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UNFEIGNED FAITH

Part 5

THE STEADFASTNESS OF FAITH

By Rayola Kelley

It is obvious that we are living in precarious times. The Lord Jesus, the Apostles Paul, Peter, and John, as well as Old Testament prophets, spoke of these times. As I consider what is happening on every front, I can see why the present intense tra-
vailing, tribulation, and quasi-religious environment would cause Jesus to be concerned with the prospect of not being able to find true faith when He came the second time.



As believers, we must not let the precarious times that surround us cause us to faint in our hearts and minds when it comes to finishing the course set before us. However, we must not be foolish or live in denial as to the times we are living in either. We know from Scripture that certain events must take place before Jesus can return as Lord of lords, King of kings, and the great righteous Judge who will bring all matters to the light for the purpose of separation and judgment.

The question is how must we face the prophetic events that are unfolding before us? We know we cannot be foolish or live in denial about the times we live in because Scripture instructs us to be watchful, ready, and prepared. In other words, we must be sober about the matters of heaven. Sobriety points to being clear-headed in how we view matters, serious about our responsibilities, tempered in our actions, and somber about taking necessary steps to wisely prepare.

Through the years, I have watched genuine faith come under

blatant attack by pseudo faiths that were being promoted by wolves, heretics, and charlatans. Whether it was being promoted behind the guise of such movements as "Positive Confession", "Word of Faith", or "Contemplative Spirituality", the harsh truth is that the faith that was first delivered to the saints has always been, and continues to be, under attack. Each affront against faith has weakened the foundation of those who have not been brought up on the pure doctrine of Christ. Instead of people being disciplined to follow Jesus, they have been made converts to religious leaders, heretical movements, and lifeless denominations. This "dumbing down" of Christians has fudged the decisive lines of truth, conditioning the following generations to accept greater compromise in the Christian realm. This compromise has been so great that there is no distinction as to what identifies true Christianity. In fact, everything that has a religious connotation to it is now being labeled as "Christianity". Clearly, the term "Christian" has been hijacked to embrace every kind of religious movement regardless of how contrary or far away from that which was clearly established by the Word of God. For example, if a person is not "born again" from above by the Water of the Word (faith in the Gospel) and the Holy Spirit who will take residence in the person's spirit to bring forth the life of Christ, he or she is still lost. The Bible is clear that such a person will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Christianity is not about living some sort of "decent life"; rather, it is about possessing the life of Christ. His life within a person is the real source behind wearing the label of being a "Christian." The life of Christ will express itself in a lowly, humble disposition, through a meek attitude, and with a godly lifestyle. It will be motivated by love (charity), compelled to be benevolent, and will express itself in sacrificial ways.

Why is faith the main target of all

that which opposes God in relationship to His way, truth, and life? The main reason why faith comes under blatant attack is clear. True faith is only directed towards the true God of heaven. It will not follow another god, worship an image, serve a tyrant, compromise the truth, sacrifice purity, make peace with the unholy, or cater to the despots of the world. It will not let go of what it knows is true, will not be swayed from what is right, and will not be bullied to compromise with or submit to the tyrannical ways of man or the world.

It is for this reason that genuine faith is the only means by which man can please God. It is the only way man's standing and actions before God can be counted as righteousness. It is what inspires men to tread into the unknown in light of gaining the eternal. True faith is what causes steadfastness in the soul. This steadfastness is present because God serves as the rock that true faith clings to at all times.

Today faith is coming under greater attack as the unholy agreement between the professing Church and the world escalates. We can actually see where the professing Church is now coming into agreement with a wicked government of despots, Marxists, and arrogant revolutionaries. Together this unholy mixture has been proclaiming another gospel known as "Social Justice." They also have been promoting a heretical salvation which does away with the "sin" factor and totally bypasses the redemption of Christ, while putting the burden on man to somehow make the ills of society right. The name of this form of salvation is known as "Collective Salvation."

It is clear that a line is being drawn in the sand. Although there are those who claim that they will remain neutral in the battle that is raging for truth, this unholy, blasphemous agreement will divide the true Church from the apostate church. People will have to come out of the apostate church and take a stand as to which side they are going to choose, knowing full well that it could cost them everything in the end. The cost will be

obvious. For one side, it will be the life they used to know, and for the other side it will be the life they could have known. One side will consecrate all to God, while the other side will lose their souls in the end.

The harsh reality is that the visible Church has been going apostate from the faith first delivered to the saints for years. As this element of the Church has given way to the world's influence, devised a "seeker-friendly" gospel, mixed pagan rituals with Christian truths, and conformed to a worldly-approved religion, it has become lost to its true calling. On the other side are those individuals who contend for the true faith as they warn and exhort Christians of the dangers that await them in the path they are taking. Such watchmen are forever trying to pull souls out of the fire as they bring them back to center as to what is true, right, and godly.

This brings us back to the days we are living in. The one aspect of the Christian faith that we must be sober about is the fact that genuine faith is under blatant attack in America. Instead of discerning the times in which we live, it appears as if much of the professing Church is being caught up with the wave of delusion. Granted, this delusion has the veneer of religion attached to it, but there is an anti-Christ spirit behind it. This anti-Christ spirit is seducing many with a false light into an unholy reality that will one day cause them to crash against the rocks of judgment. For this reason we must know where we stand and in whom we are going to believe. We are going to have to make some tough decisions as to what will serve as our absolute authority, who we are going to ultimately believe and follow, and what we will end up loving.

As for me, I choose the way of Abraham. He chose to believe God and allowed His Word to be his final authority. He chose to love everything associated with his God, from His truth to His ways in order to embrace his ultimate inheritance. In Abraham's life there was only one absolute and that was his God. There was only one purpose and that was to inherit the unseen promises of God. There was only one way to walk, and that was in accordance to

all that God had ordained.

As we follow Abraham, we see the type of steadfastness his faith towards God produced in him. By faith he separated from the world (Ur) in search of the Promised Land. He separated from his father (idolatry) in order to discover God as his portion. Even though Abraham took a detour here and there, he always came back into line with his God.

The more I consider Abraham's steadfastness, the more I realize I must possess the same resolve in relationship to my faith if I am going to complete the course. The truth is we as believers are walking through a spiritual minefield. At times we are going to be overwhelmed as we encounter the travailing of our souls, the distress of tribulation, and the reality that we could be swallowed up by the different deceptive waves of the age we live in.

What does Abraham's faith show us about his steadfastness towards God? The first thing that I noticed was that Abraham's faith was steadfast because his resolve was based on the character of God. He believed that God never lied; therefore, he could trust His instructions. If He said "go," he could go with confidence, knowing that the Lord would never lead Him astray.

When we bring this down to layman's terms for us today, we must believe what God has said in His Word. If His Word commands us in a certain way, we must obey it. If His Word instructs us to wait, we must wait. If His Word tells us to be faithful in the small ways, we must in good faith be responsive to do so in order to be entrusted with more. If His Word promises a matter, we must make sure we are adhering to its condition to benefit from such promises. God desires to do much for us, with us, and through us, but the conditions must be present for Him to have His way in our lives and in our circumstances.

When the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, he was assured that God would fulfill it in due time. We can actually see that Abraham was not caught up with seeing the covenants of God being fulfilled. After all, the covenants that God made with him were not necessarily for his benefit. God makes covenants so that He can show that He not only means what He says, but says

what He means. He is also faithful to not only remember what He promised or agreed to, but He is true in bringing a matter about regardless of the time that has elapsed between the actual pledge or agreement and its coming to fruition.

Abraham walked according to promises and covenants that would not be brought forth for generations to come. For example, there was a four-hundred-year lapse between the covenant that God made with Abraham concerning his descendants possessing the Promised Land to when it actually happened. The beauty about Abraham's faith is that the promises and covenants of God caused him to look past them being fulfilled or coming to some type of fruition, towards eternity where all matters of heaven would find their ultimate fulfillment.

As Christians, we are part of a covenant that identifies us to the status of being children of God. However, we will not completely benefit from our status until we come into the fullness of our spiritual inheritance. Like Abraham, we should be looking beyond this present age towards the next one to come. We must be walking according to that which God has established, and not that which belongs to this present age. We must be looking beyond the temporary to that which has been promised, and be assured of an eternal inheritance.

As we consider the possibilities before us in relationship to the times in which we live, we need to consider them in light of God bringing forth all of His promises and covenants. We are living in precarious times, but they are also exciting days. We know that the prophetic events are pointing to wickedness hitting a pinnacle that will cause all of it to be brought low by the wrath of God. Meanwhile, we must become resolved and steadfast in our faith towards God. We must walk with confidence towards what is true, stand sure upon what is right, and remain immovable in the course set before us. We must set our face towards our destination, knowing that only faith towards God will enable each of us to keep our eyes steadfastly on the glory that awaits us. †

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." — Ephesians 5:16

THE LOST ART OF FRIENDSHIP

By Jeannette Haley



Anyone who is a fan of the *Anne of Green Gables* series, as we are, is surely familiar with Anne's longing to have a "bosom friend." In Anne's mind, a "bosom friend" was a person that was as her "own soul" (See *Deuteronomy 13:6*). Such a friend would be someone who thought, believed, and felt the same as she, and in whom she could safely confide, and share the innermost thoughts and desires of her heart without fearing reprisal. As "bosom friends," they would never betray one another, or use each other for personal gain. Indeed, such friends would give or do anything for the benefit and well-being of the other.

The Bible gives us wonderful examples of true friendship, such as Ruth and Naomi, and David and Jonathan. Ruth's servant heart loved Naomi so much that she left behind her family, culture, religion, and lifestyle to be with her mother-in-law. She was determined to commit her life to Naomi until death.

Likewise, Jonathan chose to be a faithful friend, and self-sacrificing servant, to David. Jonathan's actions reveal that he had no desire to become the future king of Israel after his father, Saul, because God had chosen David. Jonathan threw himself whole-heartedly behind David, at the risk of his own life, and helped him in any way that he could. After Jonathan's death, when David became King over Israel, he carried out his love and faithfulness to his friend by bringing Jonathan's crippled son, Mephibosheth, into his own home where he ate at the king's table. (Read this interesting account in *2 Samuel 9:1-13*.)

Friendship is distinct from other human relationships because friendships are a matter of choice, not chance. We have noted through the years that the happiest and strongest marriage bonds are those that are rooted in years of true friendship. The beauty of a true friend is that "*A friend loveth at all times,*" *Proverbs 17:17a*.

If you have such a friend, it doesn't matter how you look, how you feel, or how many times you fall, your friend will still be there for you to love, encourage, and help you. Such a friend, who loves "at all times," will stand by you no matter what life and circumstances throw at you.

Such a friend is a treasure. Needless to say, this brings us to the question, what kind of a friend are you? While a true friend is a blessing beyond description, having such a friend comes at a price: it takes two. *Proverbs 18:24* tells us, "*A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.*" Thus, we are told first that in order to have friends, we must show ourselves to be friendly. One might ask, "What does it mean to 'show yourself friendly?'" Surely it means more than flashing your very best smile at somebody." Developing a genuine, lasting friendship is an art.

Going back in my own life over three decades ago, I remember reading this verse in *Proverbs* and taking it to heart, which helped me to develop many valuable and meaningful relationships. I have to admit, these special friends kept me from "going under and drowning" when my life hit major "turbulent waters" down the line. What is disturbing to me is, as I look around today at people's relationships (or lack thereof) my conclusion is that our super "advanced" culture is fast losing the art of friendship.

Most people in the "old days" had an entirely different mindset, or viewpoint, about others, and life in general. People lived a more wholesome, innocent, and simpler life in the respect that they were closer to the land (source of food, sustenance, and *reality*), and were more dependent upon one another for survival. Folks used to have more in common back then such as love for God, country, and one another. They helped each other in practical ways when there was a need. Their thoughts, beliefs, and goal were purer. They weren't distracted by all the excesses we have in our day such as countless hours of television, obsession with sports, lust for material possessions they didn't really need, and artificial means of communication. I'm not saying that life or people were perfect back then, but the level of hate,

lewdness, perversion, self-love and selfishness wasn't to the all consuming level it is today. The "cup of iniquity is full," and so is the cup of the wrath of God. If you aren't convinced of that fact, just listen to the vitriol spewing forth unabashedly through the "mainstream media" (and the Internet). It's as if the lid of hell has blown off and every foul, perverted, evil, and unclean thing has been unleashed upon the earth against anyone who is pure, innocent, loves God and His Word, loves life, loves righteousness, loves truth, loves freedom, and loves others.

Through the years as we have moved to different places, visited different churches, and met different people, we have experienced an increasing level of detachment, coldness, and disinterest when it comes to even casual friendship. Sadly, there have been those whom we have met through the years who have desired for us to be their friends, pursue them, serve them, give to them, and make them feel good about themselves, but how can there be a genuine, lasting friendship when it is all one-sided? (Isn't that "using and abusing?") Obviously, our culture is shifting from close-knit relationships where friendships formed deep "roots" that consisted of character, integrity, decency, and "natural affection," to a shallow and meaningless pseudo society of independent snobs. As Jesus put it, "*And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold*" *Matthew 24:12*. Iniquity is moral deviation, and what could be more immoral than abortion (child murder), child molestation, child pornography, child abuse, child kidnapping, the child sex trade, and child exploitation? Of course the sewer of moral deviation is vast beyond this single category concerning children.

How does "abounding iniquity" cause people's hearts to grow cold? When I asked Rayola to explain this, she said, "Iniquity is moral deviation from what is true, pure, and just. When iniquity abounds, it means that basically all manner or righteousness can be disposed of in the name of wicked agendas and evil ideologies. In the name of wicked agendas, decency and consideration can be done away with, and in the name of evil

ideologies people can be sacrificed. It creates a cruel, despotic environment where insanity and foolishness reigns with a vengeance against anything that would dare oppose its goals.

"In such an environment people realize there is no real protection. Since these tyrannical agendas have no point of reason or accountability, individuals realize that they have no recourse in which they can stop the evil tides. Helplessness and hopelessness immerse as fear and anger take center stage. If people have no hope in which to hide, this fear and anger will cause the heart to grow cold."

If we as the people of God, and as a nation, do not guard our hearts against this coldness and lack of love, then we are doomed, both as individuals who have forsaken the faith, and as a nation. We cannot continue to go on living as independent, self-sufficient, prideful little entities and expect to survive what is coming upon the face of the earth. Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if yet have love one to another" *John 13:34, 35*. The only way we can do this is by having the very love of God within us. John wrote, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" *1 John 4:7-11*.

This is where the art of true friendship begins. It must be founded upon the solid Rock of Jesus Christ. Jesus desires for us to be His friends, but this is a conditional relationship based on our obedience to His commands (see *John 15:13, 14*). As you study these verses, you discover that the greatest love in a friendship that any person can have is when a person is willing to lay down his or her own life for his or her friend. Laying down one's life can mean more than

"taking a bullet" for your friend—it can also mean laying aside your own dreams, aspirations, and goals in order to help your friend succeed. It may mean sacrificing your lifestyle or comforts to help meet the needs your friend may have. There are many ways that a person can lay down their life for their friends. *Philippians 2:4* says, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Have you practiced this in your daily life? "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" *Galatians 5:14*. Out of the lips of Jesus came this commandment, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" *Matthew 7:12*.

Developing the art of friendship is dependent on many factors, all of which can be found in Scripture. Remember, if you want to have friends, you have to be one. Here are a few guidelines in how to "show yourself friendly," and to become the kind of friend that you would like to have. Wherever you are, whomever you meet, treat others the way you would like to be treated. Granted, this may come across as an oversimplified cliché; however, stepping up to the plate and actually putting it into practice is another matter. If we are to "do unto others" as we would have them do unto us, then we need to be sensitive and alert to where others around us are in their lives. This takes discernment, and to become discerning, you have to get past yourself first; that is, get out of your self-absorbed little world, and ask the Lord to give you discernment.

Pray that God would give you "unfeigned love" for others. That is, be real. Resist the temptation to put on a good show, come across as the "good guy," or put up an image. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" *1 Peter 1:22*. You may ask, what if I am rejected? Then you can be identified with Christ in His rejection, rejoice in doing well, and return evil with good.

In order to be a true friend, you must be genuinely humble. *Romans*

12:3 says, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." The Bible tells us that God resists the proud—but so do people! We must have genuine love, and be "kindly affectioned" to others with "brotherly love; in honour preferring one another" (*Romans 12:10*).

Good friends are "of the same mind one toward another" and walk in agreement. They rejoice with one another, and weep with one another. (See *Romans 12: 15,16; Amos 3:3, Galatians 6:2*.) Truly close friends will also stimulate one another. *Proverbs 27:17* declares, "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." We also learn from *Proverbs 27:6*, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." A true friend will be honest with you even when it hurts when it is for your own good.

We at GSM have been blessed with certain faithful and true friends. As we look back over the years, we think of those who have continued to love us, support us, pray for us, and encourage us in our incredible journey. On the other hand, there have been those who "sat" in our boat watching us as we struggled to "row" against contrary tides. Some folks even found an excuse to jump overboard and left, while our true friends jumped in to "bail" and "row" with us. They have stayed the course with us during those times when our "boat" rode plainly in sight on the high waves, and they remained steadfast when our boat became a "submarine" quietly working in areas that weren't always publicly visible. They were supportive and kind when our boat sometimes hit rocky shoals, and became beached in times of sickness and need. Such friends are those who brightly shine as the stars of heaven in our memories and lives, and we thank God for every one of them.

All of us, however, who know, love, trust, and obey the LORD have one Friend who will never leave us, nor forsake us. He who was called "a friend of publicans and sinners" is the Friend that we all desperately need in

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY

Q: *I attend a church that believes that the message remains the same, but the methods must change to be relevant to our generation. Although I already have a good idea as to your response about this issue, I still wanted to know, "What say you?"*

A: The idea that the message of God is the same, but the methods have to change to adjust to the times is erroneous. Such a concept developed out of the Emergent Church movement. According to the information I have on this matter, the Emergent leaders work from the premise of contextual theology. This is where you take the spirit and message of the Gospel, along with Christian tradition, the current culture, and social changes and you combine them in order to make the methods in which you reach out to people relevant to their times. It may sound wise, but as one writer puts it, it is simply the humanization of theology. Any time a spiritual matter becomes man-centered or humanized to make it more acceptable to the world, it has not only become defiled and ineffective, but it is heretical.

The message of the Gospel is straightforward. Man is separated from God due to sin. God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son to die on the cross in our place so that we can be saved from the consequences of sin and be reconciled to God. The method for delivering the message was set forth in the Scriptures. It is also straightforward. We are to preach the Gospel and teach those who choose to believe the Gospel to be followers of Christ. It is the message that contains the power of God unto salvation, and not the method (*Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; John 3:16-17; Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4*). In other words, there is no method to fulfilling our calling or commission. One only has to reason if the message remains the same, it would only make sense so does the means by which it needs to be delivered.

The reason there is no need to change the so-called "methods" attached to the message of heaven

and our commission as a body of believers is because the message of God is truth. It is to be proclaimed in the power of the Spirit (*1 Thessalonians 1:5*). Clearly, the only thing you can do with truth is proclaim it, present it, share it, and teach it in sincerity and with the powerful conviction and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. When man tries to make the truth pliable in some way, he will take the edge off of it that can bring contrast, conviction, and change. Any time that man tries to make truth acceptable to the world's philosophies, palatable to fleshly appetites, and pleasant to rebellious attitudes, he will mishandle it by watering it down or twisting it to fit into his perverted reality.

Let us now consider man's patterns when he has attempted to adjust the truth in the past. When man attempts to silence the truth, he will strive to demote or outlaw it by calling it unloving, obsolete, wicked, and unjust. When he tries to adjust truth, it becomes propaganda and diplomacy; when he perverts the truth, it becomes indoctrination; when he changes the truth, it becomes a viewpoint, and when he denies the truth, it becomes a point of debate. However, the Bible is clear that those who mishandle the truth will experience God's wrath, and those who twist it will taste damnation. The Apostle Paul was clear that we can do nothing against the truth, only for it (*Romans 1:18; 2 Corinthians 13:8. See also 2 Peter 3:16*). We must never forget that in the end the truth that we may have lightly esteemed, changed according to selfish agendas, or rejected altogether will ultimately judge us.

If your particular fellowship is perverting the message of the Lord in any way, you need to flee from it or face the possible repercussions of coming under some form of judgment. We are living in times that call us to soberly line up to the center of what is true and real, and not allow the different tides of this world to take us out with its waves of folly, delusion, and destruction. †

QUOTES

"The Bible was written in tears, and to tears it yields its best treasures."

- A.W. Tozer

"A man with God is always in the majority."- John Knox

"The Lost Art" Con't. from Pg. 4

these dark times. He is our forever Friend, "that sticketh closer than a brother." After all, He took our place on an old rugged cross to purchase our redemption and open heaven's gates to all who repent, believe, and receive Him as Lord.

Is He your best Friend today?
Are you His? †

COMMENTS

"Once again, you gals have NOT 'cut corners' on the Word of Truth you've brought forth! For this, I'm so thankful to God, and ask Him to bless you beyond your wildest hopes! I also wanted to address the above portion of Rayola's Q&A section this month. [January's issue.] Rayola, I understand what you've said, and I agree wholeheartedly with you! BUT [you knew it was coming, eh?] I'm sure we all know of one or another ministry, who is ALWAYS in "crisis mode." I know a great sister who heads up a ministry, but she always has "big needs" that she sends to her e-mail list. After years and years of these kinds of needs, I'm all too aware that she is just not a good manager of the bounty that God has sent her in the past! Her property is almost "lost" every single year, unless "the funds come in to pay the taxes," as she puts it. Alas, she always says she's depending on the Lord to provide for her needs, but somehow that just doesn't ring true to the fruit that comes forth year after year, month after month. All of this to say that although I readily agree with what you've written, there's always those who will "make their requests" known to the Body of Messiah, but it leaves us with wonderings in our heart, if they've truly sought the face of the Lord in this matter, before spouting it to everyone else. The latest urgent need in GSM is a prime example of how it's to be done Scripturally!!!! The need was there, and the message went out, and God tugged on heartstrings to meet that need. I also note that this is NOT something that is done on a daily, weekly, monthly basis, but was a TRUE need for the time. A tip of my hat to all of you for

Continued Page 6, Column 1

proceeding in a Godly manner, according to God's Word! I thank you all for being such transparent sisters, and for permitting us all to look into your life, with love unfeigned for us, your family.” - FL

“No matter how much we think we are in control, we are not. You cannot make it through this world without pain or suffering or disappointment that is why we have to look to Jesus as He is the only One in control and our destination, which is eternal.” - ID

“Yes, I agree, I think we are just scattered among the wolves!!! And with the persecution of believers going on and spreading, we will be better off that way, as I find the Lord either leads me to those who will listen, or they come to me. One to one I believe may be the way to go now, and may be the wisest! As you say, some of the truth may be depressing, but the real Truth is uplifting! Instead of majoring on the depressing bits, its good to encourage and edify each other if we can, there is more than enough depressing stuff in the news, TV and anything else you can think of. I send you love and blessing.” - UK

“God is very patient with mankind, he is trying to get our attention but we are so preoccupied with living that we don't see it and don't want to see it. Things are getting real bad. Be watchful and pray.” - AK

“I'm afraid that if I start crying that I will just lose it totally. My stomach hurts with so much sorrow of how many people come in [to the office] ... living off the government and the state of affairs our country is in and that pretty much no one wants to win. I was also thinking about how God is using Mormons mightily to stand for our freedom while most Christians are resting on their laurels in the pews waiting for God to take them up and out so they can be spared. I'm so disgusted with the state America is in and how much it has digressed and that we can never go back to days where people kept their word and values, stayed married and didn't compromise and lived a God-fearing life. You know, the 'thank God, I'm a true American days'”. - ID



“LOOK UP”

By James Smith, “A New Year’s Motto” - 1865

“Look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near!” Luke 21:28

We are entering upon a new year, we shall have new toils, new trials, new temptations, and new troubles. In whatever state, in whatever place, into whatever condition we may be brought this year--let us seek grace to follow our Lord's loving advice, and "look up!" Do not look back--as Lot's wife did. Do not look within--as too many do. Do not look around--as David did. But "look up!" Look up to God--He is your Father, your Friend, your Savior. He can help you. He will help you. He says, "Look unto Me, and be delivered--for I am God!" Look up for light to guide you--and He will direct your path. Look up for grace to sanctify you--and the grace of Jesus will be found sufficient for you. Look up for strength to enable you to do and suffer God's will--and His strength will be made perfect in your weakness. Look up for comfort to cheer you--and as one whom his mother comforts, so will the Lord comfort you. Look up for courage to embolden you--and the Lord will give courage to the faint; and to those who have no might--He will increase strength.

Look up for endurance to keep you--and the God who preserves you will enable you quietly to bear the heaviest burden, and silently to endure the most painful affliction. Look up for providence to supply you--and the jar of flour will not be used up, and the jug of oil will not run dry; but God shall supply all your needs, according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Look up in faith--exercising confidence in the Word of a faithful God. Look up in prayer--asking for what God has graciously promised. Look up in hope--expecting what you ask in the name of Jesus. Look up with adoration--and adore the sovereignty, righteousness, and wisdom of God. Look up constantly--let nothing daunt or discourage you! Rather say, "Our eyes are on the Lord our God--until He shows us mercy." Look up--for this will keep . . . the head from swimming, the heart from sinking, the knees from trembling, the feet from slipping, and the hands from hanging down!

It is impossible to say what will happen to us, or what will be required of us this year--but "Look up!" This direction, if properly attended to, will . . . procure for us all that we need, secure us against all that we dread, and make us more than a match for all our foes and fears! Fellow-Christian, are you fearful? "Look up" and hear Jesus saying to you, "Do not be afraid--I Myself will help you!" Are you discouraged? "Look up"--and your youth shall be renewed like the eagle's, and fresh light, comfort, and courage shall be given to you! Are you desponding? "Look up" for Jesus never breaks the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax. Do not look too much at your sin--look at the infinitely meritorious blood of God's dear Son! Do not look too much at self--but look at Jesus, who ever lives to make intercession for you in Heaven.

Are you stripped of your comforts, your props, and your goods? Then look up! He who stripped you--loves you! He will be more than all these to you! He will . . . bind up your broken heart, calm your perturbed spirit, cheer your drooping mind, and fill you with His own peace and happiness. Look up . . . for all that you need; from all that you fear; through all that would obstruct your way. Look up every day, saying with David, "In the morning, O Lord, You hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before You--and will look up!" Psalm 5:3 Look up in every trial, saying "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence comes my help: my help comes from the Lord, who made Heaven and earth!" Do not look at your sin--it will discourage you! Do not look at your self--it will distress you! Do not look at Satan--he will bewilder you! Do not look to men--they will deceive, or disappoint you! Do not look at your trials--they will deject you! "Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us--looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith!" Hebrews 12:1-2. Look only, look always, look intently--to Jesus! Run looking, work looking, fight looking, suffer looking, live looking, and die looking--to Jesus, who is at God's right hand in glory. Oh, look, look, look to Jesus!