

GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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

REFORMATION OR REVIVAL?

Discipleship Series 14 By Rayola Kelley

We have been considering various aspects of the Christian life.



Last month I dealt with the subject of conversion. People are being converted to embrace some type of worldview according to philosophies of the world or the belief systems of man. Such a conversion will determine the attitudes and lifestyles of those who are converted.

When it comes to religion, conversion can lead to reformation or revival. Recently, I just finished reading a book about the revival that was prevalent in Charles Finney's ministry in New York in the 1800's called "*Holy Spirit Revivals*." The stories are incredible. One of the most popular stories surrounding this revival had to do with Charles Finney being invited to the next community to preach. Mr. Finney always prayed for his text. He was given the text of *Genesis 19:14*: "*Get up, get out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city!*"

This text was in reference to the destruction of Sodom. As he was preaching, he noticed that the men looked angry. He could not figure out why they would be offended from this simple text. To make a long story short, he later found out that the community he was preaching in was called Sodom, and the man that had invited him to the community was named Lot.

We tend to remember such stories, but my goal in reading this book was to understand the environment that was present for such a revival to take place. Stories may inspire us in our faith, but coming to terms with the environment is how we can glean

from the experiences of others.

Environment has to do with the state or disposition. State or disposition is determined by the spirit and attitude that is present. As I mediated on the environment conducive to revival, I could see a pattern. Note, I said a pattern, not a method, but a pattern that was obvious throughout Mr. Finney's book. The Bible talks about patterns. They can be followed, but to follow a pattern does not necessarily mean you will always get the same results.

Before I present to you the pattern that I observed through this incredible revival, I must establish what real revival is. When the Church attempts to come back to center to God, its calling and responsibilities, it has been known to work within the two environments that I have already made reference to: that of reformation and revival. Reformation points to reforming in the way something is being done. Revival is an awakening out of an indifferent or dead state. In fact, revival occurs when one is actually awakened to his or her spiritual state. Reformation involves changing our outward conduct, while revival entails a total transformation of the inward state or disposition. You can have reformation without revival, but you will not have revival without reformation following.

It is easy to study these two environments. Because of King Hezekiah's personal spiritual awakening or revival, he brought great reformation to Israel during his initial reign. As you study this reformation, you will see that the people of Judah may have complied outwardly to godly cleansing and separation, but under the next king, they went right back into their idolatrous and pagan ways. Therefore, reformation may result in people lining up to godly practices outwardly, while still maintaining a mixture of idolatry and pagan preferences.

A good example of revival is the story of Jonah and Nineveh. Nineveh was a wicked city, doomed by God.

However, a reluctant Jonah was sent to the people of Nineveh to warn them of the judgment that was about to befall them. Out of Jonah's preaching came true revival. These wicked people were truly awakened to their spiritual state and responded accordingly, and judgment was stayed for many years afterwards.

Today there is a lot of talk about revival, and some reformation, but is the environment surrounding the professing Church conducive to revival? There are individuals who are experiencing personal revival, but could the visible Church be a candidate for a true revival?

As I consider the trends, attitudes and emphasis of the professing Church, my answer to whether it is a candidate for true revival would be a resounding, "NO!" Granted, it is not impossible for revival to occur, but in its present state, the professing Church is not even close to experiencing a revival. I realize this blunt honesty will not make me popular, but as I considered the environment of Charles Finney's day there is no way that the environment surrounding the professing or visible Church would ever encourage a true revival.

There are three ingredients necessary for true revival. The first ingredient is God. Revivals are a sovereign move of God. They are done outside of religion and man's traditions and efforts. This is why many in the professing Church can talk about revival, but they most likely will not experience it.

In the past I experienced a revival. It was not on the scale of Charles Finney's, but the one thing that I was quite aware of was that it was a total, sovereign work of God outside of the church system. I witnessed an incredible move of the Spirit upon the hearts of people. They were being awakened to their spiritual condition, and as a result, they were open to the salvation message. As you read Charles Finney's book, he likewise was aware of this fact. He never took any glory for what God was doing. He was simply a messenger, a mouthpiece for God.

The second ingredient is referred to as a spirit of prayer. Nothing gets accomplished without prayer. But, this is not just any prayer. This prayer is inspired by the Spirit, is in tune with the heart and work of God, and is steadfast in seeing a matter fulfilled for the glory of God. There were times recorded in Mr. Finney's book when the Spirit lifted from the work of revival. Committed saints got on their faces and prayed that the Spirit would not lift, but continue to do the work of revival in the hearts of people. In fact, these individuals would mourn and wrestle before God if the Spirit was missing.

The third ingredient involves preaching. However, the main emphasis of the message had to do with sin. Charles Finney's anointed preaching was a sword that went into the very spirit and soul of people to expose their hopeless condition that was wrought by sin. In his book he made this very profound statement: "Ministers generally avoid preaching what the people before them will understand. They will preach to them about other people, and the sins of other people, instead of addressing them and saying, 'You are guilty of these sins' and 'The Lord requires this of you.' They often preach about the Gospel instead of preaching the Gospel. They often preach about sinners instead of preaching to them" (*Holy Spirit Revivals*, pg. 68).

Preaching that addresses where the people are in their spiritual lives gives the Holy Spirit something to work with. If a person is not being made aware of his or her sin, the Holy Spirit will have no means to convict or reprove him or her of sin. Sadly, people are not concerned about their sin breaking fellowship with God; rather, their main emphasis, even in some Christian circles, is that they want to feel good in their sin. They want to be esteemed in their sin, and be placated and pampered in their darkness.

This brings me to another important point. True revival begins in the Church. People who consider themselves to be Christians need to also be awakened to their spiritual condition. Finney wrote that there was a man who was a leader in his church. He even conversed with the

pastor on various occasions. One day he approached Mr. Finney concerning the fact that his prayer to have all that God had for him was unanswered. Mr. Finney told him, he must be praying with a wrong motive. The man was insulted by the truth, but as he went to prayer, God exposed his selfish motive. Before it was over, the man had such a deep sense of his sinful condition, he even asked God to take his very life. It was from this premise that the man was finally converted.

The truth is, without the awareness of sin there can be no revival. The main work of the Holy Spirit is to awaken us to our sin, the righteousness of God, and the judgment to come. If the issue of sin is missing from preaching, there will be no real premise or anointing in which to awaken a soul to his or her need of repentance from sin and conversion to righteousness. Without true repentance and conversion, a person has no assurance of being spared from the impending judgment that has already been pronounced upon those who belong to this present age of rebellion, idolatry and paganism.

As I considered my own situation, I realized the greatest transformations that took place in my life were when I was the most aware of my sinful condition. At such times, I could do nothing more than cry out for mercy, knowing that I deserved great judgment for my condition and actions. In such times, I also sense how far Christ had to go to reach me in the depth of my sin. He had to come from heaven as the sinless Lamb of God in order to die on the cross. He then went into the depths of the earth in order to be raised in newness of life.

This brings us to the environment of the professing Church. It may preach about various matters, but in some cases the matter of sin has been ignored, watered down or totally cast aside. Without the awareness of sin, a person will have no need to repent. And, as Jesus stated, we must repent or perish (*Luke 13:3, 5*).

Without repentance, a person will never turn around in order to be truly converted to the righteous ways of God. This brings me back to the pattern. The pattern of revival begins with the sovereign move of God upon the hearts of people. In this move, the Holy

Spirit impacts a person in such a way that he or she feels totally undone and exposed. This usually occurs when certain people are interceding on behalf of others in compliance to the Spirit, or there is anointed preaching that strips away cloaks of delusion and religion exposing people's true spiritual condition.

Once an individual has a true sense of his or her spiritual condition, then he or she will be ready to repent. Repentance implies one has changed his or her will, mind or direction, which causes an about-face in relationship to God, sin and life. However, an about-face is just the beginning. Christians must face God in order to be converted to His way. Obviously, a person who is converted to some kind of religious code will reform his or her way. However, when a person is truly converted to the Person of the Lord Jesus, recognizing his or her need for forgiveness for his or her wretched condition, revival takes place in the inner man.

Sadly, sin has been negated, repentance has been perverted, and conversion has been misrepresented in the postmodern churches. Today conversion is a matter of saying a sinner's prayer, rather than a total conversion to a particular Person and His work of redemption.

Clearly, revival will result in conversion, while reformation often just produces outward change. This brings me to a very good question. Many people may be reformed in their practices, but how many of them have been revived to walk in the ways of righteousness? The problem with reformation is that a person can take pride in the fact he or she no longer sins a certain way, but, without conversion, such pride often ends in self-righteousness and delusion. Sadly, this person will not see that he or she has never been converted to what is right. These individuals consider themselves in light of what they are no longer doing, instead of in the light of the righteous ways of God.

In reading about the revivals that took place in China in the early 1900's missionary James O. Frazier pinpointed five manifestations of the Holy Spirit that were consistently evident in these revivals. They are as follows:

Conviction of sin in light of God's holiness.

FIGHT, FLIGHT, FAINT OR FAITH?

By Jeannette Haley

*"Know this also, that in the last days perilous times shall come."
2 Timothy 3:1*

Anyone who thinks that the world is not changing for the worst must dwell on another planet, or is completely deluded. It is no secret that we are living in a hostile environment—one in which those who fear and love God are becoming marginalized by those who hate anything decent, moral or Christian. That goes for Judaism as well, although it appears that most in the Jewish community continue to remain clueless to the looming danger. Many students of eschatology fear that the "beast" of Marxism, or Communism, has come back to life and is determined to exterminate all those who believe in their right to freedom, and who love God.

Thanks to the "information highway" (Internet) and the only unbiased news source available (FOX) people can be kept abreast of the "news behind the news." Add to that conservative and Christian talk radio, DVD's, books and other printed material, and you have more information available to the public than at any other period in history. No one in America or any other developed country has an excuse to be uninformed. There are times, however, when I consider it a mixed blessing.

While people need to be aware of current events, especially in light of biblical prophecy, I have found, at least for myself, that a continual, steady diet of bad news can result in a wide range of emotional reactions and responses. I believe I am not alone when I admit that my feelings can fluctuate between shock, anger, dread, grief and sorrow, to a sense of expectancy due to prophecies being fulfilled before our very eyes.

In Jan Markell's May 7 article, entitled "For Such a Time as This," she wrote: "This office has been receiving communications in the last few months revealing that some Christians 1) Are discouraged by the level of struggle they are facing; 2) Are tired of bad news and don't wish

to hear or read anything negative; 3) Feel they are being tested beyond what they can endure; 4) Feel a sense of hopelessness in many areas from finances, to relationships, to grief over the dismantling of America. Some express fear along with grief and anxiety. Christians can shoot their wounded, so I hope no one considers these people to be lesser Christians who need chastisement. They need encouragement. Nobody said it would be easy to be born for such a time as this.

"Ministries like this one could compromise as many churches have. We could switch and present 'feel good' articles and 'happy talk' radio. We could stop sharing the inconvenient truth. Well, we will not.

"The Bible says that when unrighteous people rule a nation, the people groan (Prov. 29:2). Thus, many in America are literally groaning and weeping. It would be better to be down on your knees, praying without ceasing for our great nation. As stated above in point 4, many are grieving at the loss of the America we once knew." (Full article: <http://bible-prophecy-today.blogspot.com/2009/05/for-such-time-as-this.html>)

Granted, bad news is "discouraging." It is unsettling, and depressing. It can undermine and erode our sense of security and confidence in our earthly life. After all, for 233 years, America has been the bastion of freedom and prosperity, and most Americans blithely assumed that it would never fall, in spite of the lessons of history, and biblical warnings and prophecies to the contrary. Most Christians have assumed that God would always bless and favor America. Therefore, is it any wonder that so many are reeling from shock at the unchecked evil that is eroding and threatening every level of our society? People who have lost jobs, homes, and their retirement along with their way of life know what it is like to have the rug literally pulled out from underneath them.

How are born again Christians to respond? Should we grab our guns and grub, head for the hills and dig in, or should we stand still and fight? Should we give in to our fears and faint? (Do not think you are "beyond" fainting. Many of God's kings, priests and prophets have experienced that emotion.) The truth is, we, as God's

people, need to stop, fall on our faces, and in faith seek the Lord for His wisdom, perspective and leading. The other thing we must do is to ask the Lord to help us think "outside of our comfortable box" by tossing out personal pet theories, ideas, concepts, formulas, and conclusions concerning how everything is going to play out. With Job, we need to humble ourselves and quickly come to the place where we realize that God Almighty is sovereign, and that man's best attempts to put Him in some "understandable" box is silly and futile.

Some of the more dominant theories (theologies) are as follows: The Church is not going to go through "the great tribulation." Yet, the Bible does not uphold this conclusion, but rather assures us that, rather, we will be spared from the wrath of God. One widespread teaching promoted by the Manifest Sons of God and Latter Rain is that there will be a great, worldwide revival, with Jesus "returning" in the "manifest sons" instead of personally and visibly as the Bible affirms. Another false idea is set forth by the Preterists who claim that the apocalyptic prophecies have already been fulfilled, beginning in A.D. 70. How anyone with even a limited understanding of Scripture can come to such a conclusion is mind-blowing, and merely gives evidence to the fact that people will go to great lengths to bend, twist and wrest the Scriptures to support what they want to believe in spite of biblical and historical evidence to the contrary. Of course, there is the other extreme where some believe that Jesus is not coming until after the Millennium, and so forth. There is no end to theories based on Scriptures taken out of context, man's traditions and teachings, limited understanding of both the Bible and history, and just plain wild imaginations that bear more resemblance to Hollywood fantasies than God's Word.

The question remains, how are we to respond to the dismantling of our Constitution and country? Some may insist that the Bible tells us to sit and passively submit to evil rulers. (The Bible and history prove, and condemn, such thinking as suicidal nonsense.) Others believe it is our duty to stand up and fight for our precious

freedoms. Either way, it is time to reflect on King Solomon's words as recorded in Ecclesiastes 3. According to verse 8, there is "A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace." Action, or inaction, for believers depends on God's timing and His will. Those who have "ears to hear" and "eyes to see" will understand. The Prophet Daniel, speaking of the times in which we live, said, ". . . but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits" (Daniel 11:32b). Jesus told us that His sheep know His voice. Therefore, it all comes down to each individual believer "watching and praying" and walking in the Spirit. There is no doubt about it; we are heading into treacherous waters. Playing church will no longer provide a safe haven for members of the lukewarm or worldly Laodicean church.

Are we to fight, or flee? Again, whenever we face such a dilemma, it is wise to go to God's Word to gain wisdom and perspective from examples and principles. We all know that the Lord's people, Israel, fought countless physical battles throughout the Old Testament (and up to the present time.) But, what about Christians? Does God have one set of rules for Israel, and another for Christians? What did Jesus mean in Luke 22:36 where He told His disciples, "But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one." Obviously, Jesus knew that, after His resurrection and ascension, His followers were going to suffer much persecution, and that they needed to be prepared. This was for the purpose of self-defense, and defense of loved ones, not for launching an all-out aggressive, physical assault on the enemy. In essence, Christians are to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16b). If you think that Christians must obey every oppressive law passed down by a wicked, godless government, then you haven't read the Book of Acts lately.

As Christians, if we love our freedom—the freedom to love, worship and serve God, a freedom that millions have fought and died for—then do we not owe them, as well as our

fellow citizens and loved ones our allegiance to stand for, and by, the Constitution of the United States that guarantees such freedom? Keep in mind, Christians have a mandated responsibility from God to preach the Gospel to the entire world, and to make disciples. Without our freedom, carrying out the great commission in obedience to Christ would be greatly hindered, if not rendered impossible.

While we, with Abraham, look for that city not made with human hands, an eternal kingdom being prepared for us, remember that our forefathers, who gave us this Republic, paid dearly for it. Most of the signers of the Constitution gave their lives as a result. Should we do less? The self-indulgence and passivity of most Americans has brought the sleepy, Laodicean church to this midnight hour. Instead of taking advantage of our God-given freedom to live for and in obedience to God, many have squandered away time, money and energy on selfish pursuits. It is vital that there be true repentance and turning to God that He may have mercy and forgive us, but not so that we can return to our selfish lifestyles.

Concerning a "time to flee," *Proverbs 22:3 and 27:12* says, "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished." As surely as there is a time to take a stand and fight, there is also a time to flee. (See *Matthew 24:16-22*.) Each person must do that which the Holy Spirit instructs, and not listen to or follow any other voice. Therefore, God's people need to be prepared at all times, while continuing to do the work of the Lord, wherever He has placed them. Remember Nehemiah and the builders of the wall at Jerusalem, "For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me...our God shall fight for us" *Nehemiah 4:18, 20b*.

Bad news, especially that of the stature facing us today, involving such topics as nuclear attack, terrorist attack, flu epidemics, food shortages, and so forth are depressing enough, but now that our government has turned its guns on "We the People," the result can understandably be faintness of heart. *Proverbs 13:12* says, "Hope deferred maketh the

heart sick . . ." Let us face it, the hope of most Americans has been, or is, directed towards temporal things that cannot offer real security, either in this world or in the next. Such hope is ill founded at best and disastrous at worst. Therefore, may we take into our minds and hearts the eternal and never-failing Scriptures: "Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty. I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD" *Psalms 27:11-14*. Is your spirit afraid and feeling faint? God declares, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee: yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" *Isaiah 41:10*. "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" *Isaiah 40:31*.

Of course, in order to be encouraged by the Lord, you must receive His Word, and His Spirit, by faith. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" *Hebrews 11:6*. We must settle within our hearts if we can stand and firmly declare, with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" *Job 13:16a*. We can only come to this point if we know Him, not just of Him. Therefore, may we all have "ears to hear" when the Spirit calls, ready to listen and obey; willing to heed His instructions, for we have this promise, "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" *Romans 8:17*. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" *Revelation 21:7*. †

"But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off." - *Psalms 37:38*

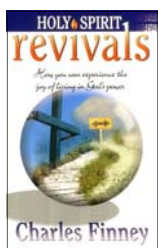
Revelation of Jesus: We must behold the Son to begin to grasp His grace as our Redeemer and His glory as Lord.

Understanding the truth: God's truth must be presented so that people can clearly see their spiritual ineptness and condition.

Outpouring of love: Godly love is the only fruit that clearly identifies Christians. One of the major sins that will hinder revival, agreement, and growth in Jesus' Church is unforgiveness. Being unforgiving breeds anger, conflict, bitterness, and revenge.

Anointing of Power: The Holy Spirit is the One who brings such anointing to preaching, teaching and evangelism. Anointing breaks the yoke upon people.

My question to you is have you truly been converted to the person of Jesus Christ, resulting in being revived from that which was dead? When was the last time that you were undone by the Spirit of God moving upon your life in deep conviction of sin? When was the last time you repented because you were lifeless or near death in your spiritual life? Only the Lord can show you these matters, but if you are tired of nominal or lifeless Christianity, God is always near those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit. The prophet Isaiah put it best: *"For thus saith the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the heart of the contrite ones (Isaiah 57:15).* †



**LONG FOR TRUE REVIVAL?
Here is a must read!**

HINDRANCES TO REVIVALS by Charles G. Finney—Part 1 (1874)

www.gospeltruth.net/1868_75Independence/740326_hindrances_a.htm

LETTERS & EMAILS

“. . . sadly many people who think they are not out [Word of Faith Cult] really are not because they hang onto some of their pet WOF traditions and doctrines. They will talk about the great end time revival coming, or the great end time wealth transfer, or they will stress the importance of positive confessions in their lives. They are still trying to have their best life now. . . It is a very strong delusion and it will not go easily. It will embed itself into our secret hearts and continue to influence us until we recognize it for what it is. There is great resistance, especially among pastors, to acknowledge and completely repent of involvement in this. They want to hang on to little pieces here and there.” - TX

“Bibles being burned and gay pride being celebrated in Muslim territory, really great for any kind of Christian witness. Stand up Church, where are you. Where are the letters being sent to the President. They read real letters, not e-mails.” - WA

“I guess the question is.....How do you stand against something that cannot be stopped???? Sometimes I think....."Hunker down and wait till the storm passes (until Jesus returns). I guess there is some moderation in all the above mentioned. When the Lord started to build His church, the last thing He said was the first thing the disciples had to do. They were told to 'Go and preach! Baptize! Make disciples!' Many things, BUT they had to go to Jerusalem and **WAIT**. Wait for the outpouring of His spirit. **THEN** you will be witnesses, endued with power! I try to share that if you are not under God's protection, then you are not protected. **ESPECIALLY** now and into the days ahead. Sometimes I feel that we should not take a stand **AGAINST** all of the things coming at us, but rather take a stand **FOR** God.” - CO

“We have been so challenged and blessed by the messages you are getting out. Thanks a thousand times over.” - MT

“And these are the people [Mr. Hilton and homosexuals] who claim to be 'tolerant' and 'accepting of diversity'.... but he can't have it both ways. Either you are 'tolerant' and 'accepting of one's diversity' (including CHRISTIAN-

ITY) or you cannot expect others to be 'tolerant' of your 'lifestyle'". - AR

“It [pride] does stink. I'm not Stubborn, [nature] but my selfishness in my nature can operate in many of those respects. You betcha I get a revelation of my nature and the different ways it operates. I don't like how my nature has to be in control, needs respect and is indifferent. I don't like how we can become so focused on something that we miss everything around us, which also messes up our priorities. Coming under the meekness and strength of the Spirit is hard. I just love the last part of the [Hidden Manna] seminar is so anointed in showing how when each nature reaches its potential they make up a powerful church for Christ. The part of the Ox coming under His yoke, the Eagle soaring on the wings of the Holy Spirit, the Self-Assured taking on the very Image of Christ and Strong Willed, a lion being tamed under the strength of the Holy Spirit and becoming as meek as a Lamb.” - ID

“You were right about Obama wanting to create a socialistic government.” - FL

THE SEEDS OF ATHEIST SOCIALISM IN AMERICA

“In the case of the ACLU, their target is the American people, and like the Nazis they lie about their reasons. They speak of defending the civil rights of Americans, but that is not true. Just as the Nazis did, they strive to cut the connection of the American people to God, Christian morality, history, and traditions. By doing so, they are cleverly preparing the moral ground in America to cultivate and harvest the Socialist/Atheist seed.

“What they are propagating is not significantly different from the Nazi philosophy. When I point out that Nazi stands for National Socialist and the ACLU has a Communist/Socialist background, it demonstrates the ideological similarities in the two groups. 'I am for socialism, disarmament, and ultimately for abolishing the state itself. I seek social ownership of property, the abolition of the propertied class and sole control by those who produce wealth. Communism is the goal,' stated Roger Baldwin, the founder of the ACLU.” - **Defeating the Totalitarian Lie**, by Hilmar Von Campe, Page 3

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

HAS GOD FORSAKEN AMERICA?

Q: "Are all the terrible things happening to America since Obama was elected a sign that God has removed His hand of protection off of this nation?"

A: You are not alone in wondering if God has truly removed His hand of protection and blessings from this nation. It is important to point out that God is consistent in His ways. In other words, you can actually observe that God works according to a pattern. This pattern is in relationship to His people's spiritual digression. For example, man falls into sin and begins to rebel against God. God then turns him over to taste of and serve the bitter tyranny of his sin with the intent to bring him to repentance. As some people begin to taste the dire consequences of their sin, they begin to cry out (supplication) for mercy and salvation (deliverance) from their oppression. In such a state, God is able to step on the scene and restore these individuals. Restoration brings rest and silence to the land until the cycle repeats itself due to the fallen condition of man. You can clearly observe this cycle and pattern in the Book of Judges.

This cycle applies to those who are God's people. As members of His Church, we must consider where we are in this cycle, and what the precarious events occurring around us reveal about our own relationship with our Lord. It is clear that the Church will be presented in a chaste state to Christ, unblemished by the defilement of the world, but this would involve purging and purifying.

When it comes to God dealing with a nation that is operating in complete opposition against Him, His truths and His people, there is also a clear pattern. First, there are repeated warnings for the nation to repent or turn from its wicked ways. Warning eventually turns into judgment, often resulting in a nation's blessings becoming curses.

Such judgment will start with the shaking of foundations to expose

faulty foundations and sources of idolatry or points of reliance. Such judgment has a two-fold purpose. It will bring people to a place of decision in order to do away with the areas of compromise, as well as bring a separation between light and darkness to expose wickedness. For those who choose the light, it will serve as a time of testing, tribulation or chastisement, but for those who choose darkness, it will actually turn them over to the desire of their delusion to eventually taste the wrath of God. Since judgments are often symbolized by shaking caused by the winds and crashing waves of storms (include economic and political storms) that are brewing on the horizon, we can conclude that God's judgment has begun to shake this nation and its people.

The wrath of God is His anger being poured out on rebellious, unrepentant man. Since believers will be spared from His wrath, we do not have to worry about personally experiencing His anger. However, we must soberly consider how close this country is to experiencing His wrath. We may not taste His anger, but we could very well witness it and feel the ripple affect of it such as Daniel did in his time. For example, much of the leadership is drunk on power at the expense of what is morally just and proper. As a result, will God write this nation's epitaph on the walls of congress just as He did on the walls of Belshazzar's palace in *Daniel 5*, pointing to immediate destruction that will be devoid of any remedy?

Commemorating his hundred days of being in office, a blasphemous painting of the leader of this nation was to be unveiled in New York City. It depicts him as the "messiah" parting the curtain to his reign. Apparently, subtly intertwined in the seal of his reign is the number "666" for the antichrist and his wicked system. Since this wicked imposter also receives undeserved worship from his deluded followers, you wonder if he will receive the same fate as Herod after he arrogantly received worship in *Acts 12:23*: "*And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.*"

Perhaps the insanity of the wick-

edness that is spreading like cancer in this nation will awaken the spirit of the same sleeping giant that was quietly content in its comfort zone in the midst of war and destruction until Pearl Harbor was attacked. Decent, committed patriots of this nation may rise up in one accord to stand for justice with the resolve to fight and protect liberty at any cost against the enemies from within. Such a prospect could lead to a revolution or civil war. Clearly, this nation has offered millions of unborn children, along with its character and morality, on various altars of the world as a means to satisfy its many gods of selfishness, greed and indifference. Therefore, it will not pass through the storms that are now ravishing this country or looming in the near future without being scathed, humbled and brought to the brink of collapse.

Meanwhile, as Christians we must watch and be prepared for the shaking and purging, praying to be found worthy to escape, ready to stand for truth even in the face of persecution and death, and do everything we can to possess our souls in patience, and maintain our lives in righteousness. †

VIRTUE IS ITS OWN REWARD

"Some people complain they are not appreciated for what they do for others. This is a concealed form of approval-seeking. While it is normal to want to feel appreciated, to demand appreciation is to cause yourself suffering.

"Anyone can do kindness for honor. It is a mark of an elevated person to do kindness when he knows he will not receive any praise in return. Instead of telling yourself, 'How awful that my hard work is not appreciated,' tell yourself, 'I can take pleasure in knowing that I help others even though they do not express proper appreciation.'" - (*Rabbi Pliskin's "Gateway to Happiness," p.284*)

"The Constitution ... is a mere thing of wax in the hands of the judiciary which they may twist and shape into any form they please."

--Thomas Jefferson