

GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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

REDEMPTION

Part 7

FAILING TO ENTER IN

By Rayola Kelley

Last month we considered how redemption gives people opportunity to be restored to their original inheritance. For God's people, that restoration has to do with possessing His promises. Such a concept can cause confusion for the people of God. They perceive that promises are simply given to them. It is true that God freely offers His promises by providing the opportunity to possess them, the way to acquire them, and the means of obtaining them, but it is also clear that they must be possessed through patience if they are going to be personally experienced (*Hebrews 6:12*).

Clearly, God wants to bless His people, but He must bring them to a place where they can properly receive His blessings. Blessings are meant to be used as God's means to distribute His promises in such a manner that they would be beneficial to His people as a whole.

As we follow the ways of God, it is clear to see that He must prepare His people to embrace by faith what He has promised. This can be seen in the scriptural examples in the lives of the children of Israel. Before God can bring His people into the place of promise, they must be brought to a state of desperation to produce the necessary environment where judgment upon that which is unacceptable becomes obvious. This judgment ensures separation from that which is devastating to God's people. Such judgment or separation serves as a means to redeem and prepare them for what is beneficial, causing them to walk in deliverance to possess and partake of that which has been promised. It is God's desire ultimately to bring His people to a place of communion with Him. Communion points to agreement and fel-

lowship.

For the people of Israel, God allowed an uncomfortable environment to bring them into the Promised Land as a means to distribute His blessing to them. In the Promised Land, it would afford Him the opportunity to allocate His blessings of abundance to them for their benefit. In turn, these blessings were to be used to honor Him as their God and bless others in personal ways to ensure prosperity and an ongoing inheritance for generations to come.

God had clearly prepared His people in the wilderness to enter the Promised Land. He had closed the way back to an old life of bondage and slavery when the Red Sea closed behind them. He showed them that He was their provider when He provided water and manna to sustain them. He established their spiritual life at Mount Sinai with the giving of Law and the construction of the tabernacle. He prepared them as an army with the battles that had confronted them in the wilderness. He clearly changed their status as slaves in Egypt to become a viable kingdom or nation in the land of Canaan.

Sadly, the children of Israel came up to the very door of opportunity to enter into the Promised Land, but failed to do so. What happened? Clearly, everything was in place for them to realize their inheritance. They had all the tools and means to acquire their possession as a people of Jehovah God. Instead of possessing their inheritance, they stopped dead in their tracks and declared that it was impossible to take possession of that which God had promised them.

The children of Israel serve as a special example to Christians in relationship to possessing the complete or abundant life that has been made

available to us. God has provided us with everything we have need of in relationship to obtaining the life He has ordained for us and the godliness in which to maintain it (*2 Peter 1:3-4*). For instance, the one example that has received my attention the most is that you can come up to all that God promises, but if you never enter into the life or place He has called you to, you will never possess His promises, thereby, obtaining the fullness of your inheritance that has been wrought by His redemption.

It is a sad reality to realize that a whole generation of the children of Israel never partook of the promises of abundance attached to the Promised Land because of the bad report of a few individuals. We need to take these people's example seriously and learn the lessons of why they failed in the end to take possession of what God had promised them. Let their example of failure serve as guideposts or warnings that we, as God's people, soberly take note of for our personal examination and edification.

The one aspect of the Promised Land that was made clear was that to possess its abundance, the people of Israel had to enter into it regardless of the obstacles. God was not calling His people to a place of fantasy where they would encounter some fairytale existence or some mythical land where He would wave a wand and they would suddenly be translated into a special place where all would live happily ever after. For the people to enjoy the fruits of the land they would have to possess it. The reality of it was that they were being prepared as an army and nation to enter into the land to lay claim to it as they defeated and drove out its inhabitants. God had provided all the means to possess it, but now the people had to go forth and take hold of it.

To possess something one must prove he or she is capable and worthy of receiving it. The truth of the matter is you can hand the most valuable prized possession to someone, but if it is not worth fighting for, it is not worth valuing,



laying hold of and maintaining in integrity. This is how man regards what he prizes. He must first choose to value something before he will relentlessly pursue it. He must prize it before he will sacrifice what is necessary to possess it. He must experience the importance of something before he will guard it in a proper and honorable way to maintain the integrity or value of it. Obviously, the people of Israel had to understand the value of what they were about to inherit. The Promised Land had to take on importance to them for them to count the necessary cost to possess it. In turn they would become worthy of receiving the inheritance that had been designated for them, along with the means of maintaining it.

Scripture is clear that as Christians we first must enter through a narrow gate to begin to possess our inheritance (*Matthew 7:13-14*). When you consider the word "enter," it involves seeing something through to the other side. The concept of "narrow" points to a process of "travailing," "struggle," and "difficulty" that would take place before one could actually enter all the way through the gate provided. Obviously, there must be some awareness of those who enter in and through such a gate that what lies on the other side is worth possessing. Jesus stated that where a person's heart is, is where his or her treasure will be. He posed the thought that if a person gains the whole world, but loses his or her soul, what has the individual truly profited? Obviously, that which is to be valued must be properly pursued, treasured and honored in order to receive the promises or inheritance that awaits the recipients.

Hence enters some potent warnings from Jesus. Our Lord warned that many would strive to enter through the gate that leads to a new, abundant life, but few would succeed in doing so (*Luke 13:24*). There was one main reason for such a failure to occur in the lives of those who found themselves striving to find this entryway. These individuals would fail to find this gate. For people to fail to find something, points to the fact that they do not know what they are looking for. They have their

own ideas as to how such an entryway will look and how to enter in. But, the reality is that they will miss the gate of opportunity to enter in because they are blinded to the only gate that the Lord has provided. The gate is marked by the work of redemption wrought on a cross. It is upheld by a distinct call to deny self with the intent of becoming identified with a complete work and application of a personal cross. Such an entry will appear unattractive, insignificant and foolish to those who have their own ideas as to how to enter into the promises of God.

Through the years, I have watched the erection of many gates. Those who have erected these gates have declared that these entrances serve as entryways into the truths of God and into the life that has been promised. Granted these gates might require some type of religious activity that will give the appearance of piety. They might lead into religious places that give the impression that the religion being presented is acceptable and successful. However, the criteria presented is based on the world's evaluation and not on the person or work of Jesus.

Scripture is clear that God provided the entryway that we each must enter in and through to experience the fullness of our inheritance. He has provided the way in which we must walk in order to possess the life that has been made available. This entrance serves as the only door we must enter by and the veil we must enter through to secure this life. On the other side of the gate are not elaborate earthly, religious kingdoms, but a narrow way that is marked by tribulation. *Acts 14:22c* gives us this exhortation as to where the narrow way leads: "...that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

The door that God has provided may seem insignificant or foolish, but it is the only door that will identify each of us to the sheepfold that has been purchased by and belongs to the Lord of lords and King of kings. Jesus referred to those who refuse to humble themselves and enter through the door provided for His sheep as thieves (*John 10:1*). Obviously, such individuals are not only imposters who refuse to accept God's provision, but they want to take possession of the life being of-

fered on their terms. They want to come into the midst of God's people according to their way of thinking and lay claim to something that is not rightfully their possession. They want to take possession of an inheritance that holds no real value to them. They want to benefit from something that they do not prize in an honorable way. In the end, they will take what they want as they trample under foot the real treasures of heaven.

Obviously, individuals who fail to find the right gate will also fail to enter the only door made available to the Lord's sheep. Such failure means they will end up standing far away from it as they become blinded to the only veil that leads into the secret chamber of communion. They may hang around the gate of religious convictions or walk around in the shadows of religious activities, but they will miss the only door and will not be able to see clearly to walk through the veil. Fear of exposure will keep them hidden in the shadows of religion, while the pretense of religion may satisfy their conscience, but they will never know or experience the real treasure of heaven. They may be on the outside looking in, but they will never be on the inside looking up into the glorious face of Jesus. They may be running around the outskirts of communion, but they will never enter into the revelation of His glory.

The Bible is clear. There is only one entryway, one door of opportunity and one veil that leads into blessed communion. The gate is Jesus' redemption; the door is the person of Jesus, and the veil points to total identification with the ministry of Jesus as the way, the truth and the life. To ignore God's provision is to strive in vain to enter into the fullness of His redemption, to become a thief concerning His promises, and to miss the only opportunity afforded each of us to enter into the complete life that has been made available.

What about you? The Bible is clear that it is appointed unto man to die once, then judgment. Our lives are but a vapor in light of eternity. Therefore, the window of opportunity to get it right by entering into what has been provided for us is very narrow indeed. We do not have time to be flippant or debate the matter. We have been

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HEADLESS

By Jeannette Haley

It is no secret that people (and animals as well) can live and continue to function in spite of the loss of limbs. Their capacities in some areas may be greatly curtailed, or even impossible to perform, but they are still thinking, feeling and functioning individuals (or functioning animals, whichever the case may be). The one thing, however, that any living person or creature cannot survive without is their head. I believe this is true of nations as well, including America.

As I write this, my gut is telling me that we are, as a nation, a ship adrift, and sinking fast, on a stormy sea, without a captain, crew or rudder. Oh, there may be a suited man by the name of Barack Hussein Obama (who has admitted that he is a Muslim) living in the White House, and there may be a gang of thugs in control of Congress, but most of it resembles a body trying to function without a head. There may be a *visible, physical, pseudo "head,"* but there is no true rational, intelligent *leadership*. All it amounts to is a bunch of confusion, idiocy, anger, hatred, foolishness, greed, wickedness and delusion. The whole terrifying mess is ungodly, immoral and pathetic. The results will assuredly be disastrous and deadly to both individuals and the nation as a whole. The truth is, unless God steps on the scene in a major way to save us from the dark, dangerous, demonic powers behind the *visible* head, this ship is going down. History gives ample proof of this very scenario.

The question is why would God step in to save a nation that has come to despise its heritage, and "sold" its birthright for a mess of pottage called the American Dream? Why would a holy God come to the rescue of a nation whose puppet leaders have condemned Israel and sided with her enemies, thus putting a curse on not only themselves, but also the entire nation? Furthermore, why would God come to the rescue of an apostate church that excuses and embraces every form of vileness the world has to offer? A. W. Tozer said, "Religion today is not transforming people; rather it is being transformed by the people. It is not raising the moral level

of society; it is descending to society's own level, and congratulating itself that it has scored a victory because society is smilingly accepting its surrender."

Thankfully, many Sleepy Hollow Americans are waking up. Nevertheless, the horrors of our "headless horseman" leader are increasing by the hour. We know from the famous fable, The Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow, that one of the leading

characters, Ichabod Crane, fled in terror for his life whenever the headless horseman rode his way. The truth is, the power behind both the headless horseman and the headless, power-grabbing, un-American empty suit in the Oval Office is Satan himself: "*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*" Ephesians 6:12. In light of this fact, what are we, as Christians, to do? The next verse tells us, "*Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*" Undoubtedly, we are living in the time specified as "the evil day."

Satan may masquerade as a type of headless horseman who has a designated time in which to terrorize the earth, but we know that our God is the Head over all creation. Ephesians 1:22 assures us, "*And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.*" In Ephesians 4:15 we read, "*But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.*" Again in Ephesians 5:23 we read that "*Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.*"

While these verses reassure us that Jesus is the head of His Body, the Church, there is a very real danger of interpreting this to mean that every church building, or denomination, with a "Christian" sign over the door guarantees that Christ is its head. Any person who makes such an assumption may be inadvertently moving into the dark paths of a spiritual Sleepy Hollow. Not all churches truly have Christ as

their head. You could say that they are "headless churches" where Jesus is concerned, because the leadership that they do have is of another spirit, presenting another Christ and another gospel.

Unfortunately, when undiscerning people sit in a spiritual "Sleepy Hollow" church, they become indoctrinated rather than disciplined. Such indoctrination can be very religious; or, it may be humanistic with a thin veneer of religion. Regardless of the nature, structure and traditional stance of any given church, if Jesus is not the head, in every way and at all times, it is a headless entity that is neither edifying to people, nor glorifying to God. It becomes nothing more than a social club at best, or a cult at worst.

"*Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain*" Psalm 127:1. How much church building is done in vain because it is done for the glory of man, and not God? This verse reminds us of Jesus' words to Peter in Matthew 16:18, "*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock [Christ, the Son of the living God] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" Thus, we can determine that if Jesus is not the builder of a particular church, then it does not belong to Him and it will not be able to stand against the "gates of hell." That is not to say that it may not succeed financially, or grow physically, but the spiritual impact it makes in the world for Christ will be nil, its fruits will be fleshly, and its works and activities will make no eternal difference. Hell will overcome it because it will lack the authority and power that only Christ can give to His true Church that He loves and for which He gave Himself. (See Ephesians 5:25b).

How can a person determine if a particular church truly has Christ as its head? After all, no group of believers is perfect since we are all still in our flesh, and very human. First, the Holy Bible tells us all we need to know about the true Church; thus you have an instruction book, guide book, and test book at your fingertips. Here are a few guidelines that may be useful to hungry and thirsty seekers, beginning



with the leadership: Ask yourself who or what is consistently exalted in the church. Is Jesus Christ lifted up in every sermon with such authority, power and anointing that people are drawn to Him? On the other hand, are the messages weak, entertaining, flattering, man or church centered, and spiritually meaningless? Are the church and its particular doctrine, the pastor, the church programs and schedule of events, and other people consistently exalted? Is the Word of God preached with such power and authority that people are pricked in their consciences and come to true repentance, or is the Gospel, the reality of sin, death, hell and holy living watered down, or ignored altogether? Is the leadership committed to the care of the sheep through prayer, feeding them the unadulterated Word of God, ministering to each of them personally (regardless to their age, gender or station in life) and protecting them against wolves, hirelings, and the devil? Are those in leadership seasoned (not novices) in the ministry, saturated with the Word of God, filled with the Spirit and truth, with no personal agendas except to be broken and poured out for Jesus? Are those who lead personally holy, humble, and self-sacrificing men and women of God, who obey the Word, pray, and hold themselves accountable to the commandments of Christ, and who do not feel above the people in any way? Are the leaders more ready to give than to receive money and of such high moral fiber that they, as good shepherds, are willing lay down their lives for the sheep? Are souls held in higher esteem than the church, its social programs, church building projects, and church-centered events? Does the leadership shun political correctness, personal popularity, fame and fortune or any other thing that would compromise or bring a reproach on the Gospel? Does the pastor and others try to control or bring people into bondage in any way? Are the sheep fed of the Bread from Heaven and the Living Water, or are they fed a steady diet of legalism, humanistic psychology, man's vain philosophies, or the latest fiction book? Finally, is the worship Christ-centered, holy, pure, God honoring, and doctrinally true, or is it carnal,

man-centered, hypnotic, pagan, and offensive?

Concerning the congregation: Are people coming to repentance and true salvation, or are people merely converted to an ideology or the leader's personal beliefs, agendas and goals? Are all the people, from the youngest to the oldest faithfully disciplined and equipped for ministry so that they are able to share the life of Christ with others in word, deed and example? Are the people deeply committed to prayer and intercession for the lost, for Israel, for missions, for needs in the Body, America and other pressing issues? Do the people truly love Jesus above all else so that He is the center focus of their conversations and lives? Are the people filled with unfeigned love, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, virtue, hope, and joy in Christ? Do the people practice in their daily lives what they profess to believe in practical and sacrificial ways? Are the people hungry and thirsty for more of the Living Water, and genuine in their desire to see souls saved? Are they humble and holy, submitting to one another in love, and selfless in their giving and service to others? Do the people know how to enter into worship with all their hearts, not stepping over into vain repetitions and fleshly excesses? Truly, it could be said that the Head of such a body of believers is Christ.

The tragedy is, most "Sleepy Hollow" church leaders today resemble the headless horseman, galloping through the night, with no solution to the plight of lost, wounded, hurting people because Christ is not the head. If I had the power to travel throughout the land changing church reader boards (and the signs hanging above their doors), here is what most would say. "Welcome to the headless church of Sleepy Hollow, the home of Ichabod. Here the sermons and teachings are hollow, the music loud, long and hollow, prayer is hollow, the countenances of the people hollow, their heads and hearts hollow, and their works hollow. This is where darkness reigns because of sin, transgression, iniquity and unbelief. Take note: You and your children enter at your own risk."

Who is your head? †

COMMENTS

"Wow! After reading this [Q & A, June Newsletter] within myself I have great peace! I now understand what God The Holy Spirit is saying through His word concerning salvation. All your articles are truly inspired by God The Holy Spirit and I'm sharing these messages in our cell groups and with my family members. I strongly believe that it is not by chance that I've made contact with you but via the prompting and guidance of our loving God. I pray that you will continue steadfastly, unmovable always presenting the precious word of our God as He guides you to do so in order that Jesus Christ would be glorified and lifted up and the church be rightly edified. Just to let you know, I'm South African, the church I attend is called Church of the Way, the Pastor is called and anointed of God and I know this by his fruits." – So. Africa

"This one [daily e-devotion] is absolutely beautiful, and paints such a lovely, and refreshing, picture for me! Thank you for your faithfulness in writing these, sending these out, and being true to His calling in your life!!" - FL

"Unbelievable isn't it how upside down everything is? This lady came in [office] today and she actually said she was so GLAD she voted for Obama and that he was the best thing that ever happened to us. She said she almost went to Germany when Bush was in office and I'm thinking to myself she should have kept on going. Unreal how people think in their deluded reality such as thinking healthcare is the same as car and home insurance. Wait until she standing in line in a gray dress waiting for her rationed bowl of rice and her paycheck is spread to non-working illegal class and then she will have wished she went to Germany." - ID

"This devotion [daily e-devotion] was meaningful to me. We've learned through the years not to depend on riches - not that we've ever been very far down that road - but as my faith deepens, I'm really learning to trust more and more in the living God. What a blessing to be able to do so and you certainly expressed this truth beautifully." - ID †

given the measure of faith to enter into an eternal inheritance during an appointed time and at an appointed place to secure the promises of God. We must see the urgency of resolving this matter, and the need to recognize the days and times in which we live so that we can identify what is being opened to us. We must be willing and prepared to enter all the way in and through the opening or the entryway provided for us, to secure our real eternal possession. †

QUOTABLE

“Most people are bothered by those passages of Scripture they do not understand, but the passages that bother me are those I do understand.” —Mark Twain

“Ironically, the emerging church who says its main goal is to help the suffering and to help eradicate the world's problems, is not pointing the world to Jesus Christ and His body. Rather, it is rejecting the atonement, locking arms with a religion (Catholicism) that teaches we are justified by works rather than by grace alone, embracing mystical practices and altered states of consciousness, and pulling these suffering lost souls further and further away from the only thing that will ever help them--a personal one-on-one relationship with Jesus Christ, who explains very clearly who He is.” —Roger Oakland (*Faith Undone*, pg. 220)

“When we long for life without difficulties, remind us that oaks grow strong in contrary winds and diamonds are made under pressure.”

—Peter Marshall

“I look upon this world as a wrecked vessel. God has given me a lifeboat and said to me: Moody save all you can.”—Dwight L. Moody

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.” Re. 2:4

“Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith.” 1Ti. 5:12

“Their heart is divided...” Ho. 10:2a

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

WHAT ABOUT SUBMISSION TO AUTHORITY?

Q: “I am struggling with the concept of submission when it comes to those who are in positions of authority over me such as a pastor. Could you help me to understand what my responsibility really is towards those who hold such positions?”

A: You are not the first person who has asked me this question. There is a lot of confusion concerning the concept of submission. Personally, this subject has to be studied in light of coming into submission and holding a position of authority in regards to people's souls.

In order to understand our responsibility in light of authority, we must come to terms with the concept of authority in light of both subjection and submission. What constitutes authority has to do with position. There have been certain positions established in God's kingdom. The reasons for establishing such positions in God's kingdom are as follows: To ensure order, protection through boundaries, and proper influence in regard to conduct. Without such order, chaos rules, insecurity drives and prideful competition takes center stage. However, all real authority comes from God, and can only be considered in light of His character and purpose.

Subjection has to do with lining up to the will and intent of a matter. In other words, it has to do with subjecting one's will as a means to line up to the will of another to carry out a work or deed. A good example is a subject coming into line with the will of a king when it comes to the matter of carrying out a responsibility or abiding by the law or rule of a leader. As Christians, we can only come into subjection to that which upholds the will of God for our lives. This is why if there is any question as to who or what we obey, we must always obey the heart, mind and will of God to ensure the integrity or intent of a situation.

Submission is different in that it gives way to something that is greater, worthy or honorable for the benefit of something that is necessary or excel-

lent in character. When it comes to leaders, we must discern whether we can become subject to their will or whether we will find ourselves following the lead of our Lord down a different path. The Apostle Paul put it best when he said, follow me as I follow Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Godly submission has to do with giving way to that which is worthy of all consideration, as well as what is honorable in light of godliness, and what must become preferred because of godly love. Such submission understands that without self-denial and the proper application of the cross to that which is associated with perverted tendencies, worldly thinking and the self-serving ways of the unregenerate disposition, such submission will be missing from the equation. It is with this in mind that we are told to submit to one another out of fear of the Lord (*Ephesians 5:21*). This requirement applies to leaders. If leaders do not know how to submit to that which is worthy and godly, they will fail to know how to lead properly God's sheep in the matters of life and godliness. Clearly, subjection has to do with authority and submission with the Body of Christ giving way to that which is worthy and honorable in light of godly examples and responsibilities towards one another.

If a matter is not worthy, honorable or excellent, as God's people, we must not submit or give way to it. We must demand excellence first from ourselves in order to avoid being caught up with that which would rob us of our sense of purpose, kill the credibility of our testimony and destroy our resolve to maintain righteousness in our lives that will bring a clear contrast to others.

I do hope this answers your question about this matter. †

GREAT QUOTES

“For bravery none compares with our Lord. He never turned His head from danger, not even when hell's hatred and heaven's justice appeared against Him.” —William Gurnall

“Everyone gives their life for what they believe. Sometimes people believe in little or nothing and yet they give their lives to that little...or nothing. One life is all we have, we live it and it's gone. What do you live for?” - Joan of Arc

DO YOU KNOW HOW THE APOSTLES DIED?

Each of these men had met Jesus and walked with Him, if all these men were prepared to face death rather than deny Him it would be hard to believe Jesus was not who He claimed to be.

Matthew

Suffered martyrdom in Ethiopia, killed by a sword wound.

Mark

Died in Alexandria, Egypt, after being dragged by horses through the streets until he was dead.

Luke

Was hanged in Greece as a result of his tremendous preaching to the lost.

John

According to legend, he faced martyrdom when he was boiled in a huge basin of boiling oil during a wave of persecution in Rome. However, he was miraculously delivered from death. John was then sentenced to the mines on the prison island of Patmos. He wrote his prophetic Book of Revelation on Patmos. The apostle John was later freed and returned to serve as Bishop of Edessa in modern Turkey. He died as an old man, the only apostle to die peacefully.

Peter

He was crucified upside down on an x-shaped cross. According to church tradition it was because he told his tormentors that he felt unworthy to die in the same way that Jesus Christ had died.

James

James the Just, The leader of the church in Jerusalem, was thrown over a hundred feet down from the south-east pinnacle of the Temple when he refused to deny his faith in Christ. When they discovered that he survived the fall, his enemies beat James to death with a fuller's club.

James the Great

Son of Zebedee, was a fisherman by trade when Jesus called him to a lifetime of ministry. As a strong leader of the church, James was ultimately be-

headed at Jerusalem. The Roman officer who guarded James watched amazed as James defended his faith at his trial. Later, the officer walked beside James to the place of execution. Overcome by conviction, he declared his new faith to the judge and knelt beside James to accept beheading as a Christian.

Bartholomew

Also known as Nathaniel, was a missionary to Asia. He witnessed for our Lord in present day Turkey. Bartholomew was martyred for his preaching in Armenia where he was flayed to death by a whip.

Andrew

Was crucified on an x-shaped cross in Patras, Greece. After being whipped and severely beaten by seven soldiers, they tied his body to the cross with cords to prolong his agony. His followers reported that, when he was led toward the cross, Andrew saluted it in these words: "I have long desired and expected this happy hour. The cross has been consecrated by the body of Christ hanging on it." He continued to preach to his tormentors for two days until he expired.

Thomas

Was stabbed with a spear in India during one of his missionary trips to establish the church in the sub-continent. Some reports claim he was skinned alive.

Jude

Was killed with arrows when he refused to deny his faith in Christ.

Matthias

The apostle chosen to replace the traitor Judas Iscariot was stoned and then beheaded.

Paul

Was tortured and then beheaded by the evil Emperor Nero at Rome in A.D. 67. Paul endured a lengthy imprisonment, which allowed him to write his many epistles to the churches he had formed throughout the Roman Empire. These letters, which taught many of the foundational doctrines of Christianity, form a large portion of the New Testament.

TEN LEPERS

Ten lepers cried out for mercy as the Son of God passed through their midst. They were too far away to touch Him, but He was powerful and compassionate enough to touch them all with His healing virtue.

Ten desperate men cried out to a stranger because they were hopeless. This stranger had stepped outside of eternity not only to hear them, but to also meet them in their plight. As a result, their lives would never be the same.

Ten hopeless men cried out, and heaven heard and touched them, changing their devastating plight. These ten men left rejoicing, but only one came back to thank the one Man who took the time to hear, care and do the incredible.

The man who came back to thank the Man, Jesus, not only understood the isolation his terrible disease had caused him, but most likely, he understood that separation could go deeper than a terrible disease. Such things as beliefs, race and culture can cause separation. After all, he was a Samaritan who did not fit within any other culture except the one he was born into.

He was the one who in spite of his overwhelming joy realized that joy had an origin. In his case, it could be traced back to the Man named Jesus. He recognized that his newfound healing was an act of mercy because he knew he didn't deserve it.

Thankfulness begins with recognition that any act upon those who are destitute is a display of mercy, kindness and grace. This man knew the hopelessness of destitution, but in spite of his plight, he had experienced supernatural benevolence. Such an act deserved a proper response.

This Samaritan realized his healing was not only supernatural, but also an act that should not be ignored or taken for granted. Luke 17:15-16 states: "And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God. And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks." We see four distinct responses from this man when he realized he was healed. First, he turned back. In other words, he went back to the source. -Excerpt Vol. 3, Developing A Godly Environment, R. Kelley