

GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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UNFEIGNED FAITH

Part Six THE BOX

By Rayola Kelley

Does the term "Fireside Chats" ring a bell with you? It is where the promoter or leader would casually sit, with supposedly a fireplace in the background, and chat about the issues presently affecting the landscape. In this article, I want to have such a chat with you about faith. In a way, I want to reason with you about what constitutes the faith that was first delivered to the saints.



I, for one, have struggled greatly with this issue. When I was first saved, I had an understanding that my salvation was the result of believing the Biblical evaluation that was pronounced upon my spiritual condition. Without any doubt I knew I was a sinner. I had identified hatred in my heart, perversion in my conclusions, confusion in my thinking, emptiness in my soul, and discontentment in my life. I had come to the end of myself and realized there was nothing I could personally do about my condition. It was clear that I needed to be saved and only something outside of my limitations could accomplish such an incredible feat.

Salvation of my soul was my first encounter with faith. It was that measure of faith that served as the incredible seed that allowed God to impart the very life of Jesus in me. It was incredible to think that faith, the size of a mustard seed, had connected me to the glorious work of heaven.

However, that small measure of faith was just a beginning. There was an incredible ocean that needed to be explored in regard to faith. Each measure of faith that was imparted to me would be greater than the measure before. Each impartation of faith

would expose me to the vast storehouse of God's possibilities and promises.

This brought me to the reality that faith required me to be an explorer. It would make me a stranger in the world as I explored the possibilities of that which was unseen. It would make me a pilgrim as I sought out my real destination. As my status caused me to venture forth in my faith, I would have to take steps into the unknown. To explore the unknown I would have to take risks that could result in failure, or bring me to the abyss, teetering on the edge of absolute destruction.

Each journey would bring me to a type of Job's outcome. I would have to choose to trust the Lord with everything in me, regardless of the uncertain outcome. In times of great adversity and conflict, I would have to maintain my ways before the unseen and tangible worlds around me to be able to give a defense of the faith I possessed (*Job 13:15*).

The problem is that in our ignorance towards the Christian life, we can often romanticize about genuine faith until we have to walk the walk. When the Apostle Paul talked about walking by faith and not by sight, he understood what it entailed (*2 Corinthians 5:7*). Paul had indeed walked the walk. We can actually identify some of the steps he had to take. Sometimes circumstances forced him to walk in a certain direction, other times the Spirit led him, and in many cases he had to simply obey what he knew was right in light of God's Word, his calling, and his mission.

As I considered the walk of faith, I realized that what prevents us from taking such steps towards a greater life and ultimate destination of heaven is that so many of us are entangled or enslaved in a box. You might be wondering what box I could be talking about. The box has to do with our way of thinking.

When the Apostle Paul made reference to walking by faith and not

by sight, he was referring to walking according to our own understanding. We know what *Proverbs 3:3-7* states, "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man. 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."

The Apostle Paul made it clear that our minds have to be transformed by the Spirit, thus no longer being conformed to the world's way of thinking (*Romans 12:2*). Clearly, the great battle for faith takes place in the mind. The mind serves as a narrow, limited box that has been conditioned and indoctrinated by the world to oppose genuine faith.

Like all boxes, the mind will encase what it contains. Trying to operate outside of the borders of this box will bring each of us up against formidable walls. Every time a person gives way to the hindrances created by walls, faith becomes a casualty. These walls become the mountains that are too great to climb, the chasms that are too deep to bridge, the roads that are too winding and precarious to travel, and the rivers that are impassable. These walls magnify circumstances that will hold people down and establish foundations that will make their walk uncertain as they try to balance their feet on shifting sands. It is for this reason that these walls must be identified.

The first wall that will immediately erect itself when personal understanding eludes us is *fear*. The fear of the unknown will produce mountains in front of us. When fear takes hold of our mind, it becomes paralyzed as chains of anxiety and despair neutralize our resolve. Instead of taking a step back, applying the mustard seed of faith, and looking upward to our only hope, we often find ourselves hitting our head against an entrenched barricade, or cowering in

the corners of absolute panic. Instead of taking hold of the immovable Rock and source of faith, fear invades every aspect of our souls. It becomes the ever looming mountain before us that appears too great to climb; therefore, all is lost. It is for this reason the writer of *Hebrews 12:2-3* made this statement, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your mind."

The second wall is *pride*. Pride produces the high peaks of opinions. In other words, it is not unusual to have high opinions about our personal worth and abilities. This personal worth often translates into self-sufficiency. Instead of putting our faith in the character of God, we will put our confidence in our strength and abilities to get through a matter. It is for this reason the Apostle Paul reminded us that our sufficiency is of God (*2 Corinthians 3:5*). He also made this statement in *Romans 12:3*, "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."

The problem with our pride is it is arrogant in its conclusions and will not humble itself before that which would prove worthy or beneficial. Pride will scoff at the ways of faith. It will always deem faith as being weak and silly. Since pride always wants to come out on top, it is not unusual for great competition to ensue as we strive to climb over obstacles in order to come out on top. This fleshly motivation is also quick to move away from taking personal responsibility for its limited, but divisive ways, causing the person to spiral downward into the great gulf of hopelessness. In such a condition people cannot afford to be wrong; therefore, they are not in the position of getting it right. In such a state, these individuals will lack real wisdom as they give way to the folly of their arro-

gance and foolishness.

The third wall is that of *logic*. We are instructed to not become wise in our own eyes. However, all of our ways seem clean in our own eyes (*Proverbs 16:2*). The reason all of our understanding seems so right is because we have approached the matter from every logical standpoint there is, and in our minds there is no way we can be wrong. However, we are told that God's ways and thoughts are not the same as ours. In fact, they are much higher (*Isaiah 55:8-9*). As people maneuver the dangerous twists and turns of life according to their logic, they often find themselves missing a turn and plummeting head first down the steep hillside of failure.

The initial rush of missing our turn may be exciting, but the end results are devastating. Logic will often leave us in a heap of confusion, uncertainty, and despair. Not only do we discover how limited our logic is, but it is incapable of reaching the heights of excellence when it comes to obtaining the ways and thoughts of God.

Even though our logic is limited, earthbound, and incapable of seeing the whole picture, it will mock faith that trusts the simplicity and truth of Jesus Christ. It will perceive itself as being so much more superior in its so-called "rational" state that it will see genuine faith as being foolish, ridiculous, and silly. It is for this reason the Apostle Paul gave this instruction in *Romans 12:16*, "Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits."

The fourth wall consists of *vain imaginations*. Imagination has a way of making a matter impassable when it comes to advancing in a situation. Imaginations can run as wild and fast as any river. They can exaggerate how wide or great the challenge is, while dramatizing the odds of what it would mean to properly cross over a matter to finish the course.

When it came to inheriting the Promised Land, the children of Israel imagined that the cities were too fortified, the iron chariots too great, and the soldiers too fierce for God to enable them to possess the land. They could not see how they could get around or pass through such strongholds without being utterly consumed by that which

has been greatly exaggerated and exalted by their imagination. Granted, the cities were fortified, the iron chariots swift, and the soldiers trained, but in light of God's power, cities would fall, chariots would become weighed down and rendered ineffective, and soldiers would be reduced to nothing more than the size of ants, scattering in every direction.

Vain imaginations will push faith aside as they give in to their own vain currents of ridiculousness. Since they have no boundaries, they will overflow any sound reason and rush headlong towards the falls of destruction. In such times our focus is not being turned towards the character and ways of God. It is for this reason the Apostle Paul made this statement in *2 Corinthians 10:4-5*, "(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

This brings us to the bottom or foundation of the box. It is known as *unbelief*. Faith is a choice that finds its foundation in our will. I choose to believe what I know is true about God and His ways. It is only from the basis of such belief that I can get my bearings enough to step aside from the mountains of fear, step around the high walls of prideful opinions, deem the precarious route of logic as an utterly dead end, and close the dam on my vain imaginations. In other words, I must step outside of what I have deemed to be the comfortable, controllable, and convenient, but insidious box of my carnal mind in order to gain God's perspective.

It is vital that I get my bearings by putting my faith in the immovable Rock of heaven. If I fail to do so, I will discover that my foundation is the shifting sand of unbelief. As I sidestep the uncertainty of my situation, I will discover that my ceiling is not that of God's truth, but a *sick reality* that leaves me in a state of denial, delusion, or fantasy. Instead of being prepared to believe that God is bigger than every mountain, I will give in to the mountain of fear. In such a state of unbelief I will arrogantly trust that I am capable of

FORGETTING

By Jeannette Haley

There is a great deal of emphasis these days on the terrible condition known as Alzheimer's. This disorder, or disease, or whatever it is, spells doom and gloom for not only the person who is diagnosed with it, but for his or her loved ones as well. Growing increasingly forgetful is frightening. The picture that comes to my mind as I write this is that of a beautifully hand-knit sweater. This sweater is nearing completion, when suddenly the hand of an unseen enemy deftly pulls the strategic strand of yarn that has the power to unravel all



the loving work that has gone into this very personal work. Each stitch in our imagined sweater represents all the days and years of a special, unique life.

Some of us may not experience the devastation of total forgetfulness, but as we grow older, we notice that there are definitely some "memory holes" in our "sweater of life." It can be irritating, frustrating, and sometimes downright maddening to suddenly find yourself groping for a word, or a name, that you know that you know, but can't instantly recall. In addition, on those occasions when you blow it because you "forgot," you hate to hear yourself say, "I forgot," as your only explanation. After all, that's the common excuse little kids and teenagers come up with to explain away their disobedience, or incompetence. Let's face it, there is a big difference between truly forgetting and merely using it as a lame excuse!

Forgetting, however, does have its up side. Consider what the Apostle Paul wrote, in *Philippians 3:13, 14*, "*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*" Paul wrote to the church at Philippi of his impeccable Hebrew "pedigree." However, what he flatly stated in verse 7 must have been a shock to those who took great pride in their Jewish roots,

education, and works. Paul said, "*But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.*"

Paul was saying that all of his upbringing, teaching, training, education, and works of the Law were nothing compared to the "*excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus*" his Lord, for whom he had "*suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.*" How many Christian nowadays would be willing to consider their accomplishments as "dung" and forget them in order to gain Christ? The normal thing for most professing Christians is to secure their education, job, relationships, and lifestyle as the ultimate priority, and then conveniently tack Jesus on. That may work for awhile, but when one's life begins to unravel, what is there to cling to other than Christ? The problem is, if He is merely tacked on to your life instead of being the Lord and Master of your life, when your world collapses, you will find yourself up a creek without a paddle. If you think that you can safeguard your "sweater of life" in "spiritual mothballs" so that when you stand before Jesus to give an account of your life you will be "preserved," you are dead wrong.

What did Paul mean when he wrote, "*forgetting those things which are behind*"? Are we supposed to somehow dumb ourselves down by turning off our brains and forgetting everything that we have learned through teaching, training, and experience? Are we supposed to toss aside loved ones and abandon our daily responsibilities? No! But neither are we to love anyone or anything more than we love God and Jesus Christ. Paul was adamant that nothing in this world is of greater importance or value, or more worthy of pursuit than Jesus Christ. "Forgetting" those things that "are behind" is a matter of getting one's priorities in the right order. Jesus warned, "*For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul*" *Matthew 16:26*? He also said, "*He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it:*

and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" *Matthew 10:37-38*.

Paul often compared the Christian life to a race. He knew that no runner could run forward while looking backward. *Hebrews 12:2* tells us, "*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.*" The weights that "so easily" weigh us down are those things that we insist on carrying with us. What are "weights?" Paul puts them into two categories: "weight" and "sin". Both give the impression of heaviness that will hinder us from running the race. Sin is heavy. It erodes a person's strength and resolve to run the race to the finish line. Sin brings guilt and accusation, and is an open door to Satan. Sin results in heaviness of heart, and mental misery. It works like a cancer in a person's soul, working death. If sin is not confessed, repented of (forsaken), and laid at the cross, then it will bring the runner to ruin. Sin can only be "forgotten" after it has been forgiven and cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

The other weights that Paul spoke of can be broad in scope depending on the individual and where his or her affections lie. The key to laying aside the weights of this world, and forgetting them, is to "*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth*" *Colossians 3:3*. As long as our affections are upon this world, and the things which originate from this world, and are upheld by this world, then we cannot easily "forget" them in laying them aside so that we can run, and finish, the race. As long as our affections are planted and rooted in this world, then our hearts, our emphasis, our priorities, and our goals will involve these affections. In writing to the Corinthians concerning how to master this spiritual race, he gives us a valuable key in one word—*temperate*: "*Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not*

as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

Paul desired to be "found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" *Philippians 3:9, 10*. The fact is, we cannot serve two masters. We cannot serve ourselves from the premise of our own accomplishments, agendas, goals, and conclusions, and serve Christ. This is why Paul said that he "died daily." This is a choice we all must make, every day—who am I serving today, self, Satan or God? This is what I call the "mixed blessing" of the free will that God has given to each of us: it can be either a burden or a blessing. Every time we make a decision to cling to that which is temporal, we are "remembering" the world, and "forgetting" that which is eternal. These daily decisions become the burdensome "weights" which keep us from running the race to the finish line. On the other hand, as we make the right decisions, we find that our burdens roll off, we leave them behind, and are thus enabled by God's Spirit to run the race set before us. If we fail to finish our course, we have no one to blame but ourselves.

What are we to remember? In the battle of life, we are to remember the Lord (*Nehemiah 4:14*). In the night season we are to meditate on the Lord (*Psalms 63:6*). In the time of trouble, when our souls faint within us, we are to remember the Lord, and pray (*Jonah 2:7*). If we forget the Lord, then our way will be perverted, and there will be mourning and weeping (*Jeremiah 3:21*). Jesus gave us two ordinances to remember—baptism and communion. In baptism we are identified to His death, burial, and resurrection (*Romans 6*). As we partake of communion, we remember his broken body and His blood that He shed for the remission of our sins. We partake of communion in remembrance

of Jesus, and also as we take communion we remember that He is returning for His Body, the Church. These things we must never forget.

Concerning forgetfulness, the Apostle Paul warned the Corinthian believers, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand: By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain" 1 Corinthians 15:1-2. [Emphasis mine.] What can be forgotten that will cause a person to "believe in vain"? The answer follows in verses 3 and 4: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures".

As the days grow darker, and time grows shorter, my prayer is that God's people, myself included, will be able to boldly declare with the Apostle Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" 2 Timothy 4:7. †

ZION'S FIRE QUOTES

By Marv Rosenthal

JESUS will rule over the twelve tribes of Israel during His millennial reign. And, as the bona fide King of Israel, He will rule the nations of the world. That's a major reason why Israel is so important in the affairs of men and nations. And that's the principal reason why Israel has been a high-value target of Satan through the centuries. It is all about the spiritual conflict of the ages.

The world, notwithstanding its scientific advance, is as sinful today as it was nineteen hundred years ago...All that technology does is allow men to sin in more ways, more often, with more sophistication.

Christians must be aware of the subtleties of Satan. He is not locked up yet, and he is having a field day within the so-called Church in America.

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

Q: We are living in frightening times. According to the news it is obvious that various anti-God and anti-Christian factions are coming together to gain power. I just want your take on what you think is going on in the world.

A: We are indeed living in frightening times, but they are also exciting times. The times we are living in were prophesied in Scripture. They point to the glorious event of Jesus coming back as King, Lord, Judge, and God to set all matters right. Everything will be purged from the influences of wickedness.

However, before we will witness the glorious blessed hope that rightfully belongs to every blood-bought saint, we will witness the travelling birth pains as a one-world government, religious, and economic system rises out of the dark cesspool of death and destruction. Out of this platform, tribulation will engulf the whole world as insanity comes to the forefront while various groups come together to defy the true living God and His people. The common ground for these groups is their hatred towards the immovable, righteous truths of God. Their goal is simple, they want to utterly destroy the mirror that brings contrast to their wicked ways. This mirror has been established by the Judeo-Christian God and His righteousness.

Even though these different groups are flying under various religious and political banners, they are basically doing Satan's bidding. As you watch these groups, their fruits clearly identify Satan as being their father. Consider Jesus' words in *John 8:44*, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it."

Let us consider the fruits of these groups. First, they are driven by the lust for power. Even though these groups are coming into agreement, it is for the purpose of using each other to obtain their greedy goals to rule the

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getting myself through a situation, rather than flinging myself on the Rock in search of leadership and safety. Instead of being ready to reason with God about the matters of His kingdom and my pathetic ways, I will logic why His ways are foolish and my ways are correct. Instead of challenging the rapids of my imagination with child-like confidence and obedience, I will be swept away by its current towards a collision course with the jagged rocks of foolishness.

When it comes to faith, the biggest battle takes place in the mind. It is too easy to bounce back and forth from one insipid wall to the other in order to try to make sense out of the unknown, control the overwhelming, pull back the unpredictable, and bring matters back into the confines of our limited understanding. If it is not bad enough that we are bouncing back and forth in our decisions and emotions, we find ourselves losing our footing on the shifting sands of unbelief as we hit the ceiling of a reality that is void of heavenly hope, truth, and sanity.

Perhaps you might be relating to this particular article. Maybe you want to quit feeling like a ping pong ball, get off the merry-go-round of ridiculousness, and land at the place of sanity in order to gain clarity in the midst of the overwhelming. You first must cease to depend of what you think you know and humble yourself before that which possesses the eternal perspective. You must repent of trying to understand according to your own perspective and seek to know the heart, mind, and will of God. You must quit wrestling against or repelling away from that which is unknown, and desire to embrace that which is eternal.

Faith is clearly a choice. And, the choice we must make up front to exercise mountain moving faith is to step outside of the limited box of our natural thinking. We must turn our focus heavenward, set our affections on that which is heavenly, and put our full trust in the abiding, faithful character of God. We must choose to trust that He will work out the unknown, bring about the incredible, do the impossible, and ultimately be

glorified in it. As we put our trust in Who God is, what He said, and what He will ultimately accomplish for His glory, we must walk in expectation of it all being brought forth in our life.

The question is, are you walking according to your personal understanding, or according to faith that is solely directed towards God? †

QUOTABLE

Forcible revolution is not the Bible way to correct social evils. The cause of man's inhumanity lies in his own fallen nature [i.e. disposition]. The gospel attacks the root cause, and offers a new creation in Christ Jesus." - William MacDonald

The unpardonable sin involves even more than saying a final "No" go God. It is also making a final spiritual decision to attribute the entire testimony of God, by His Spirit through His Son, to be the work of Satan. It is labeling the ultimate good as evil. This is such a blasphemy that the Spirit of God no longer deals with such a person. - Dr. Gary Cohen

God has called every Christian to a holy life. There are no exceptions to this call. It is not a call only to pastors, missionaries, and a few dedicated Sunday School teachers. Every Christian of every nation, whether rich or poor, learned or unlearned, influential or totally unknown, is called to be holy. The Christian plumber and the Christian banker, the unsung housewife and the powerful head of state are all alike called to be holy.

This call to a holy life is based on the fact that God Himself is holy. Because God is holy, He requires that we be holy. Many Christians have what we call a "cultural holiness." They adapt to the character and behavior pattern of Christians around them. As the Christian culture around them is more or less holy, so these Christians are more or less holy. But God has not called us to be like those around us. He has called us to be like Himself. Holiness is nothing less than conformity to the character of God.—Jerry Bridges

Blessed are the single-hearted, for they shall enjoy much peace. If you refuse to be hurried and pressed, if you stay your soul on God, nothing can keep you from that clearness of spirit which is life and peace. In that stillness you will know what His will is. - Amy Charmichael

world. They are like Nimrod in *Genesis 10:8-10* and *11:1-9* who wanted to establish a world-wide empire.

While these groups are using each other, they are also waiting for the time that they can turn around and destroy the enemy of their enemy. They have no desire to share the tyrannical spotlight with anyone. All they know is hatred and murder. They know nothing but war; therefore, their cries are for revolution to bring about their particular "utopia". They are all after world-dominance. They hate anyone who dares to oppose them and with a plastic smile planted on their faces they hold a knife behind their back waiting to strike. They are like snakes who will strike when you are not looking, and scorpions who will quickly sting you when you let your guard down.

These people are clearly filled with hatred, and all that their mouths spew forth are either treacherous flattery or endless curses. They flatter you so they can seduce or conquer you and they curse you because they have no means to bless you. Their loyalty is to an ideology or a cause and not to people. In the end, whosoever is not standing on their side will be destroyed.

These people are liars. They believe they have the answers and that their cause is noble, and their lying, deceitful ways clever. Their light is darkness, their words are lies, and their delusion great. They are surely the offspring of Satan.

The question is who, out of all of these groups, is going to outsmart the treachery of the others? After all, everyone in this sick game thinks that they have greater causes that will ultimately stand or are cleverer than the next guy. The truth of the matter is they are all utter fools, but there are those fools that are exceedingly more treacherous and clever. If you were to ask me which fools will fall first, I would say it is the so-called Socialist and Marxist leaders and revolutionists of the United States of America. After all, a bunch of unrealistic, untrustworthy, foolish thugs cannot withstand the passion of the religious extremists or the well established machine of Communism.

If you were to ask me who would remain standing between the Commu-

nists and the extreme Islamist groups, I would bet on the Communists. As we can see, the reality of these groups is that they cannot help but destroy each other. They know nothing but the ways of death and destruction. What they cannot persuade they will persecute, what they cannot control they will sacrifice, and what they cannot use for their sick causes will be discarded like rubbish. It is for this reason that Jesus made this statement, *"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened"* (Matthew 24:21-24).

Clearly, many innocent people will find themselves in the crosshairs of this insanity of hatred. Many will be used as pawns as they are sacrificed for the sake of a delusion. Others will be trampled under as these different groups brutally race for the prize of world control.

At this point, we must ask ourselves who will come out on top. The truth is none of these groups have the means to survive. They do not know the ways of life. They can only rob, kill, and destroy. Their wicked ways will eventually cave in around them. It is for this reason the Bible tells us that the meek, not the wicked, will inherit the earth.

This brings us to the glorious promise that God will indeed win in the end. He will return and wipe out all remembrance of these wicked people and He will make right what they have so viciously torn down. His Word will be established throughout the land and not the lying flattery, judgments, curses, and claims of the wicked.

The times we are living in are frightening, but they are also exciting because we know our Lord's return is close at hand. Meanwhile, we must not let the bad tidings cause our minds to faint and our hearts to grow cold. We must know what it means to hide in our place of refuge in God. It is from the high tower of His greatness that we can be assured of victory, and it is from the inner chambers of His formidable fortress of safety that we can know that nothing can touch our life in Christ. ☩

READERS' COMMENTS

I just wanted to say, "Wow, what a great Newsletter this month!" Rayola's article reminded me once again of the steadfastness of our Lord and to always look to Him and let our requests be known to Him and let not our faith waver. Jeannette, what an exceptional article on friendship! You clearly showed what kind of friend we need to extend to others to be friendly and the example of a friend we have in Jesus. I loved the Q & A as well on the methodology being used to bring in believers instead of just the unfeigned belief and delivery in the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation. - ID

Fasting? I believe it's a personal thing that God "may" call some to do, but I don't believe anyone can any longer implement a "corporate" fast. And, IF one is called to fast for a specific purpose, I believe it's to be kept to oneself, and not spouted out to others [like, look how holy and righteous I am!]. - FL

Correction and wrath are completely different items in the economy of God. Just like our natural parents, we would be doing a DISservice to our children if we did NOT correct bad behavior so it is with God. We've passed from judgment unto LIFE because of the shed blood of Yeshua, but that certainly doesn't mean we are exempt from correction from a loving, righteous, Father, Amen? AMEN! Trials come our way to build us up and make us strong!!! And deliverance from them should glorify our Father in heaven! - FL

Just like scripture says, knowledge will increase and go to and fro....In my mind I say stop...that's enough..we don't need anymore technology, gadgets and so forth. I just came across that and wanted to share, this man wants to bring back his dad who has been dead for awhile now. People want to live forever, they think they can. I sometimes wonder what God is truly thinking. - AK

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. — Isaiah 55:8, 9

SPIRITUAL SURVIVAL

By Rayola Kelley

What does it mean to spiritually survive? Does it mean we keep the life we have in this present world intact? Does it mean we prepare ahead so we do not feel the affect of what is about to happen? Does it mean that we come out on top in the game of life? Does it mean that we come out with what we perceive due respect from those around us?

We must understand what is in stake in order to survive. We must decide what the most valuable asset to our survival is for it will be from this premise that we will be able to count the cost. If the fires of adversity, persecution, and death come our way, what must survive such fires? Jesus summarized it best when He said "count the cost." As believers we must count the cost in order to spiritually survive. Next, I am going to address what I believe is the most important asset we must guard through these dark times.

THE POWER OF LIGHT

How great of a light do we need in order to see through the grave darkness or the confusing shadows of the world we live in? It is not a matter of how great the light is, but how intense it is. Too much light can blind, but intense light can penetrate the darkness. Jesus is the great light of heaven that came to penetrate the darkness of this world. My hope is that His light is penetrating the darkness in each of our lives to bring hope and guidance. (See *Matthew 4:14-17*)

LIFTED ABOVE THE DARKNESS

In *John 9:4*, Jesus made a statement about the night coming when no man can work. How long will we be able to work before such darkness overtakes us? When I consider the darkness Jesus was taking about, it was the darkness of death, His death on the cross. It dawned on me that in the travailing that occurred during His ordeal on the cross, the light of the world was lifted above the darkness to shine in a greater way. For out of His death came a new dawning for those who experience the light's penetrating affect. *John 12:32* explained it in this way: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."