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

DUTY OR INTENT?

Discipleship Series 8

By Rayola Kelley

One of the biggest challenges we have in Christianity is that we make it a matter of rules and regulations, rather than a lifestyle. In other words, Christianity is a life that is to be walked out through application of God's truths, and obedience to His Word.



As I consider Christians, I realize that some of them have a lopsided understanding about the Christian life. This out-of-balance perspective has to do with majoring in minors, and downplaying what our real focus must be as believers. Jesus put it best when He used the illustration of straining at a gnat while swallowing a camel (*Matthew 23:24*). People actually miss the whole point of a matter because of the wrong emphasis they put on it. Instead of understanding the intent, purpose or principle behind something, people have simply made it into a religious duty that lacks real substance or meaning. In fact, this is how you kill the intent or spirit of God's truths, making them dead-letter.

A good example of missing the whole point can be found in the debate surrounding the Sabbath. Have you ever noticed how people who are caught up with this issue get stuck on one day, and it becomes their center focus or issue? Yet, Scripture is clear, observing one particular day will not save a person from the judgment of hell. Rather, salvation comes when a person believes upon the Lord Jesus Christ and walks in obedience to His commands.

However, this conflict and scriptural emphasis on the Sabbath is not new. It is just an example of how far off people can get from the center of what is important. In fact, the Sabbath was the big issue of Jesus' day. It was one of the reasons

the religious leadership justified their hatred and condemnation of Him.

It is important to understand how we can get off of center by putting the wrong emphasis on a matter. Since the Sabbath causes much conflict, we can actually use it as a good illustration as to how easy it is for people to miss the point, and emphasize something in a wrong light, causing untold confusion for many. As we consider this issue, consider what other subjects can fall into this same category.

The Sabbath is confusing because it is also one of the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments pointed to the moral obligation people had towards God and others. In the past I have concluded that the fourth commandment of the Sabbath had to do with the moral responsibility we have towards God. But, after studying the Sabbath, I realize that it is really a moral obligation that was directed at one's personal responsibility as to maintaining his or her own spiritual well-being. Since it is directed at the betterment of our well-being, I had to conclude that the first three commandments were in regard to our moral responsibility towards God, the fourth commandment of the Sabbath has to do with a personal obligation to ensure a right environment in our spiritual life, and the last six commandments were in relationship to our moral responsibility towards others.

Jesus confirmed that the Sabbath was made for the benefit of man, and that He was the Lord of the Sabbath (*Matthew 12:1-12*). In other words, the Sabbath was subject to Him, not the other way around. It is also interesting to note, that when it came to the commandments that Jesus emphasized that we are to observe, the commandment regarding the Sabbath was not mentioned. (See *Matthew 19:17-19*.)

It is important to realize that the Law of God had a purpose. The main purpose was to show man that he was a sinner or transgressor against the Law, and of his need for Jesus to

save him (*Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:24*). The Law was made up of testimonies (serve as witnesses), statutes (ordinances or rituals), precepts (doctrines), judgments (required discernment and separation to ensure justice or righteousness), and commandments (moral obligations). In some cases, the requirements in God's Law were applied to one or more category. For example, the Sabbath was both a commandment (moral obligation) and a statute (ordinance or ritual) because it involved a regular ceremonial practice on the part of the people.

This brings us to a very important question: are Christians required to keep this particular commandment and ordinance? The only way I can answer this question is yes and no. In other words, as His people we must keep the principle of the commandment, but we are not required to keep the ordinance of it. Principle points to the intent of the Sabbath, which as we will see, points to an actual place of rest, while ordinance points to a duty to recognize a certain day in which we are to rest.

In order to properly understand how this issue affects our lives, we must study the Sabbath from the premise of principle in order to bring proper balance to it as a practice or ordinance. To start from the right premise, we first must come to an understanding of the principle of the Sabbath. To do this, we must go back to the very beginning of creation. God spent six days creating the world. On the seventh day He rested or ceased from all work. In other words, He came to a complete place of rest. Keep in mind that He rested from all work in order to enjoy the satisfying fruit of His labor. He said of it that it was good or delightful and pleasurable to Him. He also ceased from all work because it was finished or brought to completion; therefore, it was a time to be refreshed. For God to set something apart for His pleasure or delight is the same as sanctifying it to Himself. He actually distinguished it because it stood separate from all the other days that were marked by His activities and work

surrounding creation (*Genesis 1:31-2:3*).

God's example establishes the principle of the Sabbath. It points to resting in terms of enjoying, recognizing or partaking of the fruits of our labors, or ceasing from all laboring because it has been completed, marking the time for being refreshed in those labors.

Therefore, the spiritual principle of the Sabbath for His people comes down to enjoying, recognizing and partaking of the life that God is bringing forth. In order to enjoy such a life as His people, we must cease from laboring with our daily tasks and responsibilities. To cease from such work in order to rest in the bountiful, satisfying blessings that God has brought forth is to set apart, sanctify or distinguish a day in which our only focus is to come into a place of rest before our loving Creator. Again, the principle points to coming into a place of rest by sanctifying or setting a day apart to do so. Therefore, the principle of rest points to the fact that any day can be a Sabbath day or a day of rest.

This now brings us to the commandment and ordinance of the Sabbath. It is important to point out that before God commanded the Jewish people to observe the practice of the Sabbath, the principle of it was already in place.

It is also important to establish the foundation for the ceremonial practice of the Sabbath. The Hebrews had been in slavery to Egypt for over four centuries. Their bondage had become so great that they cried out to God. Through Moses, God delivered them out of the bondage of Egypt. Keep in mind, when people are in bondage, they have no freedom to worship God. No doubt, in their slavery, the Jewish people had no days off to rest or regard their spiritual heritage or identity as a people.

Hence enters the covenant of the Law in which the practice of the Sabbath was clearly outlined. God established a Law for the people of Israel with the intent of setting them apart from the influence and practices of pagan nations. However, one of the principles they had to learn after being enslaved to the idolatrous

and pagan ways of Egypt was how to come into a place of true rest before their God, so they could worship Him and enjoy the life He was ordaining for them.

Exodus 16:23-30 clearly shows us that observing the seventh day as the Sabbath was not commanded or ordained as a practice until it was specifically given to Israel after their deliverance out of Egypt. We are told in *Deuteronomy 5:14-15* that the children of Israel were to remember the Sabbath as a means to remind them that they were slaves in Egypt. The word "remember" points to the seventh day serving as a memorial to the children of Israel concerning their past slavery. The reason for this reminder was to ensure that they would maintain their life of worship and service to Jehovah God. If they observed His holy Law, they would ensure their spiritual liberty, as well as the integrity of worship and service to the one true God of heaven.

Clearly, the practice of the Sabbath was to remind the children of Israel of their past slavery in order for them to come into a place of rest to enjoy the rich life they had in God. Therefore, the seventh day was to serve as a sign for each following generation of the people of Israel that the Lord had not only sanctified a day of rest, but that He also set them apart as a people for His purpose (*Exodus 31:13*).

Like circumcision, the Sabbath was to serve as a visible sign for the people of Israel. They were to keep the Sabbath to remind them of who they were, and what their purpose was in the midst of this world. They were to stand separate as a special people that belonged to Jehovah God.

This brings us up to date. Someone has put forth a challenge to prove the Sabbath is no longer the seventh day or Saturday. First of all, we assume the seventh day to be Saturday according to the Roman calendar, but does it truly correspond with God's seventh day? Does the seventh day make the Sabbath or does the intent of the Sabbath set the seventh day apart? In other words, what are we truly recognizing when observing the Sabbath, the day or the practice? There is a difference. If we strictly recognize the day, it becomes a duty, but if we approach the seventh day with the intent of observing the Sabbath, we

will ensure the integrity of it. Keep in mind, the Sabbath points to an event or a place of rest, while the seventh day was simply the day that was set apart by God to observe the rest. Therefore, we must put a distinction between the practice and the day. To prove a point, the Jewish celebrations were marked by a Sabbath or a day of rest. These days of remembrance or celebration did not always fall on the seventh day. This is why you read this in *Colossians 2:16*: "Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days." Notice that the Sabbath days are plural, not singular. Here it proves any day can be designated as a day of rest if the principle is clearly in place.

As Christians, are we to observe the Sabbath? Yes, we are to observe the principle of the Sabbath to ensure our own spiritual well-being. In other words, we are to come into a place of rest before the Lord to honor, worship, meditate upon, and clearly consider Him. Here is the next question. Must we observe Saturday as our Sabbath? The answer is no.

First of all, observing the Sabbath on the seventh day was a specific sign for the children of Israel to keep before them. I don't know about you, but I am a Gentile, and my relatives were not held in bondage in Egypt. Granted, I was a captive to sin, but the sign that identifies my liberty is not one specific day, but that of a changed life in Christ.

Secondly, observing the Sabbath on the seventh day was part of the ceremonial Law of the old covenant. In other words it was an ordinance, ritual or duty. The ceremonial part of the Law was blotted out by an establishment of a new covenant (*Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 8:6-13*). The reason for the rituals being blotted out was because they were to serve as a shadow of another completed work, the work of redemption. This work was completed on the cross. Jesus even confirmed this when He stated: "It is finished" (*John 19:30*). Once the work of redemption was completed, the rest that was made available to those who embraced His redemption was far more excellent than the actual practice of the Sabbath.

Jesus is the fulfillment and completion of the intent or principle of the

DEPRESSED?

By Jeannette Haley



It is hard for me to believe that we are actually embarking into the year 2009. Maybe that is because the older I get, the faster time seems to go. It reminds me of the story of the Indian guide who, when asked why he suddenly stopped on the trail and sat down, said: "I'm waiting for my soul to catch up with my body."

Now that the big celebrations are over, and we wave "goodbye" to 2008, our attention turns to the New Year with its many daunting challenges. As we survey the condition of the world, and especially that of our own country, depression, like a haunting shadow, may begin to nip at our heels. In fact, those who are well informed can be targets for a "tsunami" of depression. Now, if there's anything Americans hate, and try to avoid like the plague, it is depression. After all, high on the list of the prevailing American philosophy is happiness. Thus, when depression rears its ugly head, countless numbers stampede to their doctor or psychiatrist for a mood-lifting, emotional-masking prescription of some sort in order to avoid facing whatever it is that has dared to deposit gloominess in the place of happy feelings. Others turn to stimulants while many immerse themselves in sports, movies or partying.

Granted, there can be various causes of depression, but the depression I am talking about is the depression that accompanies a realistic view, or perspective, of this present world. King Solomon's observation of this fact is timely for us today. He wrote: "For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow" *Ecclesiastes 1:18*. Let us face it—this includes Christians as well as non-Christians. Of course, among the "happy-clappy" religious bunch, it is considered far less of a sin to lie about one's depression than to frankly admit its presence. Maybe a person can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but no one can fool God any of the time. He knows our hearts, and understands our emotional state, our innermost thoughts, and, not only when we are

depressed, but why.

Depression knows no bounds as far as the past, present and future are concerned, and Satan knows how to operate in all three "time zones" in order to bring condemnation, hopelessness and fear. Concerning the past, all of us have one, and the longer you live, the greater it naturally becomes. Sometimes remembering happier or better times can cause depression, as we face the fact that those times are gone. However, where the greatest depression concerning the past occurs is when Satan works to bring about condemnation. For me, it goes like this: "Remember when you made those super stupid decisions because of your selfishness?" "Remember when you ignored sound advice from others and did your own thing because of being stupid, selfish, and stubborn?" "Remember when you could've helped so-and-so and you were too busy giving in the wrong places?" "Remember such-and-such a situation when you could have been a better witness...or done more to help...or been a better Christian?" "Remember when you passed up the opportunity to show more love or comfort to such-and-such a person?" "Remember when you sinned by commission, or sinned by omission?" On and on it goes. For sure, Satan does not have Alzheimer's!

Obviously, none of us can relive, undo, alter, or change the past. What is done is done. What was left undone is undone. Regardless of whom you are, nagging regrets, guilt and shame, along with hurts, wounds and sorrow, if left unresolved, can cause deep depression. Over 900 years before Christ King Solomon summed it up thusly: "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." *Ecclesiastes 1:14, 7:20*. Solomon's father, King David, lamented "For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me" *Psalms 40:12*. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me" *Psalms 42:11a*?

Depression can certainly cause a person's heart to "fail," causing leth-

argy, and lack of initiative. It can result in "neutralizing" a person emotionally and mentally, leaving them vulnerable to demonic attack, which if not dealt with, can result in suicide. The children of Israel all became depressed in the wilderness as recorded in Numbers 21:4 which states: "And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way." (Emphasis added.) Depression is nothing new. I'm sure Adam and Eve were beyond depressed when God drove them out of the Garden of Eden.

Depression in our present state can be the result of an accumulation of physical, mental and emotional upheaval. If a person is already suffering from on going unresolved past issues, and then subsequently hit with financial, physical, relational, or other challenges and losses, depression can hit with the force of an avalanche. Regardless of the cause, every person, whether they want to admit it or not, have times when they definitely do not feel like a little sunbeam of joy, and when everything is quite out of perspective. This includes believers.

Sadly, certain powerful "religious" leaders today are presenting a morphed form of Christianity that neither our Lord nor His followers would recognize. This "updated" version of "Christianity" has indoctrinated multitudes into the New Age "positive" thinking, believing, and speaking cult. Therefore, any admission of depression or, for that matter, sickness or any other perplexing problems (and especially *sin*) is unacceptable. After all, now that we have been "enlightened" by our god-like leaders, who "preach" from blasphemous contortions of the Word of God (such as "The Message") and other demonically inspired books that claim we are "little gods" with the "divine life" within us, how can we dare be truthful and honest about where we really are? The answer is we cannot. Therefore, we end up lying to both others and ourselves, and what a lovely mess that makes.

The fact is that many of God's people through the ages have hit depression. Take, for example, Moses. In *Numbers 11:14, 15* we read Moses'

lament to God: *"I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness."* We read in 1 Kings 19:4 about Elijah: *"But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, it is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."* What a low point this was for the Prophet! Righteous Job said: *"Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul; Which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures. So that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life"* Job 3:20, 21; 7:15. Jeremiah the Prophet lamented: *"When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me"* Jeremiah 8:18. The prophet Jonah likewise prayed: *"Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live"* Jonah 4:3.

Are you and I any better, or more "spiritually advanced" or righteous than Moses, King David, King Solomon, Elijah, Jeremiah, Job or Jonah? Why is that admitting to the fact we are depressed, or sick, or any number of other things considered "wrong", "spiritually inferior", or even "sinful"? The problem is, it is simply not acceptable to the "spiritual elite" to admit that we are (oh gasp!) human. How can we be *human* with human feelings, faults and failures if we are supposedly "divine" and "superior" in every way to others? Are we above our Lord who agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane, sweating *"as it were great drops of blood"* and beseeched His Father, *"Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done"* Luke 22:42? Just who do we think we are, to change the truth (that we are human) into a lie (that we are not)?

The man Moses was telling the truth when he confessed to God that he could no longer bear the burden of the Israelites. It was physically, emotionally and mentally more than one man could handle. Job's anguished plea for death was not from self-pity,

but from the fact that his suffering, sorrow and pain were unbearable. King David always "encouraged himself in the Lord" and wrote: *"...hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God"* Psalm 11b, 43:5b. The "health of his countenance" implies changing a downcast expression to one of radiant joy. David said: *"But I am poor and sorrowful: let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high. I will praise the name of God, with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving"* Psalm 69:29. From this we learn that it is wise and just to openly admit to ourselves and to God our wretched state, then acknowledge God's salvation, and that only God can set us "up on high." Finally, make a decision in the will area to praise the name of God and magnify him with thanksgiving regardless of how you feel. This is how a depressed believer encourages him or herself in the Lord.

King Solomon worked through his despair and came to the only, wise conclusion to the problem of deep depression: *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil"* Ecclesiastes 12: 13, 14. When we are depressed, we need to recognize the fact that we are focused on ourselves, and either our past, present, or possible future circumstances. No wonder we feel hopeless! Only God can take care of the past, the present and the future. By fearing God, and keeping his commandments, beginning with loving God with all of our heart, soul, mind and might we will begin to shift our attention from ourselves and our pathetic state to the One who is the great I AM. When we remember that nothing is hid from God; that He has provided the way for us to be cleansed from the past through the blood of the Lamb; renewed day by day through the power of His Spirit; prepared for the future (as we walk in obedience to His Word) when good shall be rewarded, and the evil that vexes our hearts shall be judged, then our hope is renewed.

Consider the Prophet Elijah who asked the Lord to remove him from

the earth. He was exhausted, and everything was out of perspective. King David despaired because of the reality of evil and sin, both in his own life and in the lives of those around him. Jonah did not hold back his genuine feelings when he told God that he would be better off dead. When Jeremiah lamented: *"O LORD, behold my affliction: for the enemy hath magnified himself. Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities"* Lamentations 1:9b, 5:7, he was baring his heart to God, not trying to keep up a façade that everything is "okay."

How did the Lord God respond to each of these men? Did He slap them silly because they were being human? No! Of course not! God understood the cause of Moses' prayer and kindly provided him with a wise solution. With Job, God revealed Himself to Him in greater ways than Job could have ever imagined, thus changing Job's perspective. God healed him, and blessed him abundantly. God honored King David's heart, in spite of the difficulties he faced, and renewed his heart and spirit as David continued to praise Him. In the case of Elijah, God knew that he was exhausted and hungry, so He lovingly provided for his physical needs and instructed him as to what he was to do. As for Jonah, God wisely brought him face-to-face with himself, challenged his attitude and perspective. Through these examples, we learn that God deals with His people in a personal and intimate way. He knows the cause of our depression.

This brings us to the depression we may be experiencing today out of concern for our future, not just the normal concerns all people must come to terms with, but also a genuine concern for the future of America. As we enter this New Year, if we are willing to face reality, we must admit that there are serious challenges we face as a nation. Deny it if you will, but the fact remains that we have slid into the dreaded pit of escalating socialism. Those who know their history surely have the same sinking feeling in the pit of their stomach that we have. After all, our freedoms, which we have enjoyed for so many years, are rapidly eroding right before our

Continued page 5, Column 2

Law. Fulfilling the intent of the Law establishes those believers who are hid in Him in righteousness before God (*Colossians 3:3*). *Romans 10:4* confirms this: "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." At the end of the Law is Jesus. This brings us to the more excellent rest for the Christian. It is not a day, but rather the actual Person of Jesus that we can now find our real rest in. He stated in *Matthew 11:28-29*: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." (Emphasis added.)

As you can see, the seventh day was ordained to mark a day of rest for Israel, but Jesus serves as our place of rest. Our rest is part of a new, everlasting covenant that is far more excellent than the old. The new covenant reminds us that ceremonial practices will not distinguish us. However, as Christians we must become identified with Jesus in every way. Jesus was in the grave on the Sabbath, but arose on the eighth day, the first day of the week. Since Christians were to be identified to the new covenant, the first believers met on the first day of the week to commemorate, celebrate and worship their God (*John 20:19; 20:26; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2*).

Christians must learn how to discern between that which demands lifeless duty and that which requires integrity in order to ensure life and integrity in the matters of God. The great push for many is to come under the burdens produced by the lifeless duty of religion. Lifeless religion cannot produce life, but instead, produces only self-righteousness and despair, for such duty becomes too heavy a burden to bear.

I don't know about you, but I do not want to settle for the shadows, when I can possess what is real. As a disciple of Jesus, we follow Him into a new life. In order to follow Him, we must beware of the endless detours that are constantly being presented in the name of religion and truth.

Next month, I will be sharing with you what brings balance between the intent of the Law and the Christian life. Meanwhile, heed the Apostle Paul's warning in *Galatians 5:1*: "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty with which Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

Depression, Con't. from page 4

eyes. How can we ignore the fact that millions of Americans have lost, and are losing, their retirement, incomes, homes, and other assets? How is the true Church of Jesus Christ to respond? God forbid that we should turn a blind eye and deaf ear to the plight of others while slapping our little "Christianette" platitudes on hurting people. It is time to wake up. As I wrote a few months ago, the party is over. The way for the antichrist and the one-world government is being prepared, and the night is fast approaching when "no man can work."

How do you deal with depression? Do you depend on medication, or do you just "make up your mind" to ignore it until it hopefully "goes away? Many people choose to create their own reality through "positive affirmations" or by avoiding anything that disturbs their "peace" even if it means denying the truth. Some stuff their lives full of activity, people, noise and busyness, thus giving no space to critical thinking or influences. However, God has provided another way for His people, so that they can walk *through* depression instead of succumbing to it, trying to flee from it, denying it or pretending it does not exist.

When Moses was in despair due to exhaustion from the burden he carried, the Lord not only intervened with instruction and guidance, but He spoke with Moses and promised to talk with Him. God did not chastise Moses for his depression because sin was not the cause. Keep in mind, if sin is at the root of your depression, then God will not sympathize with you, but will instead call for repentance. Neither should we sympathize with people in their sin, for this is not love; rather, if a person fails to repent, they will perish in their sin. In *Numbers 11:23* we read: "And the LORD said unto Moses, Is the LORD'S hand waxed short? Thou shalt

see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not." When overwhelmed and depressed, tell the Lord about it. The Lord will speak to you through His Spirit or His Word, revealing to you the cause of the problem, and will encourage your heart by helping you get past yourself, and giving you a greater revelation of Himself.

Through our years of ministry, we have learned that, like Elijah, after a pinnacle moment of great victory (especially over the demonic realm) follows a downward plunge into exhaustion and depression. After all, we are still living in bodies made of clay. Therefore, when the Holy mightily uses a servant of God in ministry, it is glorious, but exhausting to the body. No flesh could survive living constantly in this realm, so it is only natural that depression, albeit temporary, results. At times like this, are we to pray, as did Elijah, that God take away our life? No, we are to wait confidently until we hear, as he did, the "still, small voice" for the Lord of Heaven and earth is omnipresent. He will never leave us nor forsake us regardless of *how we feel*.

When a person goes through tremendous suffering, they feel totally out of control. Job came to the end of himself through his sufferings, yet through it all, he never cursed God. Did the Lord rebuke Job for complaining in his misery? No. What the Lord did do was to reveal Himself to Job in such a way that Job came out knowing Him. When God gives us His perspective, then our hearts and minds can be reassured. Consider *Job 41:11b*: "...whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine." What a comfort to know that God is in control. Job declared: "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee" *Job 42:2*. Has God revealed Himself to you by His Spirit?

The emotional King David expressed every emotion known to man throughout his life and in the psalms he wrote. Concerning his transgressions (breaking the Law) and iniquity (moral deviation) and sin (falling short of God's glory) he prayed: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgres-

sions: and my sin is ever before me” Psalm 51:1-3. Repentance is the only remedy for depression caused by our transgressions, iniquities, and sin. 1 John 1:8, 9 assures us: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Jeremiah, in spite of all he suffered and witnessed as the nation of Israel was carried off into the Babylonian captivity, wrote: “It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. For the Lord will not cast off for ever: But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens” Lamentations 3:22-26; 31- 33; 40, 41.

Jonah is a good example of a person who is depressed because of anger. God also dealt with Jonah in order to bring instruction to him. Weariness of life, despondency and anger are not the Lord’s will for us. God’s will for us is that we might know His Son as “the way, the truth, and the life.” (John 14:6) The Lord has called us to be overcomers, that we “which live should not henceforth live unto [ourselves], but unto him which died for [us], and rose again” 2 Corinthians 5:15.

Therefore, as we face another year of uncertainties on every front, let us draw nigh unto God, and keep before us His great, unfailing promises found in His eternal, living Word. Bind up these words close to your heart, so that the Holy Spirit may bring them to your remembrance as we journey into the New Year: “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they

before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” Revelation 7:14b-17.

Will you be there?

RAYOLA’S Q & A CORNER

Q: This may be considered silly, but is there a difference between God’s presence and God’s glory?

A: This is not a silly question. There is a difference between God’s presence and His glory. Presence points to someone being present, or his or her person actually being in your midst as a means to interact (fellowship), influence (persuade or reason), and/or to lead (instruct and guide) you in some way. Glory points to the light, beauty or honor that actually distinguishes that person.

The difference between God’s presence and glory can be clearly observed in Moses’ life. Moses encountered God’s presence in different ways, but he could only behold the backside of God’s glory, while being hidden in the cleft of the rock. God’s presence will express itself in different ways as a means to establish a proper environment and response from man, but the fullness of His glory must be veiled in some way, so that man in his present state will not die when beholding it. For example, the fullness of God’s glory was veiled in the tabernacle in the wilderness, and in the humanity of Jesus Christ.

As Christians, we have the presence of God working in, through and on our behalf through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. For example, we are born again with the Spirit. This means we have the presence of God working in us. We are to follow after, be led by, and walk in the Spirit in the ways of righteousness. Such a walk points to a life that is surrounded by the presence of God. Finally, we are to be filled up daily by the Spirit, which points to God empowering our lives to walk out the Christian life ac-

ording to His will, mercies and compassion. Such filling points to our connection with the throne of God.

The purpose for God’s presence in us is to work the life of Jesus in us. We are to have His disposition, mind, and ways worked into our very being, attitude and conduct. In other words, we are to take on His likeness so that we can reflect His glory to the world. Keep in mind that God made man in His image for the sole purpose of reflecting His glory. By reflecting His glory, man would serve as God’s crowning glory in the midst of His creation. However, sin marred man’s inner being, causing him to become a reflection of the darkness of sin, self and the world. Hence enters the Scripture: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). (Emphasis added.)

The Holy Spirit’s responsibility is to work the life, light or glory of Christ in us. However, working this glory in us has four tenses to it. There is the *perfect* tense of this glory which involves suffering. The Apostle Paul stated that we must suffer with Him so that we may be glorified together (Romans 8:17). The *past* tense of His glory being worked in us points to the expectation that we possess due to being born again. Colossians 1:27b talks about the expectation we have been given: “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” We have the *present* work of His glory taking place, which is being made evident in us when we actually begin to reflect Jesus’ life to those around us. Second Corinthians 3:18 describes it in this way: “But we all, with open face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

The more we live in and according to the Spirit, the more our inner man will be changed to reflect Jesus’ glory. As we are continually changed from glory to glory, we need to realize that such change is preparing us for our *future* glory, where the fullness of Christ’s life will be completely realized in us as we live in His unhindered majesty, knowing that our fellowship with Him will be unbroken and eternal, and that we will also rule with Him in the next age to come (2 Timothy 2:11).