

# GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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

## SINNER OR SAINT

### Part 1

By Rayola Kelley

In ministering to people, we have discovered that many of them have not been truly discipled. Granted, they may have been indoctrinated according to a certain school of thought or doctrinal preference, but they have not been discipled to follow Jesus. They may have been exposed to Christianity, but they have been allowed to define what it means to live the Christian life according to personal understanding and speculation. As a result, people may be following concepts and notions about what it means to be a Christian, but they are not following Jesus. Such environments do not produce disciples of Jesus.

There are a couple of problems that occur when such environments are in operation among Christians. The main one is that there will be no real agreement. As a Body of believers, our real source of agreement is Jesus Christ. Due to the diversity in the Body, agreement will be missing unless there is one sure foundation in which to take stock of a matter, and one Spirit in which issues can be properly discerned. Spirit and truth serve as the only real points of agreement among believers (*John 4:24*).

Discipleship is what establishes believers on the true foundation of Jesus Christ, and lines them up to the cornerstone of His truth, examples and work of redemption (*1 Corinthians 3:11; 1 Peter 2:6-8*). This is why the Christian's commission is really two-fold. In other words, it has one main root that connects individuals to the reality and work of Jesus, but it is two-pronged.

The one prong is our responsi-

bility to preach the Gospel, while the other one is that of discipleship (*Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15*). One of the facts I remind Christians of is that Jesus' mission was to die as the Lamb of God, but His ministry was, and is, to serve as our Prophet, Priest and Lord to bring about the ministry of reconciliation (*2 Corinthians 5:18-19*). It is from this premise that He will fulfill His calling to set the captive free, and truly bring forth redemption as He rules in the believer's life as Lord, while unveiling the kingdom of God in the lives of His followers.

Since there seems to be much confusion about true Christianity, I felt a need to teach a discipleship series. It is important to point out that real discipleship entails a one on one investment. It is a matter of bringing one to the knowledge, understanding and obedience of his or her Lord. It is my desire that as a Scriptural foundation is laid, the true spiritual teacher, the Holy Spirit, will be enabled to bring life and revelation of the Scriptures to His people (*John 16:13; 1 John 2:27*). It is the life in the Word of God that will affect the inner man to ponder in humility what it truly means to be a Christian or true follower of Jesus.

Christianity is not a belief system. It is a lifestyle. In other words, Christianity's identifying mark is the very life of Jesus being worked in us, through us and out of us. Obviously, Christianity is not just a matter of association with some Jesus; rather, it is a total identification, to and in, the Jesus of the Bible. This identification is for the purpose of being consecrated unto God according to the heavenly life that is being manifested in us by the Holy Spirit.

The question is, how does identification truly distinguish us as believers? It is simple. It will come down to the way we walk. One of my struggles in my Christian life has been my identification. Am I a sinner or am I a saint? There are some Christians who can get quite adamant over this issue,

declaring that, as Christians, we are saints. However, when I first came to Jesus, I had to recognize that I was sinner, doomed by my sin. And, as we all well know, the Bible is quite adamant about this fallen state of man that initially separated each of us from our holy God.

Scripture reveals, that because of our selfish disposition, our best is considered as filthy rags before God. Because of our wretched fleshly ways, there is no good or beneficial aspect of our inner life that would honor God in His holiness. Sin has indeed marred us so much that we fall short of our potential to reflect the glory of God in this present age of darkness. Our sinful condition has brought us under a death sentence. In such a state we stand doomed. And, as the Bible warns, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth of Jesus Christ is not in us. It also states that if we say that we have not had a real problem with sin, we make God a liar, and His Word is definitely not in us. After all, God considers us sinners, subject to the wickedness of this world, enslaved by iniquity, and prone to transgress His Law (*Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 7:18; 1 John 1:8, 10*).

Through the years, I have become more aware of my inner state. Granted, Jesus took away our sins (its activities) on the cross, but what about the inner disposition? We refer to this inner disposition as the "old man." How did Christ deal with the inner man on the cross? It is simple that the work of redemption on the cross allows us to receive the "new man" or "new life" from heaven. In other words, we are given a new disposition: that of a new heart and new spirit when we are born again from above. The born-again experience makes us into new creations and places us in the position of a saint (*John 3:3, 5; 2 Corinthians 5:17*).

Saint implies a person who is set apart or sanctified. Such a person is a believer whose life stands distinct in holiness, sincerity and separation. The Bible tells us that as believers, Jesus is



our place of sanctification, but it is the Holy Spirit who does the work of sanctification. Positionally, the Father sees Jesus' sanctification, which makes us acceptable to Him. However, our life must be hid in Christ to ensure God views us from this vantage point, as well as allow the Spirit to actually do the work of sanctification in the inner man (*1 Corinthians 1:30; Colossians 3:3; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:2*).

Does the old disposition in us simply cease once we are born again? The way we are inclined, or bent, towards God may change, but many of the tendencies of the "old man" remain in us. Obviously, for tendencies to change we must change our attitude about matters. In Jesus' instruction and example, He showed believers what they must do to ensure that the "old man" never reigns again. There must be self-denial of the old ways, before the rule and preeminence of the "old man" can be crucified. Once the ways are disowned and the reign of the old disposition put to death, then a person has the liberty to follow Jesus.

Once the old is put away through neglect and death, a person can begin to take on the new. The new points to new godly tendencies. The inner man must be renewed daily by the Spirit of God to ensure that new tendencies are being developed in one's life. This is why the mind must be transformed by the renewing of the Spirit.

As I have struggled with the issue of being a sinner or a saint in my spiritual life, I have had to come to terms with what really sets a person apart as a sinner or saint. The answer is quite simple. It is found in *1 John 3:9-10*: "*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. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*"

What identifies a person in his or her walk? If a person is walking or living in sin, he or she is a sinner. If a person is walking in the ways of righteousness, he or she will be iden-

tified as being born from above. After all, those who truly have the very life of Jesus in them cannot sin without being convicted in their tender conscience. There will be no way in which they can ignore, justify or maintain such sin without a war raging in their soul. Sin breaks fellowship with God, and the new disposition will not be able to tolerate such a broken state for long.

As Christians, we must realize that our Christian identification is not a title or a means of association. It is about exchange and identification. At the cross of Christ I exchange the old with the new in order to become totally identified with Jesus in a new life. The Apostle John talks about such an identification in his first epistle: "*He that saith he abideith in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked*" (*1 John 2:6*).

To ensure complete sanctification as saints, we must follow Jesus. Jesus stated in *John 17:19*: "*And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.*" We are not only positionally identified as a saint, but our lives must also brand us as being truly followers of Jesus Christ. He sanctified or set Himself apart so we could be sanctified through His truth. Let us now consider the path Jesus followed to be set apart in His life as a man.

*Personal Glory*: He gave up His capacity as God to take on the disposition of a servant, allowing Himself to be fashioned as a man (*Philippians 2:1-8*). He became identified with us, so we could become identified to Him in His work of redemption. According to Jesus' example, before we can walk the life of a saint that is separate from the dictates of the flesh and the demands of the world, we have to give up our vainglory. This means we must give up our right to life according to our terms. To give up our personal glory enables us to humble ourselves as a servant so that we can be made or formed in the righteousness of God.

*Established*: As man, Jesus was established in His life with the Father. Most of this hidden life He had with the Father was developed in obscurity. As a result, Jesus was prepared to walk the path to Calvary. His face was set to finish His earthy mission, enabling us as believers the means to discover our heavenly inheritance. His example is

clear; we must be firmly established in our life with Him, if we are going to live separately from the influences of this world.

*Commissioned*: Jesus was commissioned to die on the cross. In His ministry He made the intention of the Father known to those who would but hear. He came to heal the broken hearted and restore hope to those in captivity, by reconciling them back to a relationship with His God. As saints, we have the ministry of reconciliation (*Luke 4:18; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19*). We have been commissioned to preach the Gospel that can bring peace, and teach others to observe the teachings and ways of Jesus that will line them up to the narrow path of life.

*Sacrifice*: As a servant, Jesus was prepared to offer all up for the glory of the Father, to benefit our spiritual state. He walked away from what was considered a normal life, sacrificed all attachments and recognition that belonged to the world, and walked contrary to the ways of the world. In the end, He became the perfect Lamb of God that the world not only hated, but also offered up as a source of reproach and humiliation on the altar of the cross. As saints, we are to become living sacrifices to prove what is the right, acceptable, and perfect will of God (*Romans 12:1-2*).

*Death*: Jesus died so we could have life. All sins have been placed in the silent grave so the guilt attached to them can no longer taunt believers' conscience, allowing them to embrace the new life. As saints, we not only possess eternal life, but we are to live this life out in loving devotion. Jesus talks about this life possessing abundance or satisfaction. When Christians are not content, it is because they are not walking out the life entrusted to them. As a result, they fail to experience the abundance of this life that truly proves to be satisfying to the spirit and soul of man. Keep in mind that the very life of Jesus is complete, full and rewarding. We can only experience the contentment of this life by assimilating it into our thoughts, attitudes and conduct.

*Resurrection Power*: Resurrection power raised Jesus from the grave. As saints, we have this same power to raise us out of the quagmire of sin and

## WHAT IS GODLINESS?

By Jeannette Haley

It's interesting how people translate words differently according to their own understanding and perception. That is why it is so important to clearly define terminology when trying to get an idea across to others when teaching, or even in general conversation. How many misunderstandings have developed between people simply because definitions needed to be established?

The subject of godliness is no exception. If you were to take a survey of people's perception of godliness, some of the terms you would most likely hear are "religious," "pious," "righteous,"



"spiritual," "holy," "pure" or "saintly." All of these definitions may be correct in whole or in part; that is, each can be a vital component of godliness. However, one has to delve deeper into the meaning of these terms in light of the context in which they are found in Scripture. In other words, we need to understand the definitions of words found within the framework of God's attributes and character as revealed in His Word. Therefore, true godliness, or holiness, as the case may be, must be defined by Spirit and Truth.

Godliness is like a many-faceted diamond, wherein each "facet" is represented by a singular definition [of godliness]. Each facet reflects the purity and beauty of the whole. The facets are not the essence of the diamond, but they are necessary in order for the glory and beauty of the gem to shine forth in complete and total perfection.

Therefore, if I were to mention "religious" as just one "facet" of godliness to a person, that person could interpret it in any number of different ways. He or she might conclude, depending upon his or her frame of reference, that religious means belonging to a certain church or denomination. Another might think of fanaticism, while someone else could think in terms of one of the world's "religions," or the occult, or a cult. As you can

see, at this point there would be a total breakdown in successfully communicating godliness according to spirit and truth.

The definition of "religious" has, through the centuries, been more or less subject to the church culture of the time, because "religion" and "religious" has to do with outward ceremonial observance and worship. While "religious" is not an attribute of God, who is spirit, it can be a characteristic of a truly godly person. But, not all outwardly religious persons are necessarily godly. We all know that the world is full of "religious" people of every sort who are enemies of God in disposition, motivation, word, and deed. Such persons, unlike true servants of God, are easily identified (as were the Pharisees) by their pride, self-love and self-serving agendas, lack of fruit and Christ-likeness, and more often than not, a religious spirit.

We find this beautiful, simple yet profound definition of "religion" in *James 1:26, 27*: "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. 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 is saying that a person can outwardly appear to be "religious," but what comes out of his or her mouth will reveal the heart condition. A person with a deceptive heart deceives no one but him or herself in the long run, regardless of how "good" or "religious" he or she appears to be, making his or her religion vain, or worthless.

James states that there is such a thing as "pure" religion that is "undefiled" before God. He doesn't say that "pure and undefiled religion" is going to church every time the door opens. Nor is it running around "laying hands on people" and "prophesying." James definitely rules out becoming rich and famous, traveling around the world promoting "world peace," or pushing for every church to join in a "purpose-driven" agenda. Rather, pure and undefiled religion in God's eyes is quiet servitude to those in great need, and living a consecrated life (separation from the world). [Note: If you want to understand how to live a consecrated life, we suggest that you

download Rayola's e-Book, "The Victorious Journey." Also, watch for her new upcoming in-depth book on this subject, "Possessing Our Souls."]

It's rather obvious, to even the most casual observer, that being religious is not an indication of godliness. After all, a pagan can be "religious" about idols demon gods, and tribal customs. However, a truly godly person may be religious, but only in the strictest sense of the term, where his or her religion is indeed "pure" and "undefiled" by personal pride, agendas or carnality.

The next word that people may use to describe godliness is "pious." According (in part) to Webster, pious means marked by or showing reverence for deity and devotion to divine worship; sacred or devotional as distinct from the profane or secular; dutiful; virtuous. Webster refers to the word "devout" in conjunction to pious, and therein notes that pious applies to the faithful performance of religious duties and maintenance of outward religious attitudes, frequently with a connotation of hypocrisy. So we see that the underlying connotation of piety and devout, while giving the appearance of true religion outwardly, fails to uphold the lasting virtues of a pure and perfect heart. Thus, we can dismiss piety, pious and devout as true definitions or examples of godliness, although, as with "religious" a godly person may be devout or pious in disposition and attitude.

The next word in our list is righteous. The Hebrew definition for nearly all of the usages of righteous in the Old Testament is "make right (in a moral or forensic sense); cleanse, (be, do) just;" justice, justify, "(be, turn to) righteousness" and "lawful." Thus those who lived before Christ and obeyed the law, and lived moral, upright lives, were considered righteous. We can study the lives of those whom God considered righteous such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Job, Abraham, and Daniel, to name a few who had right standing with God.

Righteous, or righteousness, is exemplified in the lives of Noah, Daniel and Job because of what they overcame in their generation. "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, [the world] they should deliver but their own souls by their

*righteousness, saith the Lord GOD” Ezekiel 14:14.* (Emphasis added). Noah overcame the world, Daniel overcame the flesh, and Job overcame the devil. True righteousness is more than external compliance to certain religious traditions or practices. It is more than conforming for the sake of appearing righteous to others. It is more than reforming one’s behavior in order to survive societal rules and laws. It is more than performing good works as the sole basis of personal righteousness.

The New Testament definition of righteous, or righteousness, reveals that only through Christ can we be rendered or regarded as just or innocent. Those who are in Christ are justified, or acquitted for Christ’s sake. Christ is our righteousness. (See *Romans 1:4, 9, 10; 1 Corinthians 1:30*). Consider *Philippians 3:9*: “*And 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.*” [Emphasis added] Thus we must settle it forever that righteousness is found only in Christ, and only as we are in Him *by faith* can we be deemed by God as righteous. A person cannot be considered righteous (or just) without faith; therefore, righteousness and faith go hand in hand. “*The just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*” *Hebrews 10:38; 11:6*.

Faith and righteousness are essential components of godliness. This faith is not in faith itself, or faith in anything other than God and His Word. It is as *Hebrews 11:1* defines it: “. . . *faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*” “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast*” *Ephesians 2:8, 9*.

The next definition we need to consider is “spiritual.” Perhaps in years gone by, the word “spiritual” was automatically equated with biblical Christianity. Today, however, we hear this word coming forth from the

lips of a variety of people—especially a certain wealthy TV celebrity who is an outspoken enemy of Christ and His cross. Taking advantage of her prestigious and powerful position as a popular American idol, this person has thrown up a “spiritual” detour sign on the broad highway of “churchianity,” thus rerouting the unsuspecting onto a blissfully ignorant road that leads straight to hell.

Keeping in mind that truth originates with God; that Jesus is the truth (*John 14:6*); that God’s Word is truth (*John 17:17*); and that the Holy Spirit teaches us the truth (*1 John 2:27*), and lead us into all truth (*John 16:13*), let us conclude that the truly spiritual person has received the spirit of God. “*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*.

The Apostle Paul describes why an individual can be considered godly or spiritual in *Romans 8:13-16*: “*For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.*”

The next word associated with godliness is holiness. *1 Peter 1:15, 16* says: “*But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [behavior]; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.*” For a person to be holy, he or she must be set apart from what is profane, or evil in God’s sight. Holiness

is a state of being. According to Strong’s Concordance, the Greek definition of holy is sacred, pure, morally blameless, consecrated (set apart). God calls us to holiness, which, by the way, is not a calling to be *divine*. Divinity can only be found in the Godhead. Man may think he is divine, or that he will in some future state become divine, but he is human, not divine. Nearly every cult teaches that Jesus was not divine by nature, and many of them teach that man either is divine by nature or going to become divine. Such are doctrines of demons.

Some may define godliness as purity. Pure simply means clean or clear. Definitely a godly person will possess a clean heart, and a clear conscience because of the sanctifying work of Christ, and regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, we come to our last word, “saintly” (as referring to the saints.) I found it interesting that the definition in Strong’s Concordance of saints is the same as holy. Thus, whenever one reads of the saints in Scripture (from Deuteronomy through Revelation), it is referring to all of the holy people of God. A saint is anyone who belongs to God through faith in Jesus Christ the Lord, who has consecrated his or her life to the Lord, and one who walks in faith, righteousness and obedience.

In conclusion, I feel strongly led to mention one other aspect of godliness that needs to be considered, and that is this: pure hatred for evil. “*And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth [despises] evil*” *Job 1:8*? King David wrote, “*I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me. A forward [perverted] heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person*” *Psalms 101:3, 4*.

A godly, holy or perfect person despises sin. We need to wake up to the fact that the entire world, both secular and religious, is being systematically brainwashed by the New Age antichrist system of “positivism” and “political correctness.” All that is holy,

the world, to live victorious lives over the enemies of our soul. We are no longer earth-bound by the death that reigns in the world, but now we are identified to a life that is empowered by resurrection. There will be no excuse for the Christian who fails to walk the life of a saint. Saints reflect the glory of Jesus; they have been established in righteousness, commissioned to do His bidding, have presented their bodies as a living sacrifice, are identified in His death, and empowered by resurrection to be victorious in their lives.

*Ministry:* Jesus' ministry did not stop upon His death, burial and resurrection. He now sits on the right hand of majesty. Here He serves in the capacity of our High Priest. As saints, we must always be striving to go on to perfection in our life in Jesus. This maturity will enable us to serve our Lord in greater devotion, service and worship.

Jesus' path and examples are clear. We must walk in His footsteps to not only ensure our position of sanctification, but to make certain that we become set apart in our walk or life. Sadly, there is not always a distinction between the sinner who has no knowledge of salvation and the Christian who claims rights as a child of God.

The concept of a "worldly" saint is not scriptural. According to your walk (disposition, attitude and conduct) would you be classified as a sinner or identified as a saint? If you are a sinner, you really need to repent and become identified with the complete work of redemption. However, if you are a saint, rejoice in your Lord as you continue to go on to greater maturity in your Christian walk and testimony.

"I challenge the Christian community to look at the facts surrounding the contemplative prayer movement and see its connection to New Age occultism and Eastern mysticism. Just because a writer is emotionally stirring, sincere, and uses biblical language does not necessarily mean he or she advocates sound, biblical truths." (*A Time of Departing*, pp. 14, 16, 89) by Ray Yungen

true and righteous according to God's Word is being mocked, undermined, redefined and sacrificed to the pagan idols of humanistic self exaltation as people buy into the old satanic lie that they are divine, or gods. How long do you think the mega churches would last if sin, hell, true repentance, self-denial, the Lordship of Christ, obedience, righteousness, separation from the world, the judgment to come, and godliness were preached from the pulpits?

In short, godliness is a holy, pure, consecrated life of righteousness that is lived by faith and obedience through the power of the indwelling Spirit of God which brings forth fruit for the glory of God. Godly persons have no hidden agendas that involve self-gratification, or love for that which God hates. In fact, a truly godly person will say with the Psalmist, "*I hate every false way*" (*Psalms 119:204b*). We are either living a carnal life of self-gratification in this world, where we are seeking for vain glory, or we are drawing ever closer to God, seeking and pursuing the spiritual life that endures forever. What does your life say about you today?

### PROPHETIC WORDS OF DANIEL WEBSTER

(Written in 1823)

"If religious [Christian] literature is not widely circulated among the masses in this country, I do not know what is going to become of us as a nation. If truth be not diffused, error will be; if God and His Word are not known and received, the devil and his works will gain the ascendancy; if the evangelical volume does not reach every hamlet, the pages of a corrupt and licentious literature will; if the power of the gospel is not felt throughout the length and breadth of the land, anarchy and misrule, degradation and misery, corruption and darkness, will reign without mitigation or end."

**Jack Chick** writes: "Without a God-sent revival, we can kiss America, as we have known it, goodbye...The old King James Bible (AV 1611) is right on target, and it's despised by theologians... 'Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed...' (Proverbs 13:13)."

### How Cults Deceive [Excerpts] (The Berean Call)

When we use the word "cult" and "cultic teaching" we are making reference to distorted teachings and abusive groups that redefine the Biblical, historical Person of Jesus Christ and the essential doctrines of the orthodox Christian faith . . . all cults end up attacking the real historical Jesus Christ. They ascribe to Him that which is contrary to His character, His nature and His very own claims. To redefine Jesus Christ, Biblical terminology, and the essential doctrines of the Christian Faith in this way is to produce doublethink perversion. Confusion, delusion and spiritual abuse follow.

Let us never forget the very sobering words of the Apostle Paul, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:6-9)

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1).

<http://www.spiritual-research-network>.

### WE HIGHLY RECOMMEND. . .

. . . *that every Christian, Jew and freedom-loving American see Ben Stein's movie, "EXPULSED" before it, too, is "expelled."* This excellent and timely documentary film will grip your heart and mind from beginning to end as it exposes what the God-hating "elite" do not want you to know. It is a powerful wake up call that leaves you with much to think and pray about.

#### BOOKS

*Holy Spirit Revivals*—Charles Finney  
*The Radical Cross*—A.W. Tozer  
*A Time of Departing*—Ray Yungen  
*Presentation of the Gospel*—R. Kelley

## RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

### GOD IN THE BOX?

**Q:** *I have heard some people say that they are letting God out of the "box" to discover Him in ways that others are now claiming to border on heresy. Without assuming I know what they mean or where it might be leading people who follow their example, would you give me your understanding regarding this confusion?*

**A:** Lately I have been hearing this term from a couple of sources. I have used the term "God in the box" in the past. However, the God of the Bible cannot be boxed in. Solomon put God in this perspective: *"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have built" (1 Kings 8:27)!*

The term "God in the box" is in reference to a person's perception of God. Man often puts his understanding about God in a box according to doctrinal or theological influences as a means to "control" Him according to such personal understanding. Job and his friends had such "boxes" as far as their understanding of God. It was not that these men were wrong about God; it is that He will sometimes operate outside of man's "box". Every time God moves outside of personal understanding, He will end up shaking such limited "boxes".

At such times a person must make a decision. Regardless of whether he or she understands, he or she still must choose to trust that God is who He is. If the person does not choose the way of faith, he or she will go into unbelief, throwing all of his or her belief system out the door simply because God did not fit into his or her understanding. This type of unbelief ends in delusion because such people turn around and create a god to their own liking.

I understand this place because I have been there a few times. I have my "box" of understanding towards God. However, the challenges of life caused the darkness of confusion and ignorance to shake my "box" on numerous occasions. I had to simply step outside of my personal understanding of God to believe that God is

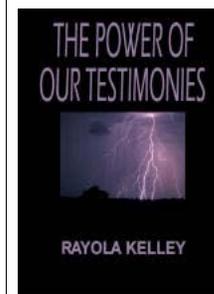
who He is. This is the essence of true faith. I had to realize that due to His infinite state and my finite state, I will not understand His workings and ways, but I need to trust His character. Each time I chose the way of faith in such challenges, the darkness eventually gave way to the work of the Holy Spirit as He unveiled the depth of my Lord's character and work in greater measure, enlarging my "box" or understanding of Him.

This brings me to the source we must use to test all matters when it does come to the truth, character and ways of God. Sadly, the individuals who have used this term lately have gone into delusion. The main reason they have gone into delusion is because they have either thrown all standards of truth out the door, or they have minimized them, stripping truth of authority and validity. When it comes to the true God of heaven, there is only one standard of truth we must judge all spiritual matters by, and that is the Word of God. Since many theological "boxes" contain Scriptural truths, those who throw out or denounce their particular "boxes" also reject the Word as being the one standard of truth that not only properly presents God, but also must be used to properly test what they are or have embraced. Granted, the Holy Spirit must be active in unveiling the intent of the counsel of the complete Word of God in Scripture concerning a matter, but without the discipline, boundaries and standard of the Word of God, these people are throwing open a door to the occult. Through that door every counterfeit will come in to delude, seduce and produce a counterfeit spirit, Jesus and Gospel that will be to the liking of their disillusioned or disgruntled state of mind (*2 Corinthians 11:1-3*).

The bottom-line to such people is that they do not have a love for the truth (*2 Thessalonians 2:10-12*). They want their own reality, and they want God to adjust to it. The main reality that people are clinging to is the reality that will allow them to feel good about themselves in their unbelieving, deluded state. In this feel-good state, God is all love and simply desires them to be happy regardless of the pigpen of perversion and unbelief they are wallowing in. In this state,

there is no sin, standard of holiness (consecration and sanctification), call to righteousness, hell or eternal consequences. Ultimately, some even believe they can become a god according to their consciousness as they strive to be a "good person" according to their own standards. However, the Bible describes such a state as being the ways of sin and death (*Proverbs 14:12; 16:25*).

My advice is simple. Stick with the Word of God. Believe what God says about all matters of life and death. Such belief will ensure that you are standing on that immovable Rock. When your "box" of understanding is shaken, cling to the Lord even more so as you choose to praise Him, knowing that He is bringing you higher in your understanding of Him.



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