

GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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

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SPIRITUAL SURVIVAL

Part 15

BLINDSIDED

By Rayola Kelley

If you have been watching the news lately, you are probably a bit concerned and maybe depressed. What may follow some of your emotional distress could be a bit of indigestion as you try to swallow the insanity of it all. It is at such times that you might even wonder if we as a nation and as individuals are going to survive this tidal wave of wickedness and conflict that is overtaking the world. It appears that the insanity is



going to win as various factions are heading on the same track towards each other at high speed. The casualties could prove to be great, but it seems like those who are considered as the powers to be have no real moral concern for the nameless and faceless. In their minds the masses are pawns that can be offered up on any altar for what is regarded as the common good for all, especially for their wicked, self-serving agenda.

As we watch different kingdoms collide, it is easy to see how the "isms" of the world are vying for that supreme position of ruling the whole world under their flag or banner. Whether it be that of Progressivism, Socialism, Communism, Fascism, Islamism, and countless other religious "isms", each of these ideologies see their particular take on the world as being the only correct one. Therefore, they have no problem oppressing or destroying those who stand in the way of their conviction.

If you are like me, you simply want the space and freedom to live according to the dictates of your convictions and moral conscience. I

have no intention of forcing my world-view on others because I know that a person persuaded against his or her will about a matter is of the same opinion still. On the other hand, no one will be able to cause me to change my mind about Jesus. It does not matter if someone holds a gun to my head or threatens my well-being with the tormenting cruelty of hell itself, I will continue to maintain my same opinion. Granted, people may comply outwardly to oppressive methods, but inwardly they will seethe with the resentment and hatred of a person who has been counted as insignificant and robbed of his or her dignity by those who are blinded by power, insanity, and rebellion.

As we consider how many of the "isms" would settle for a mere outward compliance on the part of those who do not agree, we must question the obvious. What have such individuals gained by arm-wrestling someone into submission with fear and intimidation? Clearly, they may have added another name to their various rolls, but they have failed to gain a true convert to their way of thinking. Where is the victory? Such victory is neither bitter nor sweet, but foolish and deceptive.

Since I am part of the faceless masses in this world, I wonder why these ideological tyrants cannot let things be and simply live in peace. I also consider the suffering brought on by the pursuits of these various despots of the world, and wonder why a few individuals can bring on such devastating results among the masses.

The truth is that these powers perceive that if everybody lined up to their take on the world, that all would be at peace. In essence, it is a matter of every person reconciling with them by taking on their reality. In such an environment, despots never have to confront the truth about their own foolishness and destruction. It is for this reason that these deluded individuals think that if they get rid of those who do not think their way, then they

would gain a utopia where everyone will be happy.

Yet, as Christians we know that such individuals will never live in peace and happiness. After all, how can people who have been trained to war against anything that does not fit into their comfortable boxes of philosophies, ideologies, or even doctrine ever expect to live in peace? How can those with fragile egos graciously accept anything that would challenge their high opinion of themselves? How can those who have been radically indoctrinated to see the world through a perverted lens, ever be content to let those who do not agree with them to simply maintain such disagreement without conflict? How can those who are angry about the world around them because it seems stupid and foolish show any tolerance or compassion for them who do not measure up to their personal standards? The truth is that such individuals cannot live in peace by letting matters simply be. Since they rage inside, they will naturally rage with those who come into their midst.

As I watch prophetic events unfold before my eyes, I am aware of the dangerous times we live in. The harsh reality is that truth has become a luxury that few possess. It has been replaced with wicked philosophies, insane ideologies, and heretical doctrines of men. Minds have been taken captive by these demonically inspired beliefs. Clearly, many have been or are being blindsided by the deception of the age we live in. As a person's mind becomes clouded by the seduction, hatred, and prejudices of a few, the affections of his or her heart will become shrouded in a curtain of confusion, uncertainty, and frustration. It is with this understanding in mind that, as Christians, we must remember that the mind must be transformed by the Spirit. This entails bringing down vain imaginations by bringing all thoughts into captivity to Jesus Christ (*Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5*).

As I watch the insanity of the world taking center stage, I have occasionally

found myself questioning my own sanity. I ask myself, *What if all those individuals who advocate an insane reality prove to be in the category of "sane", while in the end it will be my world that will prove to be insane?*

The only measuring rod I have as to the integrity of my sanity is the Word of God. I must always go back to the truth of God. I must be honest as I look into the pure mirror of its instructions to bring whatever reproof wherever I have strayed from the ways of righteousness. I must cling to who Christ is and avoid settling for any conclusion that is not in line with His Word. I must always come to rest with the knowledge that God is in control. As a just God, He is allowing for the season of winter where wickedness may reign and His righteousness may appear dormant, but the season that follows will be the spring where that which may be oppressed or hidden will be brought forth in new life.

Meanwhile, from all appearances, the winter is upon us and the night is fast approaching when no man will be able to work. In this darkness and through its deception, I must remain alert, realistic, sane, and maintain a truthful premise and a hopeful expectancy. The reason I must keep my spiritual edge and wits about me is because I learned long ago that it is easy to be deceived. I have been deceived in the past by one of the many "isms" in the world, and I have also tasted the subtly of seduction of that which appears acceptable. Through it all I have learned that it takes brutal transparency before God about my present status. I must be willing to be laid spiritual bare before the penetrating light of the Spirit to properly discern my own relationship with the Lord. As King David so eloquently put it in *Psalm 139:23-24*, "*Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*"

The truth is deception will blindside those who fail to see their vulnerable state. It will come alongside vulnerable individuals and wait patiently to trip them up. It will cleverly remain outside of their peripheral vision, while giving them the impres-

sion that it is all clear to "change lanes" when it comes to the matters of God. The question is, what creates the blindside in each of our spiritual lives?

There are a couple of avenues in which the deceiver can be effective in deceiving others. The two main avenues of attraction that are used to deceive people are: fleshly, worldly knowledge and pride. There is nothing as powerful as stroking the intellect with so-called, "knowledge that can only be known by the elite." If a person feels he or she has the inside scoop on mysteries of the unseen world, it will cause him or her to feel superior. When such a person encounters those who do not have such insight, they will think them out of touch and stupid.

It is for this reason that the Bible warns that knowledge that is not disciplined by the godly virtues of character and temperance will become puffed up in its understanding, and cause undisciplined zeal that will set up any novice to fall into the conceited trap of arrogance (*1 Corinthians 8:1-2; 1 Timothy 3:6; 2 Peter 1:5*). In addition, as prophetically outlined, knowledge will increase in these days, but such knowledge will not lead to Christ (*Daniel 12:4*). Paul described the affect such knowledge will have on the end days, "*Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*" (*2 Timothy 2:7*).

To avoid falling into the temptation of the present knowledge of this world, we must be seeking to know Jesus, not to obtain great knowledge about Him. People are looking to various avenues to understand Him, but they are not seeking Him out with a pure heart to know Him. It is for this reason that Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn stated, "The thin line between good and evil does not run through states or ideologies, but through the heart of every man and woman. Christianity is not based on head knowledge of Jesus Christ, but on a heart revelation of who He is and what He did on the cross for each of us. The desire to know Jesus points to the intent of having a personal, intimate relationship with Him."

Pride is the second avenue that will blindside us. It is the board in the eye that focuses on the sliver of discrepancies others may have while being blinded by an overrated ego to their own personal ungodliness. Sadly,

many people's egos are fragile. It does not take much to insult or offend such an ego. If you do not stroke, placate, or bow down to the idolatrous games that such egos devise in order to be worshipped, such individuals will become angry, mean-spirited, and vindictive. Even though they may call themselves Christians, they do not reflect the attitude of Christianity.

Pride is a major idol and demands conformity from others to its ways. It will always find itself in competition with righteousness. It cannot afford to be wrong; therefore, it is fearful and unteachable. It must come out on top; therefore, it is aggressive and refuses to humble itself. It maintains fleshly rights; therefore, it refuses to concede even to that which is honorable. It swings according to temperamental moods and proves to be unpredictable in the stands it takes. It becomes indifferent to those who will not serve its purpose, cruel to those who stand in the way, and unreasonable to the point that it will always sabotage itself in the end.

When you check out the Apostle Paul's description of the end days in *1 Timothy 3:2-9*, you will see the epitome of pride in operation. It is the pride of men that causes them to be in love with who they think they are. At the core of pride is jealousy and covetousness that rides on the shirttails of rights that will justify pursuing anything that the prideful flesh desires. Pride causes people to be boastful about foolishness, blasphemers of righteousness, lawless against all true authority, unthankful in attitude, unholy in practices, and void of natural affections. They do not keep their word, they falsely accuse those who bring any real contrast to their character, they are morally undisciplined, are fierce in insisting on their own way, despise what is good, are treacherous, heady in their sentiments, highminded towards the things of darkness, and prefer the pleasures of the world more than God. They often hide behind a robe of (self) righteousness, but the Holy Spirit is missing. They seduce others in order to feed their fleshly lusts as they seek after knowledge while resisting the truth because their minds are corrupt and their faith reprobate. In the end, their folly will be manifested to all.

Con't. Pg. 5, Col. 1

ABANDONED

By Jeannette Haley

She is known as Missy, and her story went nationwide this past August when Missy was cruelly abandoned in a helpless situation, and left to die all alone without food or water. Wounded and crippled from the rigors of the treacherous climb up Colorado's 14,060' Mount Bierstadt, Missy found herself stranded on an exposed rocky ledge at about 13,000 feet. Abandoned by the only man she knew and loved, she had to know that the situation was grim. Her bloody feet were too lacerated and raw to allow her to explore the possibilities of an escape route off of the ledge, while her body rapidly grew weaker from dehydration and starvation. As each day came and went, Missy longed for someone to come and save her. By the time a week had passed, it appeared as if all hope was lost. She had indeed been abandoned, and it appeared as if death would be her only escape from the awful misery she suffered.

Then, suddenly, unexpectedly, Missy heard excited voices and the sound of approaching footsteps. Too weak to respond, she waited in anticipation that somehow, some way, someone had finally seen her. The "Good Samaritans" were soon at her side, administering what first aid they could, and sharing their water with her. Missy's heart rejoiced in the kindness of these strangers. But, her relief soon turned to anxiety when they turned to leave without her because they were unprepared to carry her down the steep, rocky mountain. She couldn't help but feel as if she had been abandoned, again.

Miraculously she made it through the night; however, as if to add to her pain and desolation, a major snow storm descended on the lonely mountain. She instinctively knew that it would be only a short matter of time before her battered body gave way to death. Born to love, abandoned to die. Such is the lot of millions of one of God's most noble and faithful creatures—the dog.

Perhaps you know the rest of the story, at least to a point. The couple who initially discovered the German Shepherd sent out a plea for help.

The response was overwhelming in spite of the difficulties of the task. The next day eight rescuers struggled through the storm for nine hours to reach the abandoned dog. In spite of the challenges they encountered, they found her still alive and re-bandaged her bleeding paws, comfortably secured her in a backpack, and brought her off the mountain. The veterinarian who took care of Missy said, "The miracle dog of the century, and although she was severely dehydrated she has, miraculously, no long-term or permanent damage."

It would be wonderful if Missy's story ended with the assurance that the young couple who initially found her, formed the rescue party to save her, and who want to keep her were allowed to do so. But, such may not be the case, for once the 29-year-old man who abandoned her heard that his dog had been saved, he declared that he wants her back. Thus, the outcome of Missy's fate will be decided at a later date in a court of law. One can only wonder how such a person has the nerve to show his face in public, but then, we live in a time when it appears that the "tares" greatly outnumber the "wheat" in every area (See *Matthew 13:30, 38-42*.) Tares and fools know no shame, having a seared conscience. (1 *Timothy 4:2b*).

While pondering the story of Missy, I found it easy to draw parallels between the story of her abandonment and the terrible plight and end of those who are slaves to the master of sin and Satan. Satan is a deceptive, powerful, and cruel master indeed. Years ago we knew a certain man who despised God and His Word. With the devil as his master, he was supernaturally given great ideas in the business world with resulting great success. However, every time he would reach the pinnacle of success, suddenly the rug would be pulled out from under him and he would end up on the bottom. This process repeated itself over and over again. The lesson we learned by observing his life was that if you make a deal with the devil, he may give you the ability to "gain the world" for a season, but in the end, he will mockingly destroy all you have

worked for, and your own soul as well. This man, who had many demons, was only in his middle years when unexpectedly and suddenly he died with no time to repent.

On the other hand, the miraculous rescue of Missy is a powerful reminder of the love, mercy and grace of God who sent His Son as the Rescuer of mankind. Jesus said, "*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*" Luke 19:10.

Abandonment can take many forms—some more extreme than others, but all abandonment is devastating to those who experience it. Besides literal physical abandonment, which happens all too often to the most vulnerable among us such as children, the elderly, the physically and mentally challenged, there is also mental and emotional abandonment. How many people with wounded spirits and broken hearts appear as if they live in a "normal" family or in a "normal" marriage relationship, yet in their heart of hearts they suffer the pangs of excruciating loneliness, feelings of unworthiness, shame and guilt? Such people may not be physically left to die on a lonely mountain, but they find themselves drowning in a sea of depression due to events and situations that have left them feeling emotionally forsaken.

Whatever situation we may find ourselves in, we can always turn to the Bible for examples of others, including our Lord Himself, who have experienced and suffered in like manner. One ancient and powerful example is Joseph. When he was but a sensitive seventeen-year-old, he was literally hated by his older brothers because of their jealousy. Can you imagine the shock and horror young Joseph experienced as his brothers stripped him of his special coat, threw him into a dry pit in the desert, and then sat down to nonchalantly eat their lunch? With a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach, Joseph knew that his life was in the hands of his cruel brothers. None offered him food or water, and none consoled him as his mind reeled from their utter rejection and insidious actions.

However, God had other plans that none of the brothers could even begin to foresee. Likewise, how could Joseph possibly understand that the



Lord was in control of his situation, and that years later this evil would be turned to good? Even the band of Ish-melite traders who "just happened" to pass their way at that moment were God's instruments to carry Joseph to his God-ordained destination. The Midianite merchantmen who also passed by at that time, and who pulled Joseph from the pit were ordained by God. But, all that Joseph could feel at that time was total rejection and feelings of crushing abandonment by his own family. We, who have the advantage of looking back through history, know that through it all, God was with Joseph—even when he was falsely accused in Egypt by his master's wife and cast into prison. We know that Joseph, in spite of everything he suffered, was a true man of faith, and an overcomer in this world. Years later when Joseph finally revealed his identity to his fearful brothers in Egypt, he tearfully told them, "*Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life....And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt*" Genesis 45:5, 7, 8.

Another famous Bible character who suffered a different type of abandonment was David. After slaying Goliath and helping to defeat the Philistines, King Saul, instead of rejoicing in David, became insanely jealous. In 1 Samuel 18:9-12 says, "*And Saul eyed David from that day and forward. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul's hand. And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice. And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul.*"

Many Bible scholars have concluded that David and his men were pursued by Saul for about fourteen years. Many of the beloved Psalms

that David wrote were written during this time, and reflect the deep array of emotions that David experienced including faintheartedness (Psalm 27:13, "*I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living*"); feeling abandoned, (Psalm 31:12, "*I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel*"); despair, (Psalm 40:12, "*For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me*"); loneliness, (Psalm 102:7, "*I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top*"), and the one perhaps many can relate to at some time in their life, "*I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul*" Psalm 142:4. However, regardless of how many times David experienced feelings of abandonment he always looked to the Lord for deliverance, and exalted Him in praise and worship.

If anyone ever felt totally and completely abandoned it is Job. In the midst of his terrible suffering and pain, he said to his "friends," "...miserable comforters are ye all" Job 16:2b. Yet through it all, Job proclaimed one of the greatest statements of faith in the Word of God. He said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; but I will maintain mine own ways before him. He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him" Job 13:15, 16. [Emphasis added.] Out of the midst of his incredible suffering he also boldly declared, "*For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another: though my reins be consumed within me*" Job 19:25-27.

Finally, the greatest example of abandonment and rejection can be found in the life of our Lord. To me, two of the most tragic verses in Scripture are John 1:10, 11, "*He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own re-*

ceived him not." Who else has ever been as rejected as our Lord and Savior "*Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*" Philippians 2:6-8. As Creator, He was ignored by His creation. As the promised Messiah to the Jews, He was rejected by them.

Jesus knew that many of those who followed Him did not truly believe Him. John 7:64-66 records Jesus' words, "*But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.*" The next verse nearly takes your breath away as the impact of Jesus' pathos that He expressed to the twelve penetrates your heart, "*Will ye also go away?*" (Verse 67b.) Matthew 26:56b records these sad words, "*Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.*" Isaiah 53:3, 4, "*He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*" Finally, how can we ever forget His cry on the cross as he lifted up His voice and said, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" Who among us has felt the sting of abandonment more than our Lord, who deserves above all others to be received, and worshipped?

In the troubled times to come, we may see things we never thought we would see. We may experience things we never thought we would experience. Jesus warned that the "*time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God a service*" John 16:2b. He warned, "*And a man's foes shall be they of his own household*" Matthew 10:36. Regardless of

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It is for this reason that Christians are told not to think highly of themselves, but to think soberly as dictated by their faith. Those who are close to falling into the trap of pride must resist it, knowing that if they think they stand that it is a prelude to their fall into utter ruin. They must not insist on being exalted to the front of the table because of their so-called "importance;" rather, they must humbly take a seat at the end of the table until they are rightfully exalted by others. In fact, such individuals must avoid thinking they are something when in fact their high opinion of themselves will not only deceive them, but render them useless to God, for He resists the proud (*Romans 12:3; 1 Corinthians 10:12; Galatians 6:3; 1 Peter 5:5*).

It is vital for each of us as believers to understand what the Christian life entails. Christianity is not defined by a popular philosophy; rather, it is defined by the person of Jesus Christ. We do not obtain or secure the ways of Christianity from the heights or pinnacles of personal piety, but at the feet of Jesus. Obviously, Christianity is not simply a label or title we attach to ourselves because we are associated with a certain religion. It is not a concept that identifies us to some religious creed. It is not even a lifestyle that speaks of moral excellence. Rather, Christianity is a way of being by essentially becoming conformed to the life of Christ in every way. For example, in a lifestyle we adopt the attitude of the culture, while in Christianity we take on the attitude of Christ. Christianity is to become Christ-like in every aspect of our lives. When people see us, they are not to associate us to a particular denomination, religion, or creed, but as they did in the case Peter and John in *Acts 4:13*, they should be able to identify us to the Jesus of the Bible. It is His light we walk in and His salt of truth we use to season our life as well as others.

As I consider my Christian life in these insane days, I praise God that He never changes, His Word remains sure, and His truth immovable. I rejoice that my reality is not based on a temporary world that is under judgment and one day will cease to be altogether; rather, my reality is founded on

what is eternal. Like Abraham, I rest in the marvelous truth that I am a stranger and a pilgrim in this world and that one day I will realize the fullness and beauty of a city made by the hands of God. Until then, I must walk according to His eternal life in me and in light of the future glory that awaits me. This is not only my challenge, but every believer's test. May each of us accept the high calling to finish the present course in order to receive the crown of righteousness that awaits us.

OSWALD CHAMBERS

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 (1 Cor. 2:12).

The Bible uses several phrases to describe a person's disposition of sin. First is "the natural man." First Corinthians 2:14 tells us that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him"

You can hammer away at someone about spiritual things as long as you like: but until you rely on the Holy Spirit, and realize that only he can convict your friend of sin, you might as well talk to a wooden seat. Jesus Christ can satisfy only those whom the Holy spirit has convicted of sin.

The Bible also talks about "the rational man," who is highly intelligent. Such a person reasons things out. Paul says that "Christ crucified" is foolishness to the rational person. Preach Jesus Christ to someone who is moral, upright, and well-educated, and he will say, "Why did Jesus want to die for me? I am all right." The disposition of the rational man makes God's truth seem like stupidity. But Paul says, "The foolishness of God is wiser than men . . ." (1 Cor. 1:25).

* * * *

Many of us place too much emphasis on our work for God and not enough emphasis on preparation for the work. The Nazarene Carpenter prepared for thirty years in obscurity, to do three years of work. Today the standard is three or four years of preparation for thirty years' work.

From: *Devotions for a Deeper Life*

how rejected, abandoned or lonely you may feel, remember that Jesus promised, "*I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*" Matthew 28:20b; "*But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved*" Matthew 24:13.

If you feel abandoned by family, friends, or even God Himself, ponder the examples in Scripture of those who overcame, such as Joseph who remained pure and faithful, harboring no feelings of unforgiveness or animosity towards his brethren. Remember King David who mourned the death of his enemy, King Saul, and who trusted the Lord and believed His promises all his life. Remember Job who, in spite of incredible suffering and without benefit of the written Word that we have today, remained confident that God was Who He is. Finally, consider the Lord Jesus Christ who prayed from the cross, "*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,*" and who said to John, "...*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son*" Revelation 21:6, 7.

No matter how lonely or abandoned you may feel right now, if you belong to Jesus, you have this promise, "*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; And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*" Romans 8:14-18.

May our great God who mercifully saved Missy the abandoned dog, cause your heart to rejoice through your many trials and tribulations, knowing that if His eye is on the sparrow, He surely watches over you. †

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

PARTAKER OF ANOTHER'S SIN?

Q: I know the Bible warns Christians not to be partakers of other men's sins, and outward acts of sin are easy to identify. What I would like you to explain is how a Christian can partake of other people's sins in less obvious ways. Thank you for any help you can give me on this subject.

A: I appreciate your question. Many Christians struggle with this very issue. They want to be kind and compassionate with people, but sometimes kindness and compassion can feed the problem, rather than address it in a proper manner.

There are two forms of sin: commission and omission. Commission is when one transgresses the Law or covenant of God, while omission is when one omits being upright or doing right in a situation. Where the greatest offense of partaking of the sins of others for well-meaning Christians comes, is along the line of omission. Sins of omission often involve pride and unbelief. When pride is present, it often involves the sins of jealousy and idolatry: when unbelief is present in a person's life, you will can find yourself placating its various forms such as insecurity and fear.

There are various ways in which Christians can innocently partake of another's sin in the area of omission. The beauty about being innocent in a situation is that God does not hold us accountable for what we do not understand. However, if we become aware of a sin problem, we must cease to partake of it. Here are the ways in which we can partake of the sins of others:

False Way (*Psalm 119:104, 128*): It is not unusual for people to play games to get their desired responses from others. However, such games are wicked because they create a false way or environment that is self-serving and omits godly, honorable attitudes and trustworthy conduct. Individuals who play the games with these people often feed their arrogance. If these people's arrogance is being fed, they will never see the need to repent because they are being justified by the exaltation that is taking place. As believers, we must

hate and flee every false way in order to ensure the integrity of something. Scriptural and spiritual integrity will always demand that a person choose the excellent way of righteousness.

Avoiding Temptation: We must avoid taking sides in a matter that we have no personal knowledge of. *Proverbs 18:13* tells us it is folly and shame to make our opinion known when we have not heard both sides of a matter. When there is conflict, it is not a matter of who is right or wrong; rather, it is a matter of what the Lord wants to do in a situation. As Christians, we are in a ministry of reconciliation, not of judging a matter. The only reason we may hear about a matter is for the sole purpose of encouraging or challenging the one with the offense to choose the excellent ways of God to ensure character. If we simply hear another's complaints without having the intent of bringing instruction or reconciliation to the person, we will be partaking of the sin of gossip or slander. Such sin plants seeds of discord among the brethren, a sin God hates (*Proverbs 6:16-19*).

Offenses: The Bible is clear of offense will come (*Matthew 18:7*). Once again, the temptation is to take offense due to pride and misunderstandings. The Bible is clear about how to confront such offense. If a person has personally offended you, you must personally go to him or her in meekness and brotherly love to seek proper understanding, bring Scriptural instruction where needed, and reconciliation. Confrontations of this nature will always be for the sake of the one who has offended you, not so you can set the record straight. Such humility will also ensure that you will not fall into the same sin (*2 Timothy 2:24-26*). Godly love will also cover such offenses (*1 Peter 4:8*). However, to take offense for someone else is unscriptural. Such offenses become a cause and will not only set the individual up to partake of the sin of another, but will cause him or her to look foolish in the end.

As Christians, we must abide by the Bible if we are going to ensure the integrity of our lives and conduct. We must avoid at all cost partaking of personal sin or the sins of others. After all, God cannot bless a matter when there is sin in the camp. †

COMMENTS & LETTERS

"Well, here comes a scenario between Islam trying to kill us off and make us all Muslims and Rick Warren and the Catholic church trying to make us all come under what they think we should do and the true believers just trying to get the truth out about God's Word - this world is an absolute total mess. Beside the fact that over half of the world is under some demonic spirit because they have read the *Purpose Driven Life* or are involved with having watched Harry Potter we are in a heap of trouble that only the Lord can rescue us out of in this present horrible situation. And the other part of the problem is the so-called Christians thinking that The Shack is an ok book to read and they love it or our youth are caught up with the spirit world and that whole mess. Now there is a scenario for you. Oh plus the other Christian false prophets running around declaring thus and so, what an absolute mess.—ID

"I believe beyond a shadow of a doubt that persecution is coming more rapidly than we would like to believe. As to Obama being reelected that would not surprise me either because the so-called Christians as well as unbelievers are so deluded by what they think they want to hear they are willing to follow him to their unknowing destruction. Also many are not voting because they see their vote not counting or making a difference. Also if you saw any of the Demo convention that wanted to take God out and actually boo leaving Him in their party, it is so open and people are going right along with it believing they are following the right path. I have never seen that behavior so open before or so blatant. As to the fires and wars coming rapidly, I believe that it is on its way again sooner than we think, but now if it comes that soon I am not sure. I know that the Lord gave me a vision in January 2009 that many people were drowning spiritually and reaching up to God and it was too late and if you look at the spiritual condition of the so-called Christians and many Christians who have jumped on the band wagon of the new spirituality movement of what they perceive as being Christian it is frightening to say the least." - ID