

# GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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

PO Box 571 - Priest River, ID 83856 \* [www.gentleshepherd.com](http://www.gentleshepherd.com) \* November 2011

## SPIRITUAL SURVIVAL

### Part 4

## THE TEMPTATION

By Rayola Kelley

Last month I talked about who we serve and what we worship. If we are not serving the God of heaven and worshipping Him, we will not survive the present darkness engulfing the world. Whatever, or whom-ever we serve will give us identity and purpose, and what or whom we worship will determine the extent of our hope and expectation.

This brings us to the harsh reality that there is much vying for our worship. It is vital that we understand what desires worship. There are three sources that desire worship: Man, Satan, and God. Included also in the worship of man is the worship of the self-life. It is clear that we must discern and recognize what we are directing our devotion towards. We cannot assume because we participate in something called "worship" that it is acceptable to God. The truth is the Father could very well be passing by us as we worship. Remember, worship is a matter of the right spirit (Holy Spirit) and the truth concerning the nature, person, and work of Jesus Christ (*John 4:23-24*). It can only come from the altar of the heart that has been completely consecrated to God. Consecration will sanctify the Lord in the heart, making Him God, distinct in nature, worthy of exaltation, and deserving of worship. Such an environment is conducive to honor God in the way in which He is worthy. It will be natural in its adoration, praise, and thanksgiving as it personally honors God in an excellent manner.

To understand the fruits worship

produces, we must understand how man and Satan seek worship. We can understand this pursuit by studying the temptations of Eve and Jesus found in *Genesis 3* and *Matthew 4*. Keep in mind, we do not worship the counterfeit unless we have first been tempted in the flesh to do so. Our imagination must be enticed, our affections ensnared, and our will puffed up with pride in order to give something an idolatrous status.

*James 1:14-16* gives us a run-down as to temptation that ends in sin, "*But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*" It is important to point out that man is tempted by his own appetites, but there must be some point of attraction to tempt him. This is where the world comes in. It has been designed by its god, Satan, to lure us into his various traps (*2 Corinthians 4:3-4*). Once an appetite is enticed to believe something as being valuable, the imagination kicks in to consider the possibilities of how partaking of the attraction will benefit the flesh. This is when sin is conceived. Once a person gives way to the false promise or lie of the attraction, he or she will partake of the poison fruit, resulting in broken fellowship with God.

This brings us to the next question. What is Satan's goal in tempting people? We know he hates us and desires to destroy each of us, but is he after more than our destruction? The answer is yes. The "more" he is after is our worship. He desires to be worshipped. The motivation behind such worship is pride. And, when man is also beset, motivated, and plagued by pride, he will desire to be worshipped as well. That is the nature and creature of pride. Let us now follow the progression of temptation and the ultimate path that leads a person to some form of worship.

Eve represents how the idea of

personal exaltation entangles man, while Jesus' temptation shows how Satan operates to ultimately receive the worship of man. The goal of all temptation is to get people to bow down to something, while they fling all moral conscience, or truth, aside to possess the attraction or false hope. The fruit of idolatry produces the same affects: spiritual death or separation from the true God of heaven. It is easy to follow the pattern of idolatry in each temptation.

All temptation begins with a simple lie. Such a lie will present the possibilities of something in order to stir up the imagination. Imagination represents sort of a focal point that is necessary to ensure the person will zoom in on something that really did not have his or her previous attention. This is how our materialistic world sells products. Its first convinces us that we have need of something (enticement), and then it presents the solution (conception of sin). In the case of Eve, Satan simply asked a question in *Genesis 3:1* to bring attention to one particular tree in order to entice the imagination. "*Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?*"

Satan is simply putting doubt on what God has said, but in doing so he succeeded in getting Eve to consider the tree. All idolatry begins with a lie that will bring doubt as to what God said. After all, if one is to justify his or her disobedience towards God, His Word must be discredited in some way. Such lies produce erroneous doctrines, cults, and insane beliefs.

For Jesus, Satan tried to use the need of the flesh for food to get Him to bow down to His lie that His very existence depended on that which was seen. It was his way of enticing Jesus to give way to the flesh. The appetites of the flesh must become activated for idolatry to take place. Whether the imagination is tantalized or the ways of the flesh brought to the forefront, the fleshly activities of the soul must be present for the environment of idolatry to



be in place before the idol can be exalted.

We must note how each individual responded to the temptation. Eve tried to reason with Satan. However, such reasoning is a trap that will prove to become a cesspool of seduction and insanity. Jesus held the line of truth by refuting the lie with the Word of God. We do not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

The second temptation Satan weaved into his seduction of Eve implied that God did not really mean what He said. At the point of this temptation carnal logic takes center stage. Eve stated that if she ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil that she would die. However, Satan declared that she would not die, opening up the way for delusion. Surely, such a statement gives the impression that there must be a loophole or misunderstanding about what was said. God would not let a mere tree cause such consequences to occur. It does not make sense; therefore, there must be some mistake in what He meant. In the first temptation, the lie was implied, but from this premise, Satan actually declared the lie. However you may look at this particular temptation, it is calling God a liar. For this reason the Apostle Paul stated in *Romans 3:4*, "*God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.*"

It was at this time that Eve had been completely taken captive. The imagination was now focused on the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It stood before her in a different light. It was now magnified in her mind. She was now hooked into a different reality.

Since she was totally beguiled by the lie that God does not mean what He says, it was up to her to figure it out herself (*2 Corinthians 11:2-3*). At this point, the determination as to what was true was placed on her shoulders. Since the flesh had been activated, Satan's lies became more appealing to her mind.

For Jesus, His temptation was to prove that He was the Son of God. The simple truth was that Jesus was the Son of God. As in the situation

with Eve, the real test at this point had nothing to do with proving a matter for Satan already knew that death would result for Eve, and He clearly knew who Jesus was. The test was obvious. Satan wanted the Son of God to bow down from a place of excellence to a base level in order to play some sick game. If Jesus had given way to the temptation, He would have lost the distinction or glory that clearly identified Him as the undefiled Son of God. He knew it was a foolish test, while Eve believed the lie.

As we can see, the second stage of temptation results in God being humbled before man. This means that in the eyes of man He, in some way, loses His glory. To Eve, since God did not mean what He said, there were no absolutes. It was up to her to figure out what was true and real. When a person becomes the one who determines truth, everything comes into subjection to his or her conclusion. This is a subtle way of humbling God as to the authority He should hold in our lives. In a sense, God is demoted while the individual begins to exalt personal intelligence or understanding about a matter. Such individuals ultimately become judges that will lord over others with their so-called "insights." It is for this reason that we are told we are to worship God in Spirit and truth.

The third temptation for Eve had to do with God's intention. We know God is good, but to discredit His character, His intentions must be brought into doubt. This is the most subtle part of Satan's lies. He does not point blank accuse God, for that would be too obvious. However, he cleverly sows a small seed of discord that is designed to bring division. It is for this reason that God hates those who sow discord among the brethren (*Proverbs 6:15-19*).

Satan convinced Eve that God's intention for not wanting her to eat of the tree was dishonorable. This made Him untrustworthy and unbelievable in Eve's mind. The enemy of God simply humanized God in the eyes of Eve. He implied that God is no different than mere man. In fact, in some cases He is worse. When Satan convinced Eve that if she ate of the tree she would be as God, he revealed the end results of all temptation. At this point God ceases to be, and man is exalted and deified in some way.

*Romans 1:23-26* talks about humanizing God. We are told that in order to humanize God, His glory must be given to some aspect of His creation. It is at this point that God will give a person up to pursue his or her particular idol. Clearly, idolatry takes on a form in the high places of the mind. It is in the mind where a person gives God's glory to some part of His creation. To strip God of His glory means that the individual has bought the same lie as Eve did in the garden. In a sense, a person becomes a fool who secretly declares at the altar of his or her heart that there is no real true God. In the end, such a person will be turned over to a reprobate mind that retains no real knowledge or conscience about the true God of heaven. This person will also be turned over to the ways of wickedness to eventually face the wrath and rejection of God.

Jesus clearly brings the goal of idolatry out in His final temptation. When Satan offered the Lord all the kingdoms of the world in exchange for His worship, what was Jesus' response? "*Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*" (*Matthew 4:10*). Anytime, anything is exalted over God, Satan is receiving the worship. Granted, a person may be receiving exaltation, but it is due to the pagan environment of the world. Since Satan is the god of this world, he is indirectly being worshipped. If something such as worldly education, money, or power is being pursued, honored, and exalted, Satan is really the object of worship because he is lord over the world's systems.

There are many masks that hide the fact that if man is not worshipping God, then he is bowing down to Satan in some way. He is in essence selling his soul to possess the emptiness of the vanity of the world, the fading glory of the flesh, and the useless, fickle ways of the present age.

This brings me to a very important aspect of idolatry. Idolatry leaves the most sickening fruits in its wake. When you consider how many vie for the place of supremacy in their lives, relationships, and activities, you realize what a destructive trap it is. Since pride is the main motivation behind why the god of this world and those plagued by

## MISDIRECTED SYMPATHY

By Jeannette Haley

“Never sympathize with the thing that is stabbing God all the time. God has to hurt the thing that must go.” - Oswald Chambers

Do you ever find yourself asking yourself, “What is wrong with people these days?” Besides the obvious traits such as self-indulgence, willful ignorance, repudiation of the truth (and reality), stubbornness, and sheer stupidity, there lies a dangerous undercurrent of dissatisfaction fed by streams of “toxic sympathy.”

In mankind’s incessant push to change God into the likeness of a golden calf that he can fashion at will, and worship on impulse, he has managed to tip the scales of social conscience in favor of paganism. Of course, this modern-day paganism is a “one size fits all” mentality that ranges from the lowest rung of demonic expression all the way up this ungodly “ladder” to the highest and most advanced scientific accomplishments. This is ecumenism at best, and Satanism at worst. Anyone who is not grounded in the Word of God, rooted in the Rock of Ages, truly born again, walking in the Spirit, watchful and diligent, will most likely be swept to destruction by its insidious undertow.

What makes this powerful, all encompassing end-times deception so alluring and desirable? Why will people gamble with their soul in order to pursue after their own ideas, conclusions, desires, and take on a matter when it is plainly contrary to God and His Word? The answer is, as always, found in Scripture. People choose darkness, because they love it. Darkness covers their evil deeds. (See *John 3: 19*.) Add to that what *1 John 2:15, 16* plainly states, “*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*”

The natural tendency of most people (unless they are very young children) is to question what God says, His motivation for saying it, and

His intentions toward them. Even Eve, when she was yet innocent and without sin, allowed herself to be convinced by Satan that God had withheld something from her, thus putting doubt in her mind as to the verity of God’s Word, His character, and His intentions toward her and Adam. She was tempted, as was Adam who was “with her,” in all three points of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and chose to go with their own desires and conclusions. Perhaps Eve even felt a twinge of self-pity that justified her decision. What we do know is that she was thoroughly beguiled. Surely all of her emotions had been stirred up by the subtlety of Satan, causing confusion and doubt.

In considering the many polluted streams that feed the darkness of deception, misdirected sympathy has to be one of the most subtle, and dangerous. Well-meaning people, both saved and unsaved, find themselves at points of confusion when it comes to the difference between sympathy and godly compassion. As they say, “hindsight is better than foresight,” and this is so true in my own life. As I look back at most of the major mistakes and wrong decisions I made from which I suffered horrible consequences, it was from the point of sympathy. Compassion is solid ground when it is based on Spirit and truth, but sympathy is an emotional slippery slope that blurs common sense, clouds good judgment, and will always sweep you off your feet and fling you into a quagmire of quicksand. Without the grace and mercy of God, and His intervention, there is no hope of recovering oneself out of such a dilemma.

Sympathy is the favorite “warhorse” multitudes ride whose lifeblood is causes, agendas, ideas, and philosophies. It is the fuel for the fire of socialism, humanism, Marxism, and Communism, and, tragically, for the social gospel that has permeated traditional Christianity. Misdirected sympathy has replaced the truth of “it is written,” as breathed by the Holy Spirit of God, with the idolatrous golden calf of man’s vain, worldly philosophies. The darkness engulfing the world today is a deadly mixture of every unimaginable evil, borne on the siren song of misdirected sympathy, which calls good evil, and evil good. This “golden calf” is, of

course, all “politically correct” you know.

Cain is an example of a man who had a great deal of self-pity, or sympathy for himself, but none for his brother whom he slew. Rather than repent and seek reconciliation with God, he went out from the presence of the LORD. Self-pity, if it is entertained long enough, can open the door to a spirit of self pity, just as unforgiveness and anger can open a door to tormenting spirits.

We also see misdirected sympathy in the case of King Saul when he disobeyed God and spared certain of the flock of the Amalekites and their king, Agag. The excuse he gave Samuel was that he feared the people. The question is, did he truly fear the people more than he feared the LORD? Or, was he an ancient version of a modern-day “socialist” whose misdirected sympathies were in direct contradiction to God and His ways?

Socialists today are redefining the very Person and work of Jesus Christ, making him out to be a socialist through their propagandizing words and actions. Because the preaching of the Gospel has been overshadowed, weakened, and diminished by humanism within the church world, many people are buying into this lie, hook, line, and sinker. After all, the “father” of the socialism lie is none other than Satan himself. He is a master at manipulating humans through misdirected sympathy for all the wrong reasons and causes, motivating them to trample underfoot the truth of God’s Word while they march on to call good evil, evil good, and recreate the world that they worship into a one-world “utopia.”

A careful study of *John 12:1-11* reveals that Judas Iscariot, not Jesus, was the “socialist” through and through. After Mary took “*a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair,*” Judas demonstrated, first in word, then in deed, the heart of a bona fide socialist. Consider what he said, “*Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?*” We read in verse 6, “*This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.*”

Judas' statement reveals much about his character. If he was truly concerned that Mary's actions were selfish and unsympathetic to the poor, if he was a godly man, he would have kept it to himself until a more private and appropriate time to speak to Jesus about it. Instead, he exalted himself while at the same time throwing doubt on Jesus—doubt on who He was, why He came, and why He was receiving that which could have helped the poor. Judas' public question challenged Jesus' teachings concerning the poor, and belittled Mary's sacrifice at the same time. Like one of Satan's well-aimed darts, his sharp tongue confused others (see *Mark 14:4*) as well as exposed his own unbelief in Jesus' teachings of His crucifixion and resurrection. Judas revealed his disdain for the sacredness of this holy moment of sacrifice and worship. To him, Jesus wasn't worth "wasting" precious ointment on. Judas and his attitude towards the beauty of holiness and preciousness of Christ, along with his cruel, deceptive tongue, wicked selfishness, deceptive ways, unbelief, and his platform of "sympathy for the poor" would catapult him to the head of the Socialist Party, USA today. If they could only find a way to retrieve him out of hell to lead their cause, I have no doubt but that they would do it in a heartbeat.

Notice that Jesus defended Mary's actions, putting Judas in his place. He said, *"Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this"* *John 12:7*. In *Mark 14:6-9*, we read, *"Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."* Can you imagine the chagrin of this prideful traitor being rebuked in front of the people by Jesus, and a woman being exalted for her ministry to Him? At this point, Judas had an opportunity to fall on his face and repent; however, he further hardened his heart and went out to the chief priests and betrayed Jesus.

(See *Matthew 26:14*.)

Amazingly, there are many people who feel sorry for Judas. One large church that we know of, in their annual Easter play, emphasizes this misdirected sympathy throughout the production. What an affront to God! Jesus said of Judas, *"...woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born"* *Matthew 26:24*. If you want an accurate and prophetic description of Judas Iscariot, study *Psalms 109*. Unlike the "politically correct" socialists, God has no sympathy for Satan, or his followers.

Many years ago in a conversation with a certain Christian leader, I was flabbergasted when he mournfully stated that he was going to really feel "sorry for Satan" when God casts him into the lake of fire. This is a prime example of how screwed up our thinking can get when we shun the great commandment of Jesus; namely, *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets"* *Matthew 22:37-40*. Logically, we can conclude that if we love the Lord accordingly, then we will be in agreement with His Word, His ways, His precepts, His commandments, His works, His judgments, and everything that has anything to do with the Lord whether we, in our finite minds, understand it or not. If God says it, then it is right, and that is that! Otherwise, we end up being judges of God, demoting Him to our level, and exalting ourselves over Him in our worldly "wisdom". This is fertile ground for gross deception and delusion, such as the social gospel that emphasizes the "goodness" of "poor" mankind, and puts forth a perverted view of the "love of God." Take note: The social gospel is "another gospel" with "another Jesus" and "another spirit!" (See *2 Corinthians 11:3, 4*.)

Nowhere in God's Word are we commanded to feel sorry for people, including Jesus, or ourselves; rather, we are commanded to love one another. Misdirected sympathy, rather than God's call and compassion, has

caused many a missionary to "burn out" and give up. Sympathy for the plight of others may grip our hearts and stir up our emotions, but compassion will go a step farther and do something to alleviate the suffering if at all possible. Compassion means "to enter in and suffer with." Sympathy doesn't necessarily require action and sacrifice on our part, but compassion does. A perfect example of such godly compassion is the story of the Good Samaritan. He could have very well felt sympathy for the poor victim of thieves and yet bypassed him and continued on his journey as did the priest and the Levite. (See *Luke 10:25-37*.)

Rayola said, "When you feel sorry for somebody, it gives you a cause to do right or just by them so you can feel good about yourself." Often, too, you can feel guilty and sorry for people when you fail to play their "game" or bow down to them. This is a subtle trap to avoid! It is helpful to realize that sympathy for people leaves your pride intact while compassion requires humility, sacrifice, and unfeigned love.

Oswald Chambers, one of my favorite biblical teachers, summed it up well. In his devotion, *THE SACRAMENT OF THE SAINT*, Chambers quoted Scripture, then wrote as follows: *"Let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing"* *1 Peter 4:19*

"To choose to suffer means that there is something wrong; to choose God's Will even if it means suffering is a very different thing. No healthy saint ever chooses suffering; he chooses God's will, as Jesus did, whether it means suffering or not. No saint dare interfere with the discipline of suffering in another saint.

"The saint who satisfies the heart of Jesus will make other saints strong and mature for God. The people who do us good are never those who sympathize with us, they always hinder, because sympathy enervates. No one understands a saint but the saint who is nearest to the Saviour. If we accept the sympathy of a saint, the reflex feeling is - Well, God is dealing hardly with me. That is why Jesus said self-pity was of the devil (see *Matt. 16:23*).

*Continued Pg. 6, Column 3*

idolatry in the high places of arrogance and haughtiness strives for supremacy, you can begin to see how perverted and tormenting a pursuit of worship will always prove to be.

Idolatry proves to possess a sick dichotomy. On one hand, pride will travel to great lengths to receive worship. In fact, such a pursuit is tormenting and relentless in its insatiable desire to be adored, recognized, or worshipped. When it comes to Satan, he will lie, seduce, beguile, and falsely promise the world to receive such worship. He will cause much conflict, torment, and despair until he receives it.

For people, they will play all sorts of games to gain such worship. They will strive to come out on top in some fashion in order to appear superior. They will play others’ game to win confidence or agreement in order to establish a mutual adoration society where everyone is receiving some type of worship. They will also go into self-pity to cause others to lower themselves into their pigpens, so they can be exalted in some way as individuals try to comfort or bring some happiness to them. However, it is all games, wicked games that are dishonorable. The psalmist in *Psalms 119:104* wrote, “Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.” The games people play to receive adoration and worship are misleading, deceptive, and just plain false.

Now here is where the real dichotomy comes in. Have you ever watched how those who are caught up in the web of idolatry, especially those who are being improperly exalted, act or respond to such idolatry? The truth is, on the other side of the coin of idolatry are the fruits of cruelty, judgmentalism, ruthless attitudes, the indifference of superiority, and the right to become tyrants and despots in any form of supremacy.

It always amazes me that when you fall into the trap and worship Satan and others, they end up despising you. On the one hand, they are tormented if they do not receive worship, but on the other they think those who worship them are far inferior to them. For example, have you

ever been around those who worship Satan? They live in utter torment. Have you ever been around individuals who are being worshipped? They operate in insanity and they prove to be tyrants and despots, while they often show perversion or disdain towards their worshippers. Such arrogant souls regard those who worship them as weak, stupid, and foolish. It would seem that since they got what they wanted, it would be most pleasing to them; but, instead they show utter contempt towards those who bow before their whims.

This is the insipid, sick reality of idolatry, and my question is why is there such a response toward misguided adoration, worship, and exaltation by those who receive it? I have come to the conclusion that Satan and people may desire worship, but they do not know how to receive it because they do not deserve it.

It only makes sense that if you do not deserve something, then all you can do is improperly receive it. Since you do not have the means or character to receive it, you will end up showing contempt towards it. This would be a good message to send to those individuals who think the government owes them everything. The truth is, all such people can do is be miserable and contemptuous in their unhappy state. They are not doing anything constructive with their life, gifts, or abilities to bring meaning and purpose to their unresponsive, meaningless existence.

This brings us to the final aspect of worship. Since God deserves worship, He knows how to receive it. God is worthy of worship because of who He is. As Creator, we can only stand in awe that He alone stands distinct in the midst of all creation. As our Redeemer, we can only praise Him for securing our salvation. As Lord, we can only honor Him for His goodness towards us, and as God, we can do nothing but bow before Him in humility and declare what is true about Him in adoration, love, praise, and thankfulness.

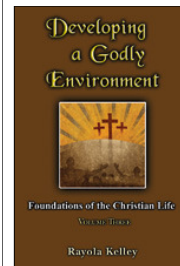
The question is who are you worshipping and who am I worshipping? There is only one true God who stands high and lifted up above all of the idols of the world. It is for this reason that He alone is worthy of our unadulterated worship. He alone knows how to receive it in a way that will clearly benefit the lives of those who properly honor

Him from the altars of their hearts.

Let those who are around the throne in *Revelation 5:12*, 14 best summarize true worship of the One who is worthy of it: “Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing...and the four beasts said Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.” †

## NEWLY PUBLISHED!

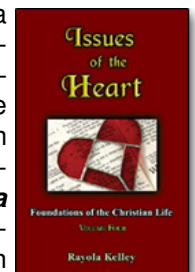
By Rayola Kelley



**Developing a Godly Environment-Volume Three** - This volume consists of five of Rayola’s finest works. The first book, *Godly Discipline*, explains different forms of disciplines and how they must be applied and worked out in our lives. The four other books in this volume address the ways such disciplines are developed. There is inner discipline, which is nurtured by *Prayer and Worship*, followed by temperance of the senses, hearing and discerning God’s voice, in *Don’t Touch That Dial*. *The Face of Thankfulness* deals with attitudes. The final book, *The ABC’s For The Christian Life* takes one through the basics of what it means to finish the spiritual journey. This volume brings valuable insights as to what is excellent and godly in our Christian walk.

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## RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

**Q:** *What is righteousness?*

**A:** There seems to be much confusion about what is real righteousness. Some people think it is a matter of what you do, but this is not completely correct. Righteousness in the kingdom of God has a lot more to do with where you are standing in relationship to the Lord.

This brings us to the simple meaning of righteousness. It is right standing *in* God. If one is in right standing in God, then one can be assured of coming into right standing *before* God. Right standing before God will allow Him to count obedient actions that are in accordance to His Word as being righteous. As you can see, righteousness has to do with our standing in our relationship with the Lord.

In light of this information, we must understand what it means to be in right standing in God. Righteousness is a position, state, attitude, and response. We must begin with position. Positionally, God must see us as being in right standing with Him. The only way He can do this is upon being born of the Spirit from above in accordance to His Word. He places us in Christ who is the essence of our righteousness (*1 Corinthians 1:30*). When God looks upon us, instead of us standing in our filthy rags, He will see Jesus in His righteousness, placing us in a position of righteousness. In a sense, we become "trees of righteousness". *2 Corinthians 5:21* brings this insight to this matter, "*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*" As the life of Christ is formed in us, we are being made more and more into the embodiment of His righteousness.

Next comes the state of righteousness. We know that there is no good thing in our flesh (*Romans 7:18*). In other words, there is nothing beneficial that originates with the flesh. Therefore, all that we do must originate with God to be considered acceptable, good, and perfect. To be in a state of righteousness where all matters find their foundation and inspiration in heaven, requires faith on our part. We must believe that what

has been declared in God's Word as true, right, and perfect. We must approach the Word with not only the intent to believe it, but with the determination to abide (live and walk) in it (*Romans 10:17; 2 Corinthians 5:7*). This will bring us into a state of righteousness. It is because of faith that God can reckon such a state as being righteous. *Romans 4:4* confirms this, "*For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.*"

Once we have come to the state of righteousness by simple faith, then we are able to develop the attitude of righteousness. The attitude of righteousness is quite simple: It hates evil. You cannot develop the clarity of righteousness unless you despise that which opposes, hinders, or defiles it. Job, who was considered pure and blameless before God, hated evil (*Job 1:1*). He clearly rejected any temptations, affronts, or claims of evil. By hating evil, it will be natural for us to seek after the standard and example of righteousness which was expressed in Jesus Christ. It was for this reason that one of the works of the Holy Spirit is to reprove us of righteousness according to the example of Christ (*Matthew 6:33; John 16:8-11*).

Finally, there is the response of righteousness. Righteousness will always manifest itself in godliness. The Bible is clear that the Lord has given everything to us that pertains to life and godliness (*2 Peter 1:3*). Godliness is exercising the instructions, ways, and matters of God into our lives through assimilation (believing it is true), applying its wisdom as truth to our ways, and obeying the instructions as a natural expression of our love and adoration for Him. Remember, there is nothing that acknowledges or compliments someone more than the desire of another to be like him or her. This is true for the Lord, only He is worthy of such adoration. It is for this reason that we will naturally flee youthful lusts and choose to follow after righteousness (*2 Timothy 2:22*).

Since our best is filthy rags and our unregenerate works can be considered reprobate, it is obvious that the Lord imputes righteousness to us at every point. It is also clear that in order to attribute righteousness to us,

we must be standing in the right place in our relationship with Him. †

*"Misdirected Sympathy" - Con't.*

Be merciful to God's reputation. It is easy to blacken God's character because God never answers back, He never vindicates Himself. Beware of the thought that Jesus needed sympathy in His earthly life; He refused sympathy from man because He knew far too wisely that no one on earth understood what He was after. He took sympathy from His Father only, and from the angels in heaven. (Cf. *Luke 15:10*.)

Notice God's unutterable waste of saints, according to the judgment of the world. God plants His saints in the most useless places. We say - God intends me to be here because I am so useful. Jesus never estimated His life along the line of the greatest use. God puts His saints where they will glorify Him, and we are no judges at all of where that is."

We must, as God's people, make sure that we are on that "straight and narrow" road and not allow misdirected sympathy to sidetrack us into the miry clay of socialism in any form. Misdirected sympathy can quickly reduce a person into confusing and perverted world of unreality which leads to frustration, depression, anger, and hopelessness. Take, for example, the extremes (as in Hinduism) of misdirected sympathy for every life form on the planet (with the exception of humans, both born and unborn), of dangerous predators such as wolves, sharks, snakes, alligators and other terrible creatures. It reminds me of that old saying, "Me thinks that the whole world is crazy, except for me and thee, and sometimes I wonder about thee." While we may snicker at that, it is true that we live in perilous times as the war continues to rage against the foundations of true Christianity, and for our minds and souls. Propaganda and twisted truths are taking a toll on the Christian ranks. Can we, therefore, realign ourselves with the Almighty, and with King David declare, "*Do not I hate them, O LORD that hate thee? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies*" *Psalms 139:22?*