

GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

P. O. Box 93 ~ Nampa, Idaho 83653 www.gentleshepherd.com June 2010

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

DOOR OF OPPORTUNITY Redemption Series 6 By Rayola Kelley



In this series on redemption, we have learned what it truly cost for each of us to enjoy its benefits. It cost God His only begotten Son, and it cost Jesus His former glory in the heavens and His physical life as the Son of man. He actually allowed Himself to be made lower than His created angels to pay the price of redemption in order to ensure legal restitution concerning God's holy Law and to restore us back into a relationship with our Creator.

This brings us to the big challenge of redemption, which entails taking advantage of it. Redemption affords us many different benefits. It identifies us to a spiritual inheritance and it provides the necessary avenues to discover and experience God's many blessings and promises. However, to benefit from blessings and promises, we must walk through the necessary entrances that He has provided. The problem is we may not recognize such doors because of our spiritual state. We can ask God to deliver us, seek the opportunity to be set free, and knock on doors to enter in to partake of His many blessings and discover the fruition of His promises. However, if we do not by faith walk through the necessary entrances He opens for us, we can easily miss such opportunities to do so. Like the door to Noah's ark, it may be the one door open to us for a short time or season.

As I have discovered in the past, it is easy talk or sing about redemption, but sadly, there are those who continue to remain in bondage. Redemption is about restitution and restoration of what was lost because of the spiritual bondage and captivity that ensued due to Adam's rebellion in the Garden of Eden. Man was not only brought into captivity of sin, but

he faced the consequences of spiritual death. In his lost state, man was without hope of changing his status without intervention from something outside of the realm of what was, and is now considered the unacceptable and inept present state of mankind.

Sadly, there are many people looking for relief from the overwhelming weight of the heavy chains of sin that often binds them, but not deliverance from the fleshly dictates or ways of sin that entangles them. As a result, these individuals might cry out in desperation against the chains, but rage against that which would challenge them in regard to their fleshly ways of thinking and being. Obviously, you can lead a horse to water, but you cannot cause that horse to drink.

Case in point: In *John 7:37*, Jesus invites all who will hear, to come freely to the wells of salvation to drink of the Living Water of the Holy Spirit. The invitation has echoed from generation to generation, but how many have truly accepted it? Many walk around dying of thirst, while some recognize that they are succumbing to spiritual drought and malnutrition even though they still strive to enter into the matters of God in other ways except through the one way provided by Jesus. The narrow gate established by His death on the cross represents the main entrance. The only accessible door comes by way of revelation as to who He is and the life He offers, and the only correct veil was clearly established by His redemption that brought forth an everlasting covenant and was a product of sanctification (*Matthew 7:13-14; Luke 13:24; John 10:7-10; Hebrews 10:19-24*). Each entrance points to an aspect of Jesus' work, character and life.

This brings us to the haunting reality that God may have secured our ransom, but you cannot force someone to receive properly the freedom and restitution offered. We can see this in our own society. In this nation, people have been afforded the oppor-

tunity to take responsibility for the quality of their life. They have had the freedom to work for goals that were obtainable and possible. Instead of settling for small pinnacles of success, they were given the means to experience the mountains while reaching for the stars.

However, there are those in our society who advocate free bread in exchange for personal liberties. The individuals who prefer temporary bread to that which has quality and is lasting are being offered a lifestyle that costs nothing; therefore, it is not to be valued or regarded as being important or significant. As these people learn to value nothing, they become irresponsible in every matter. Instead of learning respect, they become lawless. Instead of developing initiative and character, they become treacherous, always quick to sell their soul and sacrifice others for selfish desires.

Sadly, each generation has been conditioned to somehow give up their personal liberties to partake of the things of the world. They are blinded by their own limited point of view to the line that is being drawn in the sand of our present age. They have no real understanding of the liberty that has been afforded them through sacrifice. In fact, some rage against, as well as mock, the very principles that were put into place to safeguard them from tasting the bitterness of utter bondage produced by the corruption of evil. How could they understand liberty when they themselves have chosen to become slaves to their own self-serving and wicked agendas? How could they see the light of truth since they prefer the lies of this present age? Redemption is available to them, but they do not desire its benefits because they have been conditioned to take it for granted. They do not care to be restored to what has truly been lost because they have no concept as to how lost they have become. They want this present world instead of valuing the next one to come. Such individuals have sold their souls to hold on to their foolishness that will leave them empty and in complete spiritual ruin.

Jesus' words continue to echo through the centuries: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul" (*Matthew 16:26*)? Sometimes I stand in utter fear as to my own spiritual condition. Have I given up bits and pieces of my soul to partake of the things of the world? Have I become so spiritually dull towards truth that I have no consensus as to the spiritual opportunities I might be missing concerning my spiritual inheritance? Have I become so accustomed to some worldly lifestyle that I have no awareness as to how unprepared I am to face the trying tests of my faith, as well as the possible adversity that will bring me close to the abyss of utter destruction as the present darkness consumes the world around me?

In order to discern my own spiritual condition, I have often considered what God had to do with the children of Israel to cause them to walk through the entrances of opportunities allotted to them. Let us consider the route He had to take them to cause them to enter into all that He had promised them.

Desperation: We must become very uncomfortable in our slavery before we will accept being ransomed. We have been born into our slavery and know no other life. As long as we can get by with what we are familiar with, we have a tendency to be content even in tremendous bondage. Our slavery must not only become uncomfortable, it must become tormenting and unbearable before we become desperate. This is how spiritually dull we are, until we are awakened by the torment of our slavery. Torment is what will cause such slavery to become unbearable. It is when it becomes unbearable that we will begin to cry out in desperation.

Judgment: God must bring some type of judgment for us to realize that deliverance will cost. Judgment serves, in a way, as the *gate* that all must enter to experience redemption. The necessary price has to be paid for each of set us to be set free from any type of enslavement. Somewhere along the line, it will require someone to make the necessary sacrifice in order to secure red-

emption. The best must be offered and innocence must be sacrificed in order to produce the joy that should come with the awareness that one is truly being ransomed from bondage in order to be restored. First, there must be judgment on the old to bring the contrast of knowing there is a price that comes with such freedom.

Separation: Once judgment takes place, there must be a separation from that which has been judged in order for the new to be unveiled. For the children of Israel that separation came at the Red Sea. The Red Sea represented the *door* through which the children of Israel could enter to ensure the separation from the old (*1 Corinthians 10:1-2*). Once through the Red Sea, the door was forever closed for them. They could not go back to the old; therefore, they had to go forward to the new. In a sense, such a closed door represents death to the old in order to discover the new life that awaits God's people on the other side of the door of opportunity He has clearly provided (*Romans 6:3-5*).

Preparation: God allows for desperation in His people in order to bring judgment on the old as a means to separate them from it. However, separation from the old means nothing unless God's people are prepared to embrace the new. The preparation to receive the new is often wrought with difficulties. It is not enough to bring people out of a certain lifestyle, the lifestyle or way of thinking must come out of the people. You can change a person's outward appearance, but until the inward is changed, he or she remains the same. God clearly had to purge and forge the old out of His people before they would accept the opportunities afforded them as His people.

Deliverance: There are various stages of deliverance. There is always the past phase of deliverance where people are set free from that which initially enslaves their spirit. However, they must be set free from that which entangles their souls. The soul is made up of the will, intellect and emotions. God has provided the gate of redemption to set the spirit free, but He has carved out the door that would open the way through which a person's soul can be set free. Notice, one is the gate that results in deliverance, but the door

opens up the way a person must walk in order for the soul to be delivered from the influence of the old. The way a person must walk entails the ways of righteousness and the work of sanctification. The way of speaks of the present tense of deliverance that is ongoing in our lives. The truth is our souls can be easily taken captive by the strong tentacles of the world.

Communion: The ways before us must constantly be cleared by the work of sanctification that is done by the Spirit of God. He is always trying to prepare us to enter through the veil to enjoy the fullness of the blessings and promises of God. The veil for God's people points to communion. Each entrance of opportunity provided by God is to bring us to the place where the fullness of the life He has provided to us through redemption can be realized and secured. However, such a full, complete life cannot be realized outside of communion with Him.

When we consider the children of Israel, we must admit that each entrance presented a short window of opportunity through which they could enter. We can also see where God was faithful to prepare them to enter through the gate and door of deliverance at the allotted time. However, the day came when they were tested concerning entering through the veil into all that God had promised them. Even though He had been faithful to prepare them each step of the way, the children of Israel still failed to enter into the life that was secured and allotted to them by redemption.

In next month's newsletter, we are going to consider why the children of Israel failed to enter through the final entrance into the Promised Land. Surely, we need to make sure that we are not unfaithful in the life that God has clearly ordained for us. We need to make sure that we are entering through each entrance of opportunity that has been provided for us. Clearly, the seasons that mark our spiritual life and journey on this earth are ending, as we know it. Instead of becoming weary and hopeless, we must become more discerning and aware of our spiritual surroundings and be ready to enter through the veil into that place of abiding communion with our precious Lord and Savior. †

YOU, THE SHAKING AND THE MINISTRY

By Jeannette Haley

We live in a day and age where our perceptions and long-standing, comfortable conclusions are being challenged by the hour. We all have a world-view, and tucked within that worldview are our religious viewpoints. Life would be so much easier if the perceptions, worldviews and conclusions that we proudly hold so dear were left unchallenged and never proven wrong. It rattles what sense of security we may still be holding on to for dear life to discover that what we have always relied on as “tried and true” is actually a house of cards built on shifting sand. Who among us can honestly declare that the strong winds of adversity are not blowing?

When God arises to “*terribly shake the earth,*” (Isaiah 2:19, 21) He will shake all that can be shaken, not only throughout the systems of the entire world, but within the Church as well. Who can doubt that this shaking has not begun—a shaking against worldviews, perceptions and religious ideologies? “*For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*” 1 Peter 4:17? This shaking is going to be so strong, so fierce that only the truth will remain. God is no longer going to wink at our silly excuses for not walking in obedience to His Word. He will no longer tolerate our flimsy, self-serving religious practices that are all about outward show while our hearts remain cold, worldly and far from Him. God is about to shake to the core our high opinions of ourselves so that perhaps true repentance and conversion can take place before it is too late. Moreover, one of the faulty perceptions of Christians that He is going to shake is the unbiblical notion that what is known as “the ministry” is somehow an entity in and of itself. This “entity” is either set up on a pedestal, whereupon the clergy perches in idolatrous fashion in order to be worshipped and admired by all the “poor, dumb” sheep, or hotly pursued by novices with religious zeal who lack knowledge.

The majority of Christians have unquestioningly embraced the belief, or mindset, that “the ministry” is reserved for a select few who are somehow more spiritual, more intelligent, more educated, or more favored by God than the average believer is. Unfortunately, this has created a two-fold weakening of the efficacy of the Body of Christ because, 1) the majority of people settle for a nominal Christian life instead of fulfilling their mission on earth as children and servants of God, or 2) people strive to gain credentials, acceptance and praise of man to be validated as “ministers” in “the ministry.” Thus, nominal believers fail to be the salt and the light of the world on the one hand, and on the other hand, many of the “professional clergy” are in “the ministry” for the wrong reasons. The shaking that is coming upon the entire world, including the Church, is going to level the playing field, exposing those who truly know and serve their God, and those who are merely playing religious games.

The question is what is “the ministry” anyway? Is it a profession of elite overseers, who somehow stand between the people and God as mediators, and to whom money is due? Sadly, this is what millions of people believe and seek after rather than coming to God themselves through Jesus Christ. “*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time*” 1 Timothy 2:5, 6. James wrote, “*But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors*” James 2:9. Nevertheless, multitudes of people refuse to take responsibility for their own spiritual condition, but prefer to relegate the well-being of their souls to mere humans with “titles”. The fact remains, no one but God can forgive sins, iniquities and transgressions. No priest, pope, prophet or person has the power to forgive sins and guarantee eternal life to anyone.

Concerning “the ministry,” the definition of it is service. It is being a servant to God for His glory. How do we serve God? We serve God by being obedient to Jesus’ commandments. What are His commandments? In a nutshell, His commandments can be summed up this way: Love and serve

others in practical ways as He loved and served His disciples, and to love others as we love ourselves. James wrote, “*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world*” James 1:27. (By the way, “widows” also means single women.) If there is any group of people who are shunned, ignored and disregarded in the Church, it is single women. However, this attitude is nothing new. You can read about it in *Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-13*). The best place to begin serving Jesus is at His feet.

Jesus’ many illustrations through His example, along with His parables and teachings leave no room whatsoever for doubt or debate concerning ministry that is acceptable to God. This acceptable ministry (service) is not directed to a select group who desire to “go into the ministry,” but to every born-again believer regardless of his or her station in life, locality, or situation. We are not saved to sit, but to shine. We are not saved to live for self, but to be the salt. Here is a good quote from A. W. Tozer concerning service, motives for service and the Judgment seat of Christ: “Any serious-minded Christian may at some time find himself wondering whether the service he is giving to God is the best it could be. He may even have times of doubting, and fear that his toil is fruitless and his life empty. . . .

“The church has marked out certain work and approved it as service acceptable to God, and for the most part the church has been right. But it should be kept in mind that it is not the kind or quantity of work that makes it true service—it is the *quality*.”

“Before the judgment seat of Christ, very little will be heard of numbers or size; moral quality is about all that will matter then. . . .

“In Christian service motive is everything, for it is motive that gives to every moral act its final quality.”

The other day I listened to a local conservative radio talk show host discuss the missionaries who went to Haiti from Idaho after the terrible earthquake. Their intent was to help children in that devastated country. However, their work was cut short by the Haitian authorities who accused

them of kidnapping, and all ten of them were jailed. After some time, nine were released, but the leader was detained for an additional three months. What caught my attention was when the talk show host lamented that, "Most Christians don't have an opportunity to serve God..." This is false, and reveals the mindset most Christians have about ministry, or service to God. They think that unless a person goes overseas as a missionary, builds churches in some poor country, or stands behind a pulpit that they cannot serve God. If you have this mindset, let me ask you a question: Where do you find that teaching in the Bible?

Have you considered the fact that not just those in "the ministry" but your life, your service and your works will be tried by fire? *1 Corinthians 3:11-15* says, "*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*" Therefore, the foundation for our service (ministry) must be Jesus Christ. That is our starting point. It is from this foundation that all our works must flow. This means that we are to be faithful to whatever He puts in front of us, however seemingly small or insignificant, doing everything as unto Him, not for show, self-aggrandizement, or to "make points with God."

A. W. Tozer put it well when he wrote, "Before the judgment seat of Christ my service will be judged not by how much I have done but by how much I could have done. In God's sight my giving is measured not by how much I have given but by how much I could have given and how much I had left after I made my gift. The needs of the world and my total ability to minister to those needs decide the worth of my service.

"Not by its size is my gift judged, but by how much of me there is in it.

No man gives at all until he has given all. No man gives anything acceptable to God until he has first given himself in love and sacrifice. . . .

"In the work of the church the amount one man must do to accomplish a given task is determined by how much or how little the rest of the company is willing to do. It is a rare church whose members all put their shoulder to the wheel. The typical church is composed of the few whose shoulders are bruised by their faithful labors and the many who are unwilling to raise a blister in the service of God and their fellow men. There may be a bit of wry humor in all this, but it is quite certain that there will be no laughter when each of us gives account to God of the deeds done in the body."

We need to get back to the basics of true ministry, which means it is time to shed all of our preconceived notions, fabricated doctrines, church indoctrinations, phony falsehoods, and the complicated, overwhelming intellectual religious structures erected in our minds. It means becoming Christ-centered and Spirit-filled instead of being man-centered and self-filled. It means serving God for His glory, and not for our glory. Getting back to basics means returning to the one true source of all that exists, visible and invisible—Jesus Christ. Let us, therefore, meditate on His humble definitions of true ministry, beginning with *Matthew 10:41, 42*, which says, "*He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. 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.*" No kindness, no service, is too small in the eyes of God.

Imagine that you are an unseen witness to those who come and stand before Jesus on that great Day of Judgment of the saved. You see one notable church member proudly present to Him all the "great works" they have done. The person proudly declares, "Lord, my family went without so I could help build a new gymnasium for the church. I even ignored

the miserable plight of my faithful employee, who was lucky to have a job at all, so I could give lavishly to my church. After all, it was the biggest, richest church in town."

Another stands before the Lord and brags, "I went to church every time the doors were open. I even dashed off to Haiti to save the children, but ignored their laws, got myself into a real pickle, caused trouble, caused suffering and loss for my friends and family, but You know, Lord, I did it all for You. Never mind that I owed money to people at home: I sacrificed them in their financial plight so I could save the Haitian children. I know You understand how important it was for me to do that."

You stand amazed as another soul confidently approaches the Judge. "Lord, Lord, have I not prophesied in Your name? And, in Your name have cast out devils? And in Your name done many wonderful works?"

Surely, you think to yourself, you have nothing so grand to present to the Lord. His gaze turns to you, and you know that your entire life lies bare and naked before Him. You know that not a single day's thoughts, words or deeds of your earthly life have slipped away, unnoticed and forgotten by Him. Now it is your turn to appear before the Lord of Glory, to give an account of the life He has given you. "Lord," you hang your head, your voice a bare whisper. "Lord, you know I didn't have the means to do the things that were heavy upon my heart to do for You." Tears begin to flow from your downcast eyes. The burden of lost multitudes going into eternity without Christ, never hearing the Gospel, multitudes who never owned a Bible, was too great of a burden to bear. You stammer, "You know that all I could do was try to use what gifts and talents I had to lift the burdens of others around me. Some days it was only smiling at a stranger. Other times it was just passing out tracts. Sometimes it was silently praying for a homeless person that I drove past, or even a stray dog. On occasion, it was lifting the burdens of the sick, sharing food, or giving what I could for orphans and missionaries. I did offer the Gospel to others, and tried to disciple them, but only a few desired to be

truly converted, pay the price and live for You."

To which scenario can you most relate? If you were to stand before Jesus today, what would you present to Him that would be acceptable in light of eternity? Would it be your church attendance, or giving of your substance, however great, that was not truly sacrificial and according to God's will? Would you offer Him all your good intentions that amounted to nothing because you continued to live for yourself? What, oh what, dear reader do you have to offer to the Lord of glory that will stand the test of fire? If you are not sure, then allow the mighty shaking of God to have His way with your miserable soul so that you will fall on your face and get real with Him before it is too late.

God has called every believer to be a minister of the Gospel, not just the "special elite." There is no such thing as the "special elite" in the kingdom of God. We are all to let our *"light so shine before men, that they may see [our] good works, and glorify [our] Father which is in heaven"* Matthew 5:16. As the days in which we live grow darker, our lights should be burning brighter. Our ministry responsibilities are the same today as it was for the believers in the Colossian church to whom Paul wrote, *"That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God"* Colossians 1:10. Notice that walking "worthy of the Lord" so as to please Him is not about being super religious or going to church, but involves "being fruitful in every good work" coupled with "increasing in the knowledge of God." This excludes the post-modern church's obsession with humanism without the knowledge of God. All the good works in the world without the Gospel of Jesus Christ have no eternal value. Humanism is man's work for man's benefit for man's glory, and as such, it should have no part in the Body of Christ. Our works should always bring glory to God, not to ourselves or any other person. That is why we are told, *"...whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him"* Colossians 3:17.

Contrary to what the radio host said about not many Christians having the "opportunity to serve God," opportunities to serve God abound all around us. The problem is, if our vision is impaired because we are always looking to the major needs of people far away, "over there" somewhere, we will miss the opportunities to serve God that are right under our nose. Let us face it; we often ignore opportunities to serve God in small ways because it does not amount to much in our book. We tend to think that the everyday, ordinary small things are insignificant to God. The truth is those things are insignificant to us, not God, because we do not get much credit for them. There are also those times when the opportunity to serve God presents itself, but it is inconvenient, costly, and unpleasant. What then? *"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin"* James 4:17. This is the sin of omission, and as Tozer pointed out, we will be judged for such.

Jesus summed up the essence of the Christian life and service to God when He said, *"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets"* Matthew 7:12. May God give us a renewed heart to obey, with renewed love, hope, faith and courage until that day when He returns, bringing His reward with Him. †

QUOTABLES

"We are told to let our light shine, and if it does, we won't need to tell anybody it does. Lighthouses don't fire cannons to call attention to their shining—they just shine." —D. L. Moody

"We must have a reformation within the Church. To beg for a flood of blessing to come upon a backslidden and disobedient Church is to waste time and effort. A new wave of religious interest will do no more than add numbers to the churches that have no intention to own the Lordship of Jesus and come under obedience to His commandments. God is not interested in increasing church attendance unless those who attend amend their ways and begin to live holy lives."
— A.W. Tozer

COMMENTS

"This [Gulf oil spill] could effect our waters and coastline. I believe God is sounding the alarm here. He is SOOOOO patient with mankind, trying to get our attention but we are being so stubborn and stiff necked that he is allowing all this to happen. When will people see the writing on the wall? His love and mercy endureth forever but his dealings with man are surely coming to an end." - AK

"As someone else said - 'The West may not be at war with Islam but Islam is at war with the West'. I am with you - most Westerners have little idea of the spiritual powers working behind it all. Few seem to understand that the faithful Muslim is locked into Islamic Fundamentalism which in essence advocates violence including Jihad. However, not all Islamic people are militant and I am sure many have no idea of what they are caught up in so great is the deception.

I was in Adelaide and visited a church where I heard a nurse who has been working with Barnabas Fund ministering to Iraqi Christians and Iraqi Christian refugees (that is a story in itself - some wonderful people suffering severely as a consequence of the destabilisation caused by the Iraqi war and the opportunity this has given for increased Islamic violence and acts of extreme horror against believers in Jesus). She was saying that many non-militant Muslims in the region are very hospitable and rarely decline an offer of prayer and that God sometimes answers those prayers in remarkable ways so that despite the cost there are ongoing conversions sometimes attended by supernatural dreams and visions." - Australia

"You girls have always been there for me, and for that I am thankful, so grateful. God has blessed me with a wonderful husband and now a little girl. I know that he still has plans for me." - GA

"I believe it is a spirit of hopelessness that we are ALL battling. . . . that's how he [Obama] has made the American people feel. We know there is HOPE only in Jesus Christ, but I believe this is the insidious spirit that is trying to invade Believers at this time . . ." - FL

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

CAN A PERSON LOSE THEIR SALVATION?

Q: *Please clarify scripturally exact meaning, I've been taught that salvation cannot be lost? Eph. 1:11-14"*

A: Thank you for your inquiry. Many people struggle over the issue of losing one's salvation. The real issue is not whether one can lose his or her salvation, but whether or not one has truly been saved. There are many who claim to be Christians, but is there any real evidence that salvation has occurred in each of their lives? Hebrews 6:9 stipulates the things that will accompany salvation. For example, in Romans 10:9-10 the Apostle Paul clearly states that we must believe in our heart the Gospel. Salvation is a heart revelation, but many have only made a mental assent about it, but it never has penetrated their heart as being a matter of truth or way of life. We are told that the heart believeth unto righteousness. Righteousness is accounted to us at the point of faith. Faith approaches to believe the Word as truth and responds accordingly. Such righteousness points to right standing with God. Sadly, most people are only interested in or caught up with the theological points of salvation instead of the reality of it being truly evident in people's lives. They argue over whether one can lose salvation when the harsh reality is you cannot begin to lose what you never possessed in the first place.

The Bible is clear also that we must be born again of the Spirit and the pure water of the Word (John 3:3, 5). 1 John 3:9 states that "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God." There are those whose lifestyle does not bear witness that they are truly born again, yet they believe they are saved.

Jesus stated that if you love Him, you will obey Him. We are to be identified to Him and His saving grace by possessing sacrificial love for and towards our brethren. As the Apostle John stated in 1 John 4:20-21, how can one claim to love God while hat-

ing his or her brother or sister? How many people who claim to be Christians regard hate, indifference, unforgiveness and bitterness in their heart? We are also told those who do not receive a love for the truth will be swept away by a lie into destruction and damnation (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). We know that Jesus is the summary of all truth. We must reason that people who have been and will be swept away by the lie engulfing the world have failed to fall in love with the Jesus of the Bible—His person and His work of redemption.

The truth of the matter is the Bible speaks of salvation in three tenses: have been saved, are being saved, and will be saved. We are instructed to work out our salvation in fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). By faith we have been saved due to justification, are being saved as we submit to the work and leading of the Spirit, and will be saved when we are raised in newness of life to be glorified with Jesus. The Bible clearly stipulates that salvation is not a one-time event, but an ongoing work. This work entails working the very life of Jesus into us, through us and out of us to reproduce itself in others who respond to the evidence of it being real in our lives.

To me the biggest issue and concern of the Church is not whether we can lose our salvation, but whether people truly understand what it means to be saved. In a world deluged with knowledge and opinions, very few Christians are lacking doctrinal content, but many are lacking the actual evidence or assurance of what it means to be saved. They end up hiding behind doctrinal stands that amount to nothing more than wishful thinking which comes from believing that if something is considered to be true, such knowledge is enough to ensure that it is reality. However, the Christian life is not a doctrinal understanding, but a way of living and walking that will manifest itself in attitudes and behavior. It is not enough to possess a mental assent of salvation, one must possess the very life of Jesus. It is not enough to be in love with the concept of Jesus, you must truly love the person of Jesus. It is not enough to maintain a doctrinal view of Jesus, one must know Him in a per-

sonal, intimate way to ensure salvation.

To me, this theological struggle over one's eternal security would not be an issue if we as believers truly majored in what it means to be saved. Only God can know what is in the heart of a person, but Jesus was clear. He stated we would know people by their fruits—not their doctrinal stands on a matter or their religious affiliations.

I hope this answers your question. †

HEALED BY CHRIST

"A friend... said, 'You were healed by faith.' 'Oh, no,' I said, 'I was healed by Christ. What is the difference? There is a great difference. There came a time when even faith seemed to come between me and Jesus. I thought I should have to work up the faith, so I laboured to get the faith. At last I thought I had it; that if I put my whole weight upon it, it would hold. I said, when I thought I had got the faith, 'Heal me.' I was trusting in myself, in my own heart, in my own faith. I was asking the Lord to do something for me because of something in me, not because of something in Him.—A. B. Simpson (Canadian preacher, theologian, author, and founder of The Christian and Missionary Alliance)

RESPONDING TO PRINCIPLES

"I may no longer depend on pleasant impulses to bring me before the Lord. I must rather respond to principles I know to be right, whether I feel them to be enjoyable or not."

—Jim Elliot (evangelical Christian missionary to Ecuador who, along with four others, was killed while attempting to evangelize the Waodani people through efforts known as Operation Auca).

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