken and replaced by “Christian”

and our resources (which all belong to God). Such offerings will be made fit to do His bidding. As believers, we must remember that the investments we make on behalf of the kingdom of God will pass from this world into the next where they will be waiting for us.

Live in expectation: A great cloud of witnesses serve as our example of what it means to live in expectation. Abel offered a perfect sacrifice in expectation of being counted righteous. Enoch had an inner testimony or expectation that he had pleased God. As a result, he was translated before he experienced death. Abraham did not live for the day when he would see his descendants possess the Promised Land; rather, he lived in expectation of seeing the city made by God's hands. Expectation of this nature not only points to hope that will prevail to the end, but it also points to faith that will steadfastly endure to the end, and loving devotion that will cling to the sustaining testimony of God's faithfulness, until it hears the voice of the Lord calling those who belong to Him.

The Bible calls us to be watchmen in the days in which we live. As watchmen, we are to remain alert for any sign of our Lord's coming. We must guard and maintain the precious value of the life God has given us. We must sound the warning when truth and faith come under attack. Even though we may not witness His coming, we must live in expectation of it, knowing that we will give an account of our service.

As believers, we must also decide to cling to the promise of Jesus' return. We must remember why He came into the world. There were a couple of reasons He came the first time: 1) to redeem mankind, and 2) so that He could come back for His people the second time. With such hope before us, there should be no reason why believers are not living in expectation of Jesus' soon return. Clearly, we are living in dark, frightening times, but the light that penetrated the darkness of man 20 centuries ago is still shining in the hearts of believers, and is always capable

of penetrating the darkness of the lost. The testimony that gave the inner witness and expectation of those who have gone before us is still alive and well in the spirit of those who are following in their footsteps of faith.

In spite of the dark times surrounding this Christmas celebration, seize the time to take stock of your eternal inheritance as a believer. Consider the blessings He has already graced your life with, and thank Him with all of your heart. Let His light penetrate and drive away any despair and sorrow, as you remember that your real hope is not dependent on this present age, but has been firmly secured in the world to come. As you look beyond this present darkness towards the glorious bliss of eternity, consider flinging all upon Him as you recommit your life to His work and glory. As you allow Him to lift the heavy burden from your soul, permit your heart to soar upward on the wings of praise. And, while the things of the world are growing strangely dim in the comforting light of God's sovereignty, do as the shepherds and wise men did so many years ago, be sure to worship Him as you offer the sacrifices of praise, while looking upward, knowing that your redemption draws near.

Let us truly rejoice this Christmas, as well as take time to renew once again the passion of the hope that is firmly planted in the promise of His return.

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novels," are the sure source of our hope: *"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" Romans 15:4.*

The same God who guided Joseph, and others, through dreams, will be faithful to guide us by His Spirit if we wait upon Him. God has many ways of guiding us, sometimes He may lead through dreams and visions, but usually His direction comes through prayer and His Word. The key is, we must be established and rooted in Him. We must believe that we are here, in this end time, for His purpose. We must hold fast to our faith and believe that He knows all things that concern us, for *"The Lord will perfect that which*

concerneth me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth forever: forsake not the works of thine own hands" Psalm 138:8.

We can mentally formulate our own dreams of peace and prosperity, but not the world, or any world leader, no, not presidents, kings or popes, can ever offer lasting hope to humankind. *Revelation 5:3-4* tells us why: *"And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I [John] wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon." No man can solve the world's problems but One. ". . .the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain . . ."*

Concerning lasting world peace that the one-world "Planners" and "Insiders" believe they can accomplish through a one-world government, the Apostle Paul prophesied: *". . . For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 3.*

What are you dreaming about this Christmas? Are you dreaming about the things of this world that shall soon pass away, or are you looking *"for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" Titus 2:13, 14?*

May we all, with Jesus' righteous step-father, welcome the Savior into our hearts with great hope and joy, allowing Him by His Spirit to prepare us for the days ahead, that whether in the body, or absent from the body, we may bring honor and glory to Him, whose reign is forever and ever. Amen.



RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER CHRISTIANS AND POLITICS

Q: *I realize that this question may not be relevant at this time, but I am confused about what my responsibility is towards my country. Some leaders encourage Christians to get involved with the political scene, while others act as if it is almost a sin, or that it's irrelevant to vote, as well as keep up on political events that are affecting this nation. Could you help clear up my confusion?*

A: There are two opposing attitudes among Christians; however, taking an extreme position can prove to be dangerous. By putting too much hope in, or focus on, this nation's activities can end up becoming idolatrous, thereby, causing people to lose perspective. Nevertheless, failure to do what is right towards the issues confronting this nation can also end in the sin of omission, where righteousness is not being properly applied as a contrast or testimony. There is a fine balance between these two extremes that must be scripturally addressed to ensure a proper attitude in our Christian lives.

We know according to *1 Timothy 2:1-4* that we are to be in subjection to the authority of our leaders as long as it does not compromise our Christian life and responsibilities, as well as pray for them as a means to ensure we can live in peace in our country. The reason we should seek after and desire such peace is that peace points to the liberty to fulfill our commission to preach the Gospel and to make disciples of Christ.

Some Christians feel that their calling is in politics. God has always had His people in every arena of the world to serve as a testimony of Him. David was a king, Esther became queen so she could intercede on behalf of Israel, Daniel was placed in high positions in two empires, Nehemiah was a cupbearer to the king, and believers were part of the political machine in the early Church. Because of these many examples, I have no problem with Christians being in political office as long as they remember that their main responsibility is to serve as a godly light and contrast in such positions. It is important to point out that a nation cannot save the peo-

ple, and the people cannot save the nation. There is only one Savior, and that is Jesus Christ. Although moral accountability is necessary to ensure the greatness of a nation, it will simply hold lawlessness at bay, while the Gospel has the power to change the hearts of man. Therefore, a moral, upright nation will prove to be beneficial to the masses, but a changed heart will prove to be more excellent for it can produce a bountiful harvest that can bring lasting, eternal changes to homes, churches and societies.

Proverbs 14:34 tells us that righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. This brings us to the Christian's responsibility towards their nation. Our greatest voice is the voting booth. We need to vote, not according to party, personal causes, checkbooks, political promises, etc, but according to righteousness. If the stands of the politicians are not righteous, their character will prove to be untrustworthy as well. The only dark fruit a leader of such character can promise anyone is that of oppression.

Christians are to be the light in their present age. As believers, we must come out and be separate from all works of darkness. We must be willing to reprove such works to bring contrast, as well as give the Holy Spirit the avenue to convict people of their need to be saved from such sin (*Ephesians 5:5-13*).

Clearly, the darkness of this present age has taken hold of people's hearts and minds. Where is the penetrating light that is to shine into this darkness? Has the darkness become greater than the light because it is more powerful, or has the light become dim because the oil is low or missing altogether? Darkness cannot extinguish a light that is burning brightly.

The Church of Jesus is meant to make an impact on nations with the life-changing Gospel. When a nation's light of moral substance and freedom becomes dull, it is usually because good men do nothing to hold the line of righteousness, while bad men push their wicked agenda on a nation. The problem is that when good men finally arise from their comatose state of complacency, the darkness has usually already done irreversible damage.

COMMENTS FROM READERS

"Wonderful sermons, Q & A's, articles, etc. in your newsletter last month! They're always very good but especially great last month! Thank you for giving us and all your readers the true gospel! God bless you! - WA

"How appropriate this [Rayola's email daily devotional of October 23] is for the day in which we are living! Unfortunately, I feel that this is the place where America is right now. She has sown to the wind, and is now going to reap the whirlwind. May God have mercy on us all. This is a very sobering thought and a great devotional for today! - FL

"I am very concerned about the present and future of America, of course. I am saddened that Obama seems all but in the White House due to treachery, deceit, and lies and that he is NOT the man I would want as a president. However, my deepest heart's cry is concerning God's people and their famished souls. My heart aches at the ignorance that abounds in the midst of the assembly. And most of it is willful ignorance. Like Jeremiah, I cry for the daughter of God's people. 'Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?'" (Jeremiah 8:22) - MD

"Man, this ol' nation is in for some SERIOUS judgment from God if this guy [Obama] gets into office. We wouldn't take Communism in one lethal dose, but they've been feeding it to us for so long, that people now think that Communism/Socialism/Nazism is GOOD! God help us all. He is our ONLY HOPE and a very satisfactory Rock to run to!!!" - FL

". . . this situation [election] reminds me of King Saul, etc. The Democrats may regret having this man elected. I truly believe that this country won't elect another Democrat for President for a very long time after Obama is through with us. Be careful what you wish for, you may get it!" - ID

"You know something...even talking to Christians they say, "Oh, it is all going to work out". Man, talk about BEING TOTALLY ASLEEP." - ID

"God is certainly judging America for we don't care for what is morally right anymore. We sure are in for the ride of our life." - ID