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

MENTAL ASSENT OR CONVERSION?

Discipleship Series 13

By Rayola Kelley

The concept of being a Christian has been greatly redefined through the years. Due to the professing Church embracing questionable beliefs, worldly philosophies and methods, along with the sweeping influence of "flash in the pan" movements, a dangerous spiritual vacuum has been left in its wake. For example, during the 1970s when I became part of the family of God after receiving Jesus as my Lord and Savior, the study of eschatology and the presentation of "easy believism" were on the rise, causing association with the Christian scene to become a popular fad that often overshadowed or confused the seriousness of the real message and purpose of the Gospel. In the 1980s different movements that embraced ecumenical ties rolled through Christendom, blurring the lines of holiness and truth, while encouraging unholy alliances. The 90s decade found some of the professing Church being swept up by heretical waves of delusion that hid behind the concept of pseudo revivals, "new revelations", and the need to build bigger, earthly kingdoms (churches) in the name of Jesus.

This brings us up to the present decade. In this decade, we have faced the hateful design of terrorism to destroy anything that will not agree with or bow down to its oppressive, deadly ways. When we think of terrorism, we think of the Twin Towers in New York City. However, terrorism comes in different forms. One of the greatest examples of terrorism involves the affront that has been happening against unborn babies in mothers' wombs since 1973. These silent victims are clearly being terrorized by inhumane, murderous practices that show no respect for the sanctity of life.

We know that terrorism's main goal is to terrorize in order to intimidate and control through fear. Such treacherous acts are appalling to those who are being systematically pushed into a corner by a few people who have no real scruples. With this in mind, consider the threats or possible tactics (fairness doctrine) that could be used against the conservative and Christian talk show hosts as a means to silence them, as well as the recent controversial matter surrounding Miss California's stand on marriage. Keep in mind that if Christians call certain preferences and practices sin, they are labeled as hateful and illegal. No doubt, any version of the Bible that fails to pass the test of political correctness will eventually be outlawed as well. There is also a move to redefine the word "terrorist" by applying the term to those who will not bow down to the wicked lunacy of how these people think. Is the attempt of these individuals to redefine "terrorist" a means to hide their own identity and purpose?

We clearly are living in a decade and age of terror where the events around us imply that we are living in the end of the last days. Jesus made this statement about the environment that would abound, *"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved"* (Matthew 24:12-13).

Jesus made it quite clear that even in the midst of iniquity reigning, we as believers must endure to the end to ensure salvation. The question is how many of those professing Christianity will endure to the end when the Church is being refined in the fiery trials of oppression and persecution? Since, in the name of religious tolerance, there has been an unholy mixture of beliefs and practices placed under the umbrella of the Christian faith, ecumenism and evangelism, we, as believers, have to wonder how much of what I refer to as quasi-Christianity will remain standing

when tested in the fiery ovens of tribulation, and how much of it will give way to the pressure to sell, reject and trample under all truth in the name of the upcoming one-world religion. We also must consider how much of this quasi-Christianity has ignored, agreed with, inspired, and enabled the present abominable political environment to gain its present foothold. The heat is definitely being turned up for all of those who would dare defy the wicked agendas of these people to strip our Constitution of its authority and protection, and do away with the sovereignty of this nation, while ushering in a totalitarian government that will eventually come into line with the one-world government. We know according to Scripture that Satan and his cohorts will have their season of terror, and reign, in this world, followed by God's wrath. Meanwhile, we must as believers endure by faith to the end to receive our salvation.

Recently, I watched a Christian documentary detailing how this present-day quasi-Christianity came into being. Even though there have always been counterfeits presenting their own take on Christianity, the present false staging started over seventy years ago. As most false presentations begin, the present quasi-Christianity started with a split between two respected religious leaders. One leader decided to enlarge the boundaries of the Christian faith to include ties with those of a different spirit and agenda in the name of evangelism, while the other leader maintained the need to stand on the truth and principles of the Bible that command believers to come out and be separate from that which possesses a different spirit and holds to a different Jesus and gospel (2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 11:2-4).

When people begin to veer from the center of truth, there is no way of telling how far they will depart from the faith that was first delivered to the saints, which points to apostasy or a falling away from the truth (Jude 3). As the interviewer on the documentary asked the people who were part of the more "tolerable Christianity" about their

beliefs, it became obvious how far from the mark this pseudo Christianity had veered from the center. These people's beliefs included the following: The Word of God was inspired, but it is not inerrant, Jesus was not born of a virgin, He is not God Incarnate, and we must avoid presenting the concept of Jesus as the only way to salvation, as well as eternal consequences because they are too negative. As I listened to how one particular individual judged eternal truths according to whether it would be positive, I had to wonder how he expected people to wade through his quagmire of positive hogwash that is devoid of spirit and truth, and come out with any real concept of salvation.

The one consistent thread that I could detect from the individuals who were part of this adjustable concept of Christianity is that when asked if they were saved, you could sense that they did not really have assurance of their salvation. Even though there was one who made reference to election, the individual could not stand on the Apostle Peter's exhortation in *2 Peter 1:10*: "*Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.*"

The Bible is clear about what constitutes salvation. Since these people do not believe the inerrancy of the Bible, how can they be clear or have an assurance about salvation? They may have some sentimental notion and wishful thinking, as well as a vague hope for salvation because of their religious views, association, beliefs, or practices, but salvation appears to be far from them.

Since these people associate themselves with Christianity, what would they use to link themselves to this religious umbrella? Where is their common ground to the faith that was first delivered to the saints? After all, they do not consider the Bible their final authority nor do they believe the Jesus of the Bible, while shunning or mocking any possible consequences for deviation from established Scriptural truths and teachings. As you listen to them, you realize that they align themselves to Christianity because they can agree

with certain aspects of it. Such agreement involves some type of mental assent where these individuals can agree with such things as the main theme of the Gospel, as well as certain aspects of Jesus' teachings and character, while brushing over, adjusting, and changing the intent of other aspects that would not compliment their quasi form of Christianity. It is because of such mental assent that these people believe themselves to be Christians.

Granted, these people can talk a good talk, give an impression of piety, and give a good explanation for their acceptance of some beliefs and their rejection of others, but there are inconsistencies in their life that are exposed when truth challenges their fragile reality and belief system. These people become fearful, obstinate and angry. Sometimes you can see the war between the convicting power of the Spirit and the overpowering flesh occurring within the souls of these individuals, but their tendency is to maintain their mental conclusions, rather than repent and give way to truth regardless of the gain. Each time these people resist the truth, they become more blinded to the true light of the world and the Gospel (Jesus), as their hearts become harder towards what is pure and righteous.

Even though these people may have agreed with the Gospel, repeated the "sinner's prayer," had some religious experiences, studied the Bible, attended church, paid tithes, and been active in some type of ministry, they have not been truly converted to the ways of righteousness. They may agree with some truths because it makes logical sense to them, but if they have not embraced the whole truth of God's Word by faith, they still walk in unbelief towards God. Even though these people may be adamant about some foundational Christian beliefs as being true, they have shown contempt for others by ignoring, shunning, and rejecting them.

Through the years, I have seen different stages of mental assent among those who call themselves Christians. There are those who have mentally agreed with Christianity on an association level because of family ties or how it makes them appear to others, but they have their own idea of what constitutes salvation. Others have

shown mental assent on the basis of logic according to what makes sense to them, but these individuals often prove to be skeptical, mocking and unbelieving when challenged with what they consider to be the irrational side of Christianity. There are those who agree on a doctrinal level with certain principles and practices of the Christian faith, but ultimately will prove to be judgmental when their doctrine is challenged by truth that does not adjust to their understanding. There are those who agree with Christianity on a religious level, but because of their love of or for the world, it proves to be surface and hypocritical. These different forms of mental assent or agreement are devoid of a love for truth, genuine faith towards God, and true conversion.

The Bible tells us that we must be converted and become as little children in order to enter the kingdom of heaven (*Matthew 18:2-4*). Salvation is not a matter of simply agreeing with aspects of the Gospel and the Bible, it is about being born again with the very life of Christ. The new life points to a new disposition within the believer that will be formed into the very likeness of Jesus. It is the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in each convert that develops Jesus' lowly disposition and meek attitude in the Christian. Clearly, what identifies a person as a Christian is the presence of the life of Jesus in him or her. The Holy Spirit will be the one who bears witness to this salvation as the mind of Christ is worked in the believer. Obviously, Christianity is not mental assent due to intellectual agreement, a religious cloak we wear, a doctrine we take ownership of, or a religion we practice when convenient. It is a life that is expressed through genuine commitment, a meek attitude and godly conduct. It is a walk of faith that is established and advances forward through obedience to the Word of God. It is a conversion that involves turning away from the old (repentance) in order to be converted to a new way. Such conversion is not a one-time phenomenon, but an ongoing decision and action where one is constantly being converted to what is of truth and righteousness.

As I look back on my life, I can see where conversion has been ongoing for me. It is not a matter of just

COMPLICATING CHRISTIANITY

By Jeannette Haley

One of the earmarks of satanic involvement in the life of people is confusion. Confusion works much like a smoke screen, giving the enemy opportunity to advance and promote his lies, causing people to stumble over reality. Satan's lies are subtle, clever, insidious and usually almost undetectable. He presents his lies in such a way that they appeal to a person's point of strength, be it their intellect, emotional makeup, standards, or moral boundaries. At this point most people will go into one of four places—their mind, their emotions, their images or their facts to come to some sort of a logical conclusion to a matter. However, God says, *"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil"* Proverbs 3:5-7.

As we turn inward instead of upward for clarity and truth, complication begins to develop with the result of mass confusion. The reason for this is, while it is true that the elements of nature and the physical world in which we live can be very complicated to our finite minds, when it comes to matters of the spirit, the complication that results from seeking answers within oneself will always lead to a shipwrecked faith and spiritual destruction. We are not God, and Satan knows it.

The Apostle Paul sternly warned the Corinthian Church of this very thing. He wrote, *"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ"* 2 Corinthians 11:3. The "simplicity of Christ" is such that even a small child can understand and readily accept whom Jesus is, why He came, what He did for each of us and why He did it, where He is, and that He is coming back one day to rule and reign over the earth. A small child can easily grasp the fact of sin, punishment, hell and heaven. No wonder Jesus said, *"Suffer little children to come unto me,*

and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein" Luke 18:16, 17. Jesus also warned, *"It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones"* Luke 1, 2.

It makes one pause and consider how many children are, and have been, deeply offended by those who talk the talk, but fail to walk the walk. Children and youth, who have not yet learned how to complicate the simplicity of truth, can see straight through hypocrisy better than most adults can. Let us face it, our wonderful, post-modern, super duper, rich, arrogant Laodicean visible church system today of professing "Christians" have, and are, greatly offending not only the little ones, but those who are young in the faith as well. The grave hypocrisy of it all is a stench reaching to the highest heavens.

What has happened to the church? What has happened is that it has been so busy admiring itself that it has left Jesus outside the door. There may be a reference or two to "Christ," and maybe a picture or two of Him in the hallway, but He is not there and the Holy Spirit is missing because the real Jesus is not welcome. The real Jesus is not complimentary to our way of doing church. He upsets the fragile egos of those who cannot stand to be challenged in their wicked lifestyles. The cross of the real Jesus is an offense to those who see themselves as being "good." Their self-esteem must be upheld and pacified at all times, regardless of the fact that it is nothing more than pride, which God hates and resists.

The visible church today is full of people who cannot give a testimony of their salvation and life in Christ; who have never read the Bible through, even once; who cannot truly fellowship with others on the basis of Christ, but only concerning their church; who are lacking in their knowledge of what real Christianity consists of and what their personal responsibilities are as a Christian; who have a weak prayer life, and who have no concern for the lost

or the needs of others.

In the midst of this self-exalting subculture, children and youth are isolated from the main congregation (which is unbiblical), sent to their own little group where they are entertained with a bunch of nonsense more than taught from Scripture, and challenged in their life in God. No wonder we are losing our youth to the world, the flesh and the devil. We underestimate the intelligence of young children, ignore the importance of teaching them the Gospel, and fail to instill God's Word into their hearts through Bible memorization and Bible stories, followed with application to their own lives at home and elsewhere. Even three and four-year-olds can memorize Bible verses, and the Books of the Bible. The children that have been involved with this ministry are testimony to that. They were eager to be part of the fellowship, to learn how to pray and listen to the Spirit, to discern spirits, to be involved in decisions, to pray for others, to learn Christian songs and to sing for the fellowship, in nursing homes, and the street mission. They were eager to pass out gospel tracts, give their testimony, and share Christ.

Today we are beginning to reap the consequences in our homes, schools, churches and nation of complicating and confusing the real Gospel for a false gospel. The post-modern, seeker-friendly, emergent church has booted out the Way, the Truth and the Life for another spirit, another gospel and another Jesus that cannot save anyone. It may look good, it may sound good, and it may appear to be the answer to modern man's problems as it moves towards the one-world religion that will bow down to the antichrist, but it is in fact a counterfeit and a fraud. Instead of the simplicity of Christ, the cross, and the Gospel, that alone has the power to save, it offers substitute "spirituality" through "contemplative prayer" and other occult practices. This apostate church system need not fear retribution from the "left's lying liberals" because it has no qualms with being "politically correct" on such issues as abortion, homosexuality, homosexual "marriage," Darwinism, psychology, acceptance of other world religions as another "way to God" to name a few. Even the Word of God has been

added to, and taken from, to make it more “readable” and “politically correct. Yet, God has warned: “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you” Deuteronomy 4:2.

Even though our Lord said, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4), in the post-modern church the importance of diligent Bible reading, study, and memorization has been “archived.” After all, it’s “too simple” to the “progressive, modern intelligence.” In its place, heretical books, such as *The Shack*, are read and discussed. How foolish, how utterly rebellious, how utterly wicked has the professing, visible church become? Can God be mocked? “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” Galatians 6:7. If we sow to the intellect, we may reap “intellectualism” but it will have no life to it. If we reap to man’s religious traditions, we will reap dead religion. If we sow heresy, we shall reap eternal damnation. You cannot sow to the flesh and reap of the Spirit.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ” 1 Corinthians 2:12-16.

Oh! That God would send a fire through the churches today that would burn up the dross of the carnal workings of the “natural man” and purge out the tares from among the wheat! Would to God that He would restore the simplicity that is in Christ, and bring a revelation of the lost state of

those who name the name of Christ but who are not born again of His Spirit! Oh! That God would sweep through the Laodicean church system across this land and bring her to her knees in repentance for her idolatry and fornication with the world! May God raise up holy, uncompromising, Spirit-led voices in the wilderness the likes of which this nation has not heard for decades, to bring a contrast to the apostate, harlot church system that is no longer the salt and the light! May it be so!

Have we “intellectually developed” beyond the wisdom of God? Has mankind suddenly topped the “evolutionary scale” so that he no longer needs to worship the God of the Bible, the God of creation, “in spirit and in truth?” Perhaps God has changed, and He is no longer holy and worthy of all praise and glory. Perhaps He has become more like us, or, as we have convinced ourselves in our complicated and convoluted way of thinking, that we are more like Him. Perhaps He is pleased by our incessant desire for excitement and sensuality in our “worship” as opposed to the “beauty of holiness” expressed through sound doctrine and truth that He is so worthy of. Perhaps He is pleased with our profane offerings of lip service while our hearts remain cold, and our works reprobate. Maybe, if we’re lucky, He is overlooking the offenses to others that our fine-honed hypocrisy is causing. But, if not, woe to this wicked generation! Woe to the “church” that is no longer the salt and the light. Woe, woe, woe for she deserves the judgment that is forthcoming upon all the earth. If she had remained true and faithful to her first love, would America be in her present, and future, hellish plight? “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God” Psalm 9:17. What makes us think that America is an exception? We need not forget that to whom much is given, much is required.

Indeed, Satan loves confusion and complication for such creates a gross darkness of idolatry in which sin, iniquity, unbelief, indifference (hatred), pride, prejudice, irresponsibility, self-love, witchcraft, fornication, lawlessness, and various forms of paganism can thrive. A complicated

form of religion gives people an excuse for not obeying God’s commandments. It’s that *simple*. We must approach the Bible to believe it, and by faith to obey it. Once we obey God, then He reveals more of Himself to us so that we can take the next step of obedience through faith. This is how God designed the Christian walk, taking one step of obedience at a time. Consider Jesus’ words: “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you” John 15:10-14. He laid down His life for us, and we are to lay down our lives for Him (in service to others). How complicated is that? Just *do it!*

Can we not conclude that a Christian, or a church, that professes to love Jesus but fails to keep His commandments, the greatest of which is to love one another as He has loved us, is hypocritical? Are His commandments complicated and confusing? The answer is no, else Jesus would not have said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” John 14:15, 21.

Why do we miss it? We miss it because obeying Jesus by becoming identified with Him in His life as He lived it and in His death (to self) as He always obeyed the Father, willing to become the sacrifice for you and me, is costly. It is going to cost us our right to ourselves—our right to life on our terms. It is going to cost us in ways that we never imagined, because the Laodicean apostate church system today has failed to produce the rugged, courageous, fully committed Christian soldier that the early church produced, and which the suffering church produced through the centuries. Maybe that is why God is allow-

changing my mind about a matter; I must also be converted to what is right in order to experience a complete inward transformation or renewal. In fact, when I have been the most undone by a refreshed awakening to the depth of personal sin, is when the greatest conversions have taken place in my life. The transformation in my state of being has often surprised me as to the fruit that is produced by such awakening. In every case, my attitude about something has been completely changed, my priorities realigned, and my focus more concentrated on the matters of God.

We must remember that we are all like onions. We have layers of the self-life that must be stripped away to expose the influences, workings and activities of sin upon our lives. Once a layer has been exposed and repentance applied, then there can be true conversion towards the honorable, righteous ways of God to ensure transformation.

As we consider the present day quasi-Christianity, we must realize that the minds of these people may agree about certain matters, but their prevailing attitude and mood towards truth has never been changed by true brokenness towards sin and repentance from their old ways. Since their carnal minds will not depart from their present understanding to embrace the complete truth by unfeigned faith, they are never transformed by true conversion. These people remain set or obstinate in their way of thinking, preventing them from ever humbling themselves in disposition to ensure complete conversion towards the ways of righteousness.

Obviously, salvation is a matter we must not assume, cross our fingers about, or wish for the best. We must resolve whether we possess the very life of Jesus and the witness of His Spirit, thereby ensuring that we belong to the true faith. The real debate is not once saved always saved, the real issue is whether salvation has truly taken place in the heart and is being established by faith in line with the leadership of Jesus (*Romans 10:9-10*). And, in our

desire to believe salvation has taken place, we must not foolishly cling to an empty shell that gives an appearance of salvation. We must ensure that those of us who claim to be Christians have been *converted by* the life of Christ through the born-again experience, are being *converted to* the life of Christ through discipleship and obedience to the ways of righteousness, and will be ultimately distinguished *in conversion* because we are indeed taking on His very likeness, thereby, reflecting His glory in a lost, dark world of despair and death.

This brings us to the question. Are you a Christian based on mental assent or true conversion?

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN By William Law

Sinning against the Holy Spirit would not be more dreadful than sinning against the Father and the Son, if it were not for the fact that the direct, continual guidance and operation of the Spirit is the last and highest manifestation of the Holy Trinity in the fallen soul of man. It is not that the Holy Spirit is worthier or higher in nature than the Father and the Son, but that Father and Son come forth to redeem us through a covenant of the continual inspiration of the Spirit, to be always dwelling and working in our souls.

. . . the whole nature of it lies in the fact that it is a sin against the last and highest dispensation of God for the full redemption of man . . . Sinning against Christ in the flesh is more unpardonable than sinning against the Father under the law. However, sinning against the Holy Spirit is more unpardonable than sinning against the Father under the law or sinning against the Son who came in the flesh. This is because the two preceding dispensations were only preparations for the full ministration of the Spirit.

But now that both the Father and the Son have come in the power and manifestation of the Spirit, then he who refuses or resists this ministration of the Spirit also resists all that the Trinity can do to restore and revive the first life of God in his soul. And so, he who resists and rejects the Spirit of God also commits the unpardonable sin, which is unpardonable because there remains no further or higher power to remove it from the soul.

ing everything that can be shaken to be shaken, to wake up the sleepy, harlot church that is content to commit fornication with the world. God has not changed, and His word has not changed. He is still calling His people to *"come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty"* 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18.

As human beings, in our rebellion and pride, when our flesh rises up to take us captive, we prefer the compromise of darkness, where we can delude ourselves into believing we can conceal the wickedness of our hearts. Lack of love for God and others lies under religious platitudes and church activities. Nevertheless, the fruit thereof, or lack of it, reveals the condition of one's Christianity. Therefore, one can understand why the modern and mega churches are so appealing. On the one hand, a person can meld into the crowd without becoming involved in the lives of others. It is all very calculated and clinical. He or she can attend services for his or her "religious fix" and then disappear into the shadows of private life. However, on the other hand, when the rug is pulled out from underneath them, when the "rubber meets the road" of life, who is going to be there for them?

Through the earlier years of my life, I was seriously involved in different churches. I always had the false sense of security that if anything came my way that "knocked me flat" physically or financially, the "church" would be there for me, helping me through it, because that is what Christians are supposed to do, right? To me it was simple, basic Christianity. It is all there in the Bible. Regrettably, I was wrong. I discovered to my great disappointment that the entity called "the church" consists of people who have never been taught the practical, day-to-day working out of "do unto others, as you would have them do unto you." It isn't that the people were all "bad" people, mind you. It's just that the average churchgoer is utterly and totally clueless about the meaning, duties, and responsibilities that make up the Christian life that each of us will be judged by. This is due to the failure of

the clergy to properly teach, instruct and challenge the people, as well as the failure of the people to read and respond to what the Bible clearly teaches. God knows that in most churches the underlying reason for this is so that people will focus their loyalty (their money, time and energy) towards the entity called "the church" which boils down to the leadership. After all, as the pastor of a large church once confided to us, his church was a "monster" that had to be kept going no matter what.

Is the real Christian life all that complicated? No, but we complicate it by theorizing about where our duty lies, while using a plethora of excuses why we can excuse ourselves from doing the duty that lies nearest us. Let's face it, the duty that lies nearest us isn't as noteworthy as pouring everything into "our church" which (if we're honest) is usually an investment in our "cultural social club". Helping those around us, or even sending money to orphans, isn't as glamorous as going on some "mission" overseas. There is always something more compelling and romantic about "saving the heathen" in a foreign country than helping someone in need in our own little circle of friends or acquaintances. Sadly, many people who set sail for the uttermost parts of the world to do "great things" and "save souls," have overlooked the "small things" at home. How can God trust us with great things if we fail in the small, everyday things? Jesus said, *"And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward"* Matthew 10:42.

True ministry is simple, not complicated or confusing. It is sincere. It is selfless. It is humbling. It seeks no glory for self. It is as unto the Lord, done quietly, in secret. Jesus, our example, said, *"If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet"* John 13:14. *"...whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all"* Mark 10:43, 44. The Apostle Paul wrote, *"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good*

unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" Galatians 6:2, 10. Did you catch that? It says "all men" not just those we love, or those who can repay us in kind. It says "especially" to those who belong to Christ, not just those who are "more important" in the scheme of things.

We cannot serve God without consecration. Here is the key: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith"* Romans 12:1-3. Therefore, if we are not willing to be a living sacrifice, live a holy, separate life from the world, then we are not acceptable to God. In addition, if we have presented our bodies as a living sacrifice, we dare not claim that our practical, good works are more than our "reasonable service" to God.

If we are proud of our church attendance or involvement, but are still worldly and self-serving, then our fruits tell on us that our minds are not transformed. Outside of the transformation and renewing of our minds, we will fail to prove what is good, acceptable and perfect in the will of God. If we keep it simple, maintaining the simplicity of Christ, doing good works as the Spirit leads for His glory alone, then we will of necessity not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, but will think soberly according to the measure of faith that God has given to us.

Concerning giving, should we not give as the Spirit leads, and not as man dictates in order to further his own kingdom (and bank account)? Giving, out of faith and sincerity, is a form of worship. There are neither commandments nor examples given in Scripture where people were to give to keep the doors of a dead church open, or one that preached "another gospel." In the New Testa-

ment church, offerings were collected for the saints, the poor and to promote the Gospel. (See 2 Corinthians 16:1, 2 Corinthians 9.) The giving that Jesus emphasized can best be summed up in *Matthew 25:40: "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."* Truly, it must be an abomination to God to see deluded and disobedient people pour millions of dollars into the pockets of wealthy heretics, false prophets, and wolves in sheep's clothing. They shall receive their reward.

The Apostle John wrote, *"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth"* 1 John 3:16-18. While we know that humanists and unsaved people may do good works and yet remain unsaved, it is impossible to be saved without good works. (*"For as the body without the spirit is dead, So faith without works is dead also"* James 2:26.) What do your fruits say about you?

"I was hungry
And you formed a humanities club to discuss my hunger.
I was imprisoned
And you went to your chapel to pray for my release.
I was naked
And you debated the morality of my appearance.
I was sick
And you knelt and thanked God for your health.
I was homeless
And you delivered a sermon on the shelter of God's love.
I was lonely
And you left me alone to attend church.
You seem so close to God but I'm still very hungry, lonely, and cold!" ~

**HAS GOD FORSAKEN AMERICA?
Rayola's Q & A Corner, JULY**