

GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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

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The Odyssey Part 12 RECOGNIZING FALSE COMPASSES By Rayola Kelley

Last month I talked about the spiritual compass God has given each of us as Christians to ensure the success of finishing the course set before us. The compass is the Holy Spirit. He has given us the map of God's Word so that we can know where we are and properly discern the direction we need to travel in to ensure the success of our spiritual odyssey.

This brings us to the other aspect of properly using our compass. The problem that can exist when it comes to our compass is the fact that Christians can be using different types of compasses. Due to inexperience, many have not only obtained wrong compasses but they have been misguided in their spiritual lives, leaving them in precarious positions. They end up hitting dead ends in their lives, taking detours that lead to nowhere, and oftentimes finding themselves in an endless maze of nothingness that leaves them empty and uncertain.

The other problem with these faulty compasses is that we cannot imagine that the particular compass we hold to will lead us astray. After all, these compasses often have a religious side to them. They allow us to use God in our vocabulary, tack Christ onto our activities, allow us to adopt our own set of religious rules, and pursue what will serve as our spiritual notions, often blinding us to any warnings that we might be heading in the wrong direction. They will permit us to live according to our particular take on religion, regardless of the delusion it is enfolding us in.

I don't know about you but I am

aware of these compasses because I have used them in the past. The reasons for accepting the direction of these faulty compasses had to do with ignorance about God, inexperience with the matters of religion, and the presence of self-sufficiency about personal knowledge and abilities.

When I first was saved, I had such a zeal towards God. *Romans 10:2-3* tells us such zeal lacks the knowledge of the true God and His righteousness. But in my ignorance, I could not comprehend such a thought. This zeal was escalated by what I perceived to be my personal strength. I had developed this so-called "strength" especially as I grew in my intellectual knowledge about religion. My strength caused me to falsely think that I had the means to save the world, and my knowledge gave me a false sense that I actually possessed the necessary wisdom to accomplish it. Since each of us have the inherent disposition of Adam, we need to remember that such a state points to foolishness that is bound in our hearts from the time of conception. King David said it best in *Psalms 51:5*, when he admitted, "*Behold, I was sharpen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*"

Whenever you base your life on personal strengths or worldly wisdom, you will be established on a wrong foundation that will eventually be shaken when challenged by the truths and ways of God. These faulty foundations naturally lead each of us to adopt faulty compasses. In light of my zeal and strength the compass I relied on were my feelings.

Feelings are fickle. The direction they travel is determined by how the situation personally affects a person's attitude about something. There are two points of judgment when it comes to feelings: one is how something makes a person feel about his or her life, and the other point of judgment is how something makes the person feel about him or herself. Regardless of

whether it is truth, if something does not make a person feel good about one's life, he or she becomes critical towards it, and if it does not make the individual feel good about self, he or she becomes insulted.

What many fail to realize is that feelings operate in fantasy. They will always bring us under the influence of the fallen disposition, allowing us to pursue our preference regardless of how fleshly, sensual, and wrong it will prove to be. When the flesh is present, its natural preference has to do with feeling good about self. Feeling good about ourselves allows us to maintain any high opinion and fantasy that we want to maintain. High opinions allow us to believe we cannot be wrong about a matter; thereby ignoring any warning signs.

Even though these feelings give us a sense of being infallible, the fantasy it erects has no common sense or reason attached to it, thereby, creating self-delusion. This self-delusion is founded on self-sufficiency. Even though these feelings give us a sense of self-sufficiency in what we perceive, they can quickly change with circumstances, redirecting their course, showing just how vulnerable and unstable they will ultimately prove to be in the end.

Such feelings are always driven by worldly winds and waves of human notions. They can easily change course and head toward dangerous shorelines. It is for this reason that the first instruction Christ gave to His disciples was to deny self. In other words, deny such feelings as having any real influence in how a person perceives a matter.

When it came to knowledge about religion, I adopted the compass of religious notions. Sadly, many of these notions were based on my previous religious influences. I was saved out of a cult. Cults pride themselves in religious notions.

Notions are concepts about the



way something should be. Behind notions is a philosophy made up of beliefs as to how something must operate. Beliefs determine the attitude one adopts toward the matters of life. All of this forms a worldview in which one judges moral matters.

The problem with judging all matters based on a faulty worldview is that one will find that he or she is never right about God, His ways, or what constitutes righteousness. For me, the judgments that came from my religious notions were cruel, indifferent, and unmerciful. Love was missing and dogmatic opinions sat as a tyrannical judge.

The next compass I obtained was a product of my religious notions. The Word of God did reveal the faulty foundation of some of my beliefs, but instead of changing my attitude that abounded because of my religious notions, I simply added the proper doctrine into the mixture. The problem with mixing the profane with the pure is that everything becomes spoiled by the profane.

In unholy mixtures, the profane represents an undetected poison that eventually will suck the very life from what is pure, rendering what may have been powerful doctrine to a lifeless and ineffective state. The compass of lifeless doctrine produces a lopsided version of a Christian life that will reek with self-righteousness, but will be void of any anointing; therefore, it is unable to make any beneficial impact on others.

The next faulty foundation and compass was the result of a lack of true spiritual experience. It is important to understand that the reason so many people adopt the faulty compass of experience is because they have failed to personally experience God through personal communion and fellowship.

In my initial journey with God I developed a substantial head knowledge about Him, but my knowledge of Him made Him one-dimensional. Without any dimension there is no depth. Without depth there is no substance, and without substance various things can come through the door of one's imagination because he or she is still shallow and has no real foundation in which to test a matter. Granted, knowledge may be based on the Bi-

ble, but the Christian foundation is not constructed by knowledge, but by a relationship with God that brings a person to a personal knowledge of the person and work of Christ. This construction of the foundation is based on obedience to the Word of God, not simply a knowledge of it.

It is at this moment that I would like to talk about religion. So much of Christianity is based on religious knowledge, doings, and activities, but what constitutes real religion? Scripturally, I know the answer is found in *James 1:27*, but I still struggled with the concept of religion. My perspective of religion consisted of a building with religious rituals and practices. According to Scripture, I knew religion went beyond such a limited premise. I understood to some point that it entailed separation from the world's influence and practical service to those in distress such as widows and the fatherless, but I wanted a clearer, more simple definition. Thankfully, I found it in one of Charles Finney's books. He stated that religion is obeying Christ. The definition of religion was never meant to describe a church affiliation, state, or even certain works and activities; rather, it was to be an active life that was set on walking out the Christian life and calling through obedience.

This brings me back to a Christian who fails to walk out the Christian life in obedience to His Word. They will never develop any real roots in God. A Christian who has no real roots into the very character and ways of God can easily become bored in soul, lean in spirit, and frustrated in understanding. These individuals will either adopt a rigid stance towards the matters of God and become immovable in their one-dimensional understanding, or they will turn to their imagination as to what they think they know about God and try to build on it, or they will begin to seek greater experiences with God.

Experiences will never lead to God; rather, through communion with the Lord, we will be led into experiences with Him by the Holy Spirit. The problem is that when people seek spiritual experiences to fill their life, they will simply open a door that any spirit, seduction, or lie can walk through. This is why when people want to possess more substance in their knowledge of God in their spiritual lives, they need to

realize that they must seek to know and experience God on a spiritual level through wisdom and revelation of the Spirit, and not on an experimental one that opens him or her to the spiritual realm, but is void of the truth of God's Word. Keep in mind, all spiritual experiences must be backed by the full counsel of God's Word, confirmed by the consistency of intent, spirit, or meaning of the Word, and come into line with every line of its truths.

The other problem with seeking the spiritual without regard to the confirmation of the truth of God's Word is that one might encounter what some refer to as enlightenment or spiritual revelation, but it will miss the mark of possessing a right spirit. It is out of such erroneous heresy that cults are born. Behind every cult is a false light that hides or promotes an anti-Christ spirit.

I did not seek experience to know God; rather, I turned to my imagination of what I thought God would be to bring dimension to Him. Granted, I had Scriptures to back up my ideas of God, but my ideas were not mixed with faith (*Hebrews 4:2*). In misdirected experiences, people exalt a wrong spirit, but when one must resort to personal imagination to bring some personality to God to add depth to Him, he or she will demote God to a comprehensible, controlled box.

It is important to point out that true faith has substance to it. In other words, the substance is the reality of the unseen: the reality of God based on what is true. When imagination is in operation, it simply is a matter of ignorance and inexperience, and it is where one seeks to imagine God, rather than know God.

The God I possessed lacked dimension; therefore, I resorted to my imagination to bring a deeper understanding to Him. I did not realize that I was seeking to know in greater depth the attributes of God and my imagination could not even begin reach such heights of understanding (*Isaiah 55:8-9*). Since it was a foolish, immature error on my part, God was gracious enough to show me that the god (idol) my imagination erected was unrealistic and would greatly disappoint me.

Eventually I learned that the type of understanding I was seeking only

came by revelation of the Holy Spirit. I discovered that as the Holy Spirit illuminated the aspects of God's attributes, that the personality of His person became more real and defined to me. Since Jesus is the revelation of the Godhead in bodily form, I began to understand more of the personality of God as I grew in the glorious knowledge of Jesus. It was then that I realized I had most of my spiritual pursuits all backwards.

It seems that I spent too much of my early spiritual life starting from the wrong angle, traveling the wrong direction, and ending up nowhere in my understanding about God. I believe that I probably made every possible wrong turn, and missed opportunities that were in front of me because of my ignorance and inexperience, setting me up to be misguided by faulty compasses.

Since we are about to embark on a new year, perhaps it would be wise for each of us to examine our map as to our spiritual location, and make sure we are not walking in a wrong direction. It is clear that Jesus' coming is nearer than last year and the signs of the times are pointing to His blessed return. But, we need to be prepared spiritually, looking in the right direction, and walking towards the finish line.

We at Gentle Shepherd Ministries want to wish you a glorious New Year. May 2014 be a year of growth, revelation, and advancement in your spiritual odyssey. †

QUOTABLE

Faith means implicit confidence in Jesus, and that requires not intellect only but a moral giving over of myself to Him It is this point of moral surrender that nearly every man "shies off." We sentimentally believe, and believe, and believe, and nothing happens. We pray "Lord, increase our faith," and we try to pump up the faith, but it does not come. What is wrong? The moral surrender has not taken place. Will I surrender from the real centre of my life, and deliberately and willfully stake my confidence on what Jesus Christ tells me? - Oswald Chambers

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

REDEEMING THE TIME

Q: "Since we are coming into a new year I would like to know what it means to redeem the time."

A: Amazingly, Jeannette wrote about the subject of time in her article for this month. She made reference to redeeming the time, but I will be glad to elaborate on it further. "Redeem" in this context means to buy up, ransom, rescue from loss, or improve opportunity. In light of eternity, man's time on earth is but a vapor. He appears on the scene for a short season and will disappear; therefore, he has very little time to get it right as far as his spiritual life is concerned.

The beauty about the Word of God is that it will tell you what it means to redeem the time. Consider what *Ephesians 5:14* states, "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." The first thing we must note is the state that is present when Christians need to be alerted to redeeming the time—they are asleep in some way in their spiritual life. Those who need to be awakened from an ineffective state are those who have been dulled down by worldliness, put to sleep by unholy mixtures, sedated by a mediocre life of just getting by, and those who settle for living on the outer edges of God's blessing and purpose for their lives, but never fully entering into His fullness.

When people are spiritually asleep they are missing various opportunities to do what is right, and what is at hand to do for the sake of Christ and His kingdom. These individuals need to be rescued from an ineffective state by the sharp edge of the Sword of God's Word and by the prompting, or reproving, of the Holy Spirit. This means they need to waken to their state so that they can ransom what is left or is available. To ransom the time that is left will require them to walk in the light.

Once the person is spiritually awakened, he or she has the opportunity to walk in the light. *Ephesians 5:15* tells us what it means to walk in the light, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." To

walk in the light will ensure that a person is walking circumspectly. "Circumspectly" means to walk in an exact way, to diligently stay the course, and to line up to what is perfect or mature. In essence, it means to walk in the ways of righteousness. The Word of God is clear about what it means to walk circumspectly or upright. Failing to do so shows contempt towards God's way, and unbelief towards His Word. For this reason Christians need to take heed. Those who play at Christianity, instead of walking it out, will become empty in their lives. Those who give the impression of walking the Christian life, but fail to do so, are hypocrites. Those who claim to be Christian but insist on maintaining their old ways are fools.

The Bible is also clear that we need to be wise to redeem the time. *Ephesians 5:16* tells us that the reason we need to redeem the time is because the days are evil. The wise will see what is down the line and will buy up the opportunities to spiritually prepare for challenges. They will rescue opportunities in order to avoid devastating losses, and they will seize on any opportunity to serve the Lord and bring Him glory.

Ephesians 5:17 summarizes the fruit of those who walk in the light, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Doing the will of God is meat to our souls. It is the way in which all righteousness is properly exercised and spiritual matters discerned. And, doing the will of God is the only way we can be assured that we are redeeming the time. †

IMMUTABLE

Fountain of being! Source of Good!
 Immutable Thou dost remain!
 Nor can the shadow of a change
 Obscure the glories of Thy reign.

Earth may with all her powers dissolve,
 If such the great Creator will;
 But Thou for ever art the same,
 I AM is Thy memorial still.

— From *Walker's Collection*



TIME

By Jeannette Haley

*"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, And we are not saved."
— Jeremiah 8:20*

It is invisible, yet we say that it "marches on," "flies," or "drags by." We talk about it "beginning," and we talk about it "ending." We can mourn over its passing, and wish we could make it stand still in our most ecstatic moments, or we can wish it would "hurry up" and usher us into a better, future state. We waste it on the one hand, but then lament that we never have enough of it on the other hand. This is the thing we call "time."

Many years ago I took my art students on a "field trip" to meet Dr. A. Lyall Lush, and see his artwork. Dr. Lush and his wife Jean (author, counselor and speaker) lived in an English (replicated) home in Edmonds, Washington. He was a genius in various pursuits, and an acclaimed artist, art teacher, and philosopher. I remember him lecturing my art class that time did not move as we generally think of it, but rather we are the ones who are moving, and passing through time. I'm not sure to this day if I fully grasp the concept that he expounded upon, but to me the gist of it was the fact that time is a stationary state through which each of us travels while in this world. William Shakespeare put it this way, "All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances, And one man in his time plays many parts...." In *James 4:14* we read, "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Jesus taught, "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away" *Luke 21:33*. Thus, we can conclude that time is indeed stationary as is God's Word and His truth, and we are the ones sojourning through this world for a very brief time.

Philosophy aside, we read in *Ecclesiastes 3:1*, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" followed by ten verses that contain the beautiful and poetic expressions of "time" in relationship to the most basic elements of human life. What we, who live in these

"end times" need to remember is that God knows, and sees everything that concerns us. *Psalm 31:15* says, "My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me." The Psalmist knew that his life consisted of periods of "time," or "seasons" through which he must live. He knew that there were times of rejoicing, and gladness, but also times of great trial, testing, and tribulation when the soul can feel utterly hopeless, helpless, and abandoned. The good news is, we are never out of His sight, regardless of how the darkness may press against us, bringing waves of fear and depression for Jesus promised those who belong to Him, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" *Matthew 28:20b*.

Perhaps there are times when you can relate to Job, (as I have on occasion) who lamented, "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" *Job 23:8-10*. "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope" *Job 14:2*. Throughout Job's trials and tribulations he was unaware that Satan was behind it all (with God's permission), but he held fast to his great faith in Jehovah God, knowing that every detail of his life was known to God, and that after being tried in the furnace of affliction, he would come forth as gold. A fitting quote from Oswald Chambers is, "Faith is deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you may not understand at the time."

It is only natural that in our fallen and limited state we struggle and strain to try and make sense of things that we, and others go through that (to our way of thinking) are unfair, tragic, senseless, and sometimes just plain "wrong." Yet, as Oswald Chambers taught, at the core of life is tragedy. It is a fact of reality. We can do our best to avoid it in its many forms and manifestations, but inevitably tragedy will touch each life in some way. Indeed, there is "A time to be born, and a time to die" *Ecclesiastes 3:2a*. The wise consider their immortality, and with

David pray, "LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am" *Psalm 39:4*. Why is it so important to face our frailty? The answer is in the next verse, "Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity" *verse 5*. Wisely, David concludes, "my hope is in thee" *verse 7b*. Is there any other who can save us, and give us eternal life? The answer is no, yet multitudes choose to continue spending their days on the broad path that leads to destruction.

Moses prayed, *Psalm 90:12*. There are important points to consider from this verse. 1) "Teach us." How often do we stop and consider who the greatest Teacher is, and ask His counsel? Concerning counsel, King David wrote, "I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins [innermost being] also instruct me in the night seasons" *Psalm 16:7*. (Addition mine.) Consider *Psalm 73:24* which says, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." Isaiah declared, "...the LORD of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." Why should we languish in the misery of confusion, lost in a foggy sea of ignorance, while sailing toward the abyss when our mighty God has given us great comfort through His Word? Meditate on this powerful verse from *Jeremiah 32:19*, "Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." There are two main ways the Lord counsels us; namely, through His Word, and by the Holy Spirit. By the way, Christian friend, trying to depend on either one without the other is like trying to walk through life on one leg apart from any type of crutch.

2) Moses is asking the Lord to teach us to number our days. What does it mean to number our days? Can we count ahead, and know the number of days we have on this earth? Of course not, for only God knows the number of our days. What he is asking is for wisdom to be able

to redeem the time that we do have, whether it is one hour, one day, one week, or a month, or even a year. *"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them"* Ecclesiastes 12:1. Redeeming the time means to make sure that your life is established in Christ, that your salvation is made sure, that your life counts for eternity, *one day at a time*, so that when you stand before Him to give an account of how you spent the precious days you were given on this earth, you will be able to give an answer that is acceptable to God, brings Him glory, and insures that you will not be ashamed before Him. Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth, *"But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away"* 1 Corinthians 7:29-31. Therefore, God's people need to remember Paul's admonition to the Colossians, *"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God"* Colossians 3:1-3.

3) Back to Moses' prayer in Psalm 90:12, *"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."* Is it really all that important to apply our hearts to wisdom? Proverbs 1:7 tells us, concerning wisdom, *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."* Concerning wisdom, James exhorts, *"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed"* James 1: 5, 6. If we are to "number our days" and "redeem the time," we must seek the Lord, and ask for His

perspective on how we truly view our time on this earth. Do we tend to think that we will always have "tomorrow" to draw nigh to the Lord, asking Him to search our hearts, to study His Word and meditate on it, to pray, to do that which He asks us to do, or to do what should be done today? Or, do we find excuses to waste the time He has given us in worldly, vain, and meaningless pursuits?

Each season of life brings its joys and sorrows, challenges and opportunities. You have been given the ability to choose how you will live in each season of your life, which really comes down to who, or what, you are living for. Are you living for self, and your selfish, vain pursuits? Or are you living for the One who gave Himself for you? It is so easy to procrastinate, so easy to put off surrendering all to Christ, so easy to sit on the fence remaining neither "hot" nor "cold." But, the Lord says to you, *"behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation"* 2 Corinthians 6:2b.

Will you, right now, stop and pray with all your heart this prayer of King David? *"But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O LORD, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation. Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered... out of the deep waters. Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it"* Psalm 69:13, 14a, 18a.

May this New Year find us all *"redeeming the time, because the days are evil"* Ephesians 5:16. Amen. †

COMMENTS FROM FRIENDS AND READERS

"I enjoy talking to you on the phone, and asking questions about the Bible. I also enjoy your newsletters every month. I want to thank you for that wonderful Bible study book! I will get good use out of it." - ID

"I think the work the church does is wonderful but I feel your ministry is just as important...I want to help support your work and Rayola's books! God has given you a gift and I feel it's important to support it in any way I can." - ID

"VERY good article! [The Compass]. And, I'm not being "flippant" by any stretch of the imagination, but as I

read through Rayola's analogy, all I could think was "Location, location, location"!! [Article, *Because I Say So*] Spot on, Girl! After Part 1 and Part 2, there should be NO doubt whatsoever as to the course we should live out our life! This Scripture came to mind, and it's one that the 'Name It and Claim It' crowd has probably NEVER owned or 'claimed': *1Pet. 4:13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. [Who is Really Saved?]* Rayola, thank you for doing such a wham-bang explanation of this question! It's one that we ALL wrestle with on a daily basis for the most part! I'm THANKFUL to God that I don't have to wrestle with that question when it comes to GSM! May Adonai bless you all richly from His hand of abundance!" - FL

"My dearest friend and sister in Christ...gave me several of your newsletters. I have been blessed by them in many ways...she also gave me a copy of your book, *Hidden Manna*. What a wealth of information. I have read it several times and always find new information. I treasure it...." - ILL

"Thank you for the book, *More Nuggets From Heaven!* Rayola, you're an amazing writer...looking forward to getting into the book and glean what you have to share!" - WA

"I have only skim-read your articles so far and look forward to reading them more completely and drawing more encouragement from them. We are 'on the same page'. A key verse of my dearest beloved in life and in death was Romans 8:28. Her life was a very real statement of that truth, and she was characteristically content and secure in His love - the manner of her death magnified it to me. It seems that our best path is to get on, imperfect as my efforts may be, with loving God (1st commandment) and trusting Him for the presently unknowable. The fact that I could see no good at all in her suffering (not even the tiniest bit, but a great deal of evil) does not mean that God did not (still does) use it for good. I really believe that He does. He is that wonderful!" - AU

Gnosticism

By Rayola Kelley

Have you ever noticed how Christians seem to operate in extremes? Balance in the life of a Christian is a must in order to avoid the extremes of religious foolishness such as embracing false doctrines that are plaguing the church today. Only God's perspective can bring balance. There are two extremes that Christians can end up pursuing and both are referred to in 1 Corinthians 1:23, "*But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock and unto the Greeks foolishness.*" The Jews sought after signs and wonders; therefore the simplicity of the Gospel tripped them up because they looked for spiritual manifestations. Their focus kept them from accepting the work of the cross that ended with the greatest miracle ever, the resurrection of Christ. Jesus stated that only a wicked generation seeks after signs (how much of the church is seeking signs today?). Wickedness always blinds people to the reality of the Gospel, causing them to overlook salvation.

The second thing people are searching for in the spiritual realm is spiritual knowledge. The Greeks pursued this type of knowledge with an unrelenting tenacity. The preaching of the cross sounded foolish to their intellectual ears. After all, they could not stoop to accept a message that was not shrouded in complicated knowledge, stamped with various degrees, upheld by the greatest philosophers, or recognized by the most popular schools of thought. This Gospel promoted saving grace instead of salvation by works, faith in the unseen rather than that which could be evaluated by the senses and the mind, and one absolute truth as opposed to various truths that could be explored, and only one road to heaven. To the "enlightened" Gnostic mindset such concepts had to be archaic-absolute foolishness!

Today many in the church are pursuing after knowledge. Knowledge only puffs up, it can never edify. The problem with this pursuit is that it is misguided. It is true that we need to seek for knowledge, but it must be directed at growing in the knowledge

of the Person of Jesus who is all truth. Intellectual knowledge at best is carnal. It will ultimately demean, overlook and/or reject the simplicity of Christ and the cross.

This knowledge that is gaining momentum in the church today often goes one step further to embrace what is called "revelation knowledge." This "revelation knowledge" has nothing to do with a greater revelation of Jesus Christ. It actually refers to esoteric (hidden truths) that are revealed by spirit guides or demons supernaturally to the initiated who become part of the inner core or the elite.

This pursuit for "revelation knowledge" is called Gnosticism. Gnosticism is considered the doctrine of the antichrist. It is linked to Freemasonry and is behind every cult, the New Age movement and the Manifest Sons of God. This doctrine has certain central beliefs that can be found at the root of the false movements that have gained a tremendous inroad into the church at the expense of ignorant and vulnerable people. Following are some of the heretical beliefs:

- 1) Their goal is to attain self-awareness as a being, or in other words, a god-consciousness. (what about self-denial to realize the person of Christ?).
- 2) The real world is spirit; therefore, the material realm is a snare (what about the fact that man was created by God with spirit, soul and body?).
- 3) All men possess a divine spark, a part of the divine being, but it has been imprisoned in human bodies (notice how sin - our fallen condition - and free will is not mentioned).
- 4) Reawakened by knowledge (not the Holy Spirit), which is considered the divine element can restore man to his proper home in the transcendent spiritual realm (so much for redemption, Christ's death on the cross was all in vain).

Simply put, Gnosticism does not recognize the redemption of the body, only the transformation of the soul. This transformation can only be obtained through secret doctrines and rites associated with the initiated (the "apostles" and "prophets"). These doctrines and rites supposedly have the ability to rescue the divine spark from its evil material environment and be reunited with the divine (so much for

the fact there is only one true God)!

Gnostic doctrines include extreme indoctrination through repetition, aggressive, twisted and unscriptural teachings, and choruses that have been readily accepted by the church. Certain religious practices are promoted that supposedly help a person to realize their divine spark or immortality. Emphasis on fasting, keeping the law, worldly repentance, and holiness are few of the works that are encouraged by those who are advocating this antichrist doctrine. The Apostle John wrote a gospel and three epistles to combat this antichrist doctrine. What a tragedy that great numbers of Christians today are becoming deluded because they fall for this lie.

What are you pursuing today? Is it "revelation knowledge" or the revelation of the Person of Jesus? Truthfully, if you are not pursuing to know Christ intimately, you are chasing after a substitute that will not only fail you, but could also bring judgment upon you.

We want to thank everyone who prays for us and supports us. Above all else, know that it is our heart that you fall in love with the One who loved you enough to die for you. May His reality consume your lives. We trust God will richly bless you for your faithful support of this ministry. ✚
(This article is a reprint for your edification.)

QUOTES BY ABRAHAM HESCHEL

"A religious man is a person who holds God and man in one thought at one time, at all times, who suffers harm done to others, whose greatest passion is compassion, whose greatest strength is love and defiance of despair."

"Self-respect is the fruit of discipline: the sense of dignity grows with the ability to say no to oneself."

"God is of no importance unless He is of supreme importance."

"The greatest lie the Devil ever told was that you could win souls with entertainment." - Charles Spurgeon

"People will easily believe almost anything except the truth." - J. Haley