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PO Box 571 - Priest River, ID 83856 * www.gentleshepherd.com * October 2013

The Odyssey

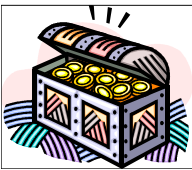
Part 9

THE MATTER OF THE WORLD

By Rayola Kelley

The spiritual journey I have been on has rewarded me with unseen treasures that are priceless. These treasures are made up of blessings and gifts. These blessings and gifts have secured for me an eternal inheritance, everlasting promises, and the ultimate prize of heaven.

Before I explain what the ultimate prize is, I must address the blessings and the gifts, along with an inheritance. The



Apostle Paul spoke of the blessings in *Ephesians 1:3*, "Blessed be the God

and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Note, how our blessings are heavenly which make them unseen. However, as believers, these blessings enrich our lives in such a way that we end up obtaining a royal position and priestly place. *Revelation 1:6* summarizes it best, "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Hebrews 6:12 tells us how we are able to obtain the matters of heaven, "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." *James 2:5* goes on to give this insight into this subject, "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" Blessings are a matter of God bestowing His provision on people out of mercy and grace, but when it comes to promises, there are usually

conditions that must be met before people can actually partake of the promises of God. The only active virtue that ensures that believers secure such promises is faith.

When it comes to gifts, they are also unseen. Blessings identify us to God's abiding intervention on our behalf, but gifts become the means by which the heavenly life will operate in our lives. The Apostle Paul identifies the essence of these gifts in this way in *Ephesians 1:17*, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him."

The Holy Spirit is both a promise and gift from the Father (*Acts 1:4; 2:38*). The gift of the Holy Spirit has to do with salvation, while the promise of the Holy Spirit has to do with being endowed with power from above. This power enables us to walk out the life that is being established in us. The Spirit also imparts gifts to the Body of Christ to build each member up in agreement and unity in order to come to perfection.

Sadly, some people abuse the power given to them by heaven above to gain some type of religious status, and use gifts as a personal platform to exalt self and promote personal agendas that are not only self-based, but are often laced with compromise and heretical poison.

This brings us to the matter of inheritance. For the children of Israel, their inheritance was the Promised Land, but for the children of God it is the fullness of redemption. It is true, as Christians, we have been redeemed from the slavery of sin, we are being redeemed from the traps and nets of Satan, and ultimately we will be redeemed from all the claims of this present wicked age. Meanwhile, the reality of this physical body and the world's gravity keeps us bound to the age we are now in. As a result, we have been given the seal of the Holy Spirit until we can realize the

fullness of redemption.

Finally, we come to the ultimate prize. If you note, there is much about our spiritual inheritance in the book of *Ephesians*. There is a general consensus that some of the New Testament books serve as companions to the books of the Old Testament. For example, *Ephesians* is a companion book to *Joshua* in the Old Testament because both books deal with inheritance, and what it means to possess it. However, for the children of Israel it was directed more towards obtaining a physical inheritance, but for Christians it is a spiritual one.

What is the ultimate prize that we need to obtain? Amazingly, it was and is the same for the children of Israel as it is for Christians. In the Old Testament the ultimate prize was referred to as Abraham's reward, and the children of Israel's portion. It states in *Genesis 15:1*, "After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." *Psalms 16:5* makes this declaration, "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot."

In the New Testament, the prize is referred to as the Pearl of Great Price. *Matthew 13:45, 46*, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Although the pearl of great price is mentioned here in regard to the kingdom of heaven, we know the revelation and fulfillment of the kingdom of heaven culminated in Jesus Christ. It is the fullness of His life that we, as believers, must obtain through faith, possess in obedience, and secure in light of heavenly hope.

This brings me to the challenge of gaining that which is heavenly within the confines of the worldly, the fleshly, and the demonic. Because of the world's design, I have taken many detours in

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the past. The worldly ways often caught my attention, while the fleshly stirred up my lusts, and the demonic would seduce, and entice me to accept or pursue another reality. For me, the challenge as a Christian was not just a matter of overcoming such distractions, but recognizing the point of temptation, enticement, and entanglement attached to them. After all, the world appeared to have my happiness in mind, the flesh gave the impression that it promised me glorious experiences that would produce satisfaction, and the demonic offered me spiritual enlightenment that would give me a corner on all matters. However, what I ultimately discovered was that the world was clothed in the vanity of false promises, the flesh was robed in utter foolishness, and the demonic became an open door to a vacuum that not only confused me about the real issues of life, but sucked the life out of me.

As I struggled with the matter of the age I lived in, I had to come to terms with what I needed to do to be loosed from the influences of these three aspects. It took some trial and error before I began to understand what must occur for me to truly overcome the world with its avenues and ways.

The first thing I had to recognize was what I was *pursuing*. Pursuits will tell much about what we value, our agendas, and priorities. It took me a while, but I had to realize that I was pursuing points of the world because my agenda was based on the influences of the world. My priority was to be wise in the matters of God, and be pliable under His hand, but my expectations of how He would use me or how His wisdom would translate was based on worldly attitudes and standards. Such expectations found their inspiration in vain imaginations and idolatrous emphasis. As a result, I was becoming double-minded towards the matters of God (*James 1:8*).

This double-mindedness produced inconsistencies in my walk and testimony. Instead of walking in the strait ways of God, I was constantly juggling different issues of life between Scriptural truths and worldly

practices in order to come to some type of understanding. However, true understanding eluded me because compromise with the world caused me to operate in misty shadows. There was no real clarity; therefore, I would find myself grabbing at this or that, but never really able to land on what was real and true. Such a state caused me great frustration, but it appeared that my solution was to continue on the same path as before.

I realized that I had to put preeminent value on my relationship with God if I was going to ensure the integrity of my pursuits. I had to be transparent about my agenda. There is only one acceptable agenda that a Christian must possess and that is to glorify God in everything that is done (*Mathew 5:14-16*). The Apostle Paul tells us what needs to be our priority and that is Christ and Him crucified (*1 Corinthians 2:2*).

The next area I had to consider was where I was directing my *affections*. The Bible tells us that we are to set our affections on things above (*Colossians 3:1, 2*). Clearly, we see that we are to discipline our affections, rather than be defined by them. Many times my affections became entangled by lustful emphasis. They were often being launched from the premise of worldly sensationalism or ecstasy. Usually it was like being launched from a canon in the hope of hitting the net of happiness and satisfaction. The height I reached at such times was minimal, and the flight temporary. In a sense, the swings of my affections made me feel like I was part of a side show. Once again my imagination would often play a part in how a matter was supposed to affect me emotionally. Sadly, I discovered that my affections were fleshly and that in most cases they never really left the ground of carnality.

Another area that I had to confront was my *strength*. For years I ran the Christian race in my own vigor. After all, I had my pious plans, my religious ways of doing things, and my own spiritual take on how it was supposed to turn out. However, I found my strength constantly being ebbed away. In the strength of my youth I could afford my strength being misdirected by demands of the world, and religious activities, and still come back to center

and maintain the course. But, eventually various aspects of life took a toll on my strength and I found myself questioning whether or not I would even finish the rest of the marathon race that was before me.

I recognized at that time that I needed to guard my strength. This meant I had to be wise and discreet about the battle lines I chose. Admittedly, I struggled with what battles I needed to fight. After all, we must stand for what is right and true, withstand the onslaught of worldly, foolish demands that can be put on us by others, and continue to stand when nothing makes a bit of sense in our lives.

As a new Christian, I fought many battles over non-essential matters, but as my strength was ebbed away by various demands of the world, I had to discern what was important to my relationship with God. There were times I was so tired that I would let other people dictate to me as far as my spiritual growth. However, I discovered that such individuals never had my best in mind. Their main concern was that they wanted me to make them feel comfortable in what often proved to be their mediocre, uncertain worlds. In essence, I found myself being brought down to their level, leaving me even spiritually weaker and somewhat resentful of them.

In such a state I found a dichotomy. On the one hand I perceived myself too weak to fight, but on the flip side of the coin I was not able to gain any real strength from succumbing to that which was spiritually inept and weak. The Bible is clear that our strength comes from the Lord, and if I was to gain strength, I had to press into Him and cling even harder to what I knew was right and true. At times it was an intense battle and I simply wanted to sit in the middle of the road and let a truck run over me, but I knew that in weakness I could give way to the strength of the Lord and find grace. His grace would allow me to begin to take small steps of faith that would allow me to advance forward. It was in my advancement forward that I finally gained inward strength from the Lord to continue the race.

Due to the influences of the old man and the world, it is natural to go with the currents of the world and give

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way to the tendencies of the flesh. In those areas that have not been regenerated, it is easy to fall back into our old habits and justify our treacherous ways before God, cover up our moral deviations and preferences, and cry foul that the problem does not rest with our present state, but with the environment around us, the circumstances of life, and the consequences of previous actions. At such times, we act as if we have no free will to choose what is right because there are really no absolutes to bring the contrast between righteousness and lawlessness from which we can choose. Clearly, each of us will choose the way in which we will walk, the path we will adhere to, and the destination we are preparing for.

This brings me to the matter of the world. In many cases the things of the world are neither bad nor good. Since we are in the world, we are forced to look to certain aspects of the world to sustain us in our physical life. However, the ways of the world constitute vanity, the attitude of the world lawlessness, and the spirit of the world results in rebellion. Since we have need of certain aspects of the world, how do we properly balance our involvement with the world with our spiritual well being?

To balance my spiritual life in light of worldly activities proved to be a great spiritual battle for me. I went through various bouts of discovering the emptiness of worldly dependency to realize that the world had served as my solution, while I treated the Lord as my option. Without realizing it I had kept the world before me just in case the Lord did not come through for me the way I thought He should. It was as if I was setting God up in my mind to fail because I could not, or I should say I would not, trust Him with all matters of life. Admittedly, I was shocked at my unbelief.

All dependency separates from God, and will lead to unbelief because at the core of it all is idolatry. Whatever we look to, to solve our problems, bring purpose, or determine our reality will automatically take the position of redeemer, creator, and God.

The God of heaven is always the great I AM, the essence and omni-

presence of what constitutes reality and truth. He is the Creator who understands our reason for being, and He is all powerful, capable of bringing forth a matter to completion. He is all-knowing with the wisdom to ensure the best results, and He is unchangeable, making Him reliable and trustworthy in whatever He does, for He never steps outside of who He is, His perfect plan, and His ultimate goal to save His people.

Through the years I have struggled with the matters of the world, but I have found that when I finally choose to trust the Lord with the issues of life, the world quickly loses its influence and begins to fade into the background. Subsequently, I have also learned how the world entangles me into its insipid reality.

In next month's article, I will write more extensively on how the world entangles us and how to overcome. Meanwhile, I want to challenge you to consider who your real solution is. It is easy to say God is your solution, but it is another matter altogether to make Him your solution. So many times talk is cheap. It often proves that there is a disconnect between what we say and our actions. It is time for the church Jesus died for to not only talk the talk, but live what is being declared. Living the life of Christ is what makes us living, walking epistles that will confirm what has already been established in Scripture as truth. †

QUOTABLES

"The Lord has heard the voice of my weeping." Psalm 6:8

"Is there a voice in weeping? Does weeping speak? In what language does it utter its meaning? Why, in that universal tongue which is known and understood in all the earth, and even in Heaven above. When a man weeps, whether he is a Jew or Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free--it has the same meaning in it. Weeping is the eloquence of sorrow. It is an eloquent orator, needing no interpreter--but understood by all.

'It is sweet to know that our tears are understood, even when words fail. Let us learn to think of tears as liquid prayers, and of weeping as a constant dropping of importunate intercession

which will surely wear its way right into the very heart of God's mercy, despite the stony difficulties which obstruct the way. My God, I will 'weep' when I cannot plead, for You hear the voice of my weeping!" - Charles Haddon Spurgeon

"It is a sight fit for angels to behold, tears as pearls dropping from a penitent eye!" - Thomas Watson

"Not only does God love us and desire our good--but His wisdom is infinite. He knows what is best for us, what things will do us the good we need. We ourselves do not know. The things we think would bring us blessing--perhaps would bring us irreparable harm! The things we dread as evil, and shrink from--perhaps are the bearers to us of divinest good! We would make pitiful work of our lives--if we had the ordering of our affairs in our own hands. If for but one day we could take matters into our own hands, out of God's hands--we would wreck everything!" - J. R. Miller, 1905

"All ministers should be revival ministers, and all preaching should be revival preaching; that is, it should be calculated to promote holiness." - Charles Finney

"By all means keep clear of the idea, both in theory and practice, that a minister is to promote revivals alone. Many people are inclined to take a passive attitude on this subject and feel as if they had nothing to do. They have employed a minister and paid him, to feed them with instruction and comfort, and now they have nothing to do but to sit and swallow the food he gives. They are to pay his salary, and attend on his preaching, and they think that is doing a great deal. And he on his part is expected to preach good, sound, *comfortable* doctrine, to bolster them up, and make them *feel* comfortable, and so they expect to go to heaven. I tell you, THEY WILL GO TO HELL, if this is their religion. That is not the way to heaven." - Charles Finney

"I had rather have no church in a place, than attempt to promote a revival in a place where there is a church which will not work. The counteracting influence of a church that will not work is worse than infidelity. There is no possibility of occupying neutral ground, in regard to a revival..." - Charles Finney

LETTING GO

By Jeannette Haley

"If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross, and follow me." – Matthew 16:24b

Probably most people, at some time or the other, have read the catchy slogan, "Let go and let God." It's easy to say, easy to remember but not always so easy to do in real life, depending on who or what a person is hanging on to. It is natural to find ourselves clinging to people, places, and things. We also tend to keep a vice grip on cherished memories, along with our ideas, concepts, standards, and perspectives. We can also find ourselves maintaining, at any cost, and without question or contemplation, valued family, religious and cultural traditions, which can range from pride to prejudice, the logical to the illogical, prudence to recklessness, or unbelief to faith. We value such things because they give identity, meaning and purpose to our lives—to a point.

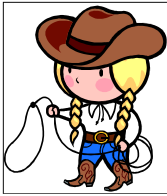
What material things we refuse to let go of all depends on the value we put on them. People value *things* for different reasons, such as how it makes them look (vanity), or how it makes them feel about themselves (pride), and they also value stuff that brings them pleasure, or holds sentimental value. Sandwiched in between all this is the downright resentment people can feel when it comes to letting go of bad habits, and unhealthy, or immoral, addictions. Crucifying the flesh doesn't "feel good!" The Bible tells us, "*Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience*" Colossians 3:5.

There is no getting around the fact that having to let go of friends, family, goals, dreams, and even our reputation can be downright traumatic, not to mention the shock and despair a person experiences when he or she is forced to give up many things for health reasons. If you stop and think a moment about all that there is in this world, all that makes up your life, including people, material things, includ-

ing the mental, emotional, and spiritual realm—all areas that the Holy Spirit may contend with us about to *let go of*—you begin to realize that the list could be virtually endless.

One biggie on this "list" is obsession for, and love of, money along with the pursuit of riches and great wealth. When it comes to money, learning how to let go of it for the benefit of others can be a tough lesson unless God has had His way in your life and heart. Remember, the essence of sin is selfishness and independence from God. Riches feed selfishness while giving the illusion that one can truly live independently happy while calling the shots in his or her life. However, such worldly "happiness" is shallow and fleeting, and must be continually fed and pumped up in order to keep the charade going. Jesus said, "For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul" Mark 8:36?

Letting go is not easy, and rarely fun. Letting go can present varying degrees of pain and heartbreak. Letting go is sometimes a very real test of faith, of our character, and our commitment to Christ. Letting go can be the ultimate act of love and sacrifice which produces a powerful testimony of the life of Christ in us to a world that is sinking in darkness and despair.

Letting go is about change. People who know me well know that I am the type of person who hates change, unless it can be proven to me that it is for the best all the way around. When I think back to my childhood, I think of all the things that were important to me— things that I seemed to think I would keep, and play with indefinitely. But time, that old enemy of youth, kept marching on, forcing me to let go of cherished childhood toys, dreams, and imaginations.

Letting go of childish dreams and fantasies while stepping into the sometimes awkward, confusing world between childhood and adulthood can be daunting. After all, a person has no choice in the matter but to keep marching forward in step with time while struggling with choices and decisions that affect not only the present, but the future as well. Unfortunately, most of life's major decisions are made in our

youth at a time where we have no experience, understanding, maturity, or wisdom. How many people do you know who are living an unhappy life because of decisions they made in their youth? Perhaps you are one of them. There are no exceptions to the Lord's warning, "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting*" Galatians 6, 7, 8. The Apostle Paul stated, "*When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things*" 1 Corinthians 13:11. Paul had learned to let go.

He also learned how to let go of his distinguished religious education, his impressive title as a Pharisee, his public acts of zeal in persecuting Christians, and his impeccable keeping of the Jewish law. He wrote, "*But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ*" Philippians 3:7, 8. Are we willing to lose it all to gain Christ? If we gain Christ, what have we really lost?

Those who present Christianity as a "bowl of cherries," or a continual state of bliss in a carefree life where Jesus daily pours out the "warm fuzzies" upon you, and those who tell you that Jesus came to make you successful and rich in your worldly lusts are wolves in sheep's clothing, false prophets, and heretics. There is a price to pay when a person truly believes and receives Christ into his or her heart and life. There is an exchange of your life for His. "*For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*" 1 Corinthians 6:20. Christianity is not a life based on the premise that all a person has to do is "accept Jesus" and then he or she can "have their cake and eat it too." In other words, becoming a Christian is not about merely

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"tacking" Jesus on to your life—your worldly, self-centered, self-sufficient, self-indulgent, sin-sick life. Either Jesus is LORD of all, or He is not LORD at all. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" John 3:3.

Letting go in order to gain Christ, the Holy Spirit, salvation, fellowship with the Father through the Son, eternal life, and heaven is the most important decision a person will ever make. "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it" Matthew 9:35. As one old preacher in Arizona used to tell people, "You don't *have* to give up your sin—you *get* to."

Through the years we have met many people who couldn't, or wouldn't, let go of their pity parties, pig pens, or pathetic perspectives. When you try to bring such people to an understanding of the life that Christ offers, presenting Him and His Word as the solution to their plight, they come up with a mountain of excuses as to why they can't let go of their baggage and trust the Lord to set them free. It all amounts to fear, unbelief, mistrust and a lack of real desire for change. That is when we, as Christian workers, have to let go of such people, which is a hard thing to do when you so very much want to see people win. All you can do is pray for them as the Spirit leads.

Sadly, there are those Christians who become rebellious, contrary, and stiff-necked when it comes to letting go of their *unbiblical* religious agendas, causes and "pet" beliefs. Woe to them if they fail to quickly let go, and repent of such idolatry when the light of God's Word challenges them to line up with the Spirit and Truth of Jesus. Woe to those who fail to receive "the love for the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:10). Refusing to receive the love for the truth throws the door wide open for "seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons," as well as "another Jesus, another spirit, and another gospel." (See 1 Timothy 4:1, 2 Corinthians 11:4.) Woe to those who will say to the Righteous Judge in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophe-

sied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name, done many wonderful works?" only to hear Him profess, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (See Matthew 7:22, 23.)

Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord" Luke 4:18, 19. However, for Him to do these things for us, we must be willing to let go of hurts, offenses, anger, unforgiveness, bitterness, and bad attitudes, which can be a major challenge. There are times when situations are totally unfair, people are offensive, cruel, rude, or insensitive, yet we know that we must forgive from the heart, and leave revenge to the Lord. After all, He is the righteous Judge. Sometimes, however, letting go seems impossible to do. Rayola explains that this is because of our perceived "rights," which come out of pride. Therefore, we believe that we have the "right" to be offended, the "right" to be angry, the "right" to be unforgiving, the "right" to be selfish, and obnoxious, the "right" to be jealous, and so forth. If we insist on maintaining our "rights," we end up in sin, which separates us from God. Psalm 66:18 declares, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Psalm 68:6b says, "but the rebellious dwell in a dry land." They become spiritually dry.

Then there is the heavy burden many of us carry concerning unsaved loved ones. Letting go of people we love is probably one of the most heart-breaking, and gut-wrenching decisions we may be called upon to make. Christians with unsaved loved ones in their family carry them continually in their hearts. I know from experience that when a family member you dearly love is rebellious, stiff-necked, unbelieving, and spiritually lost, the natural thing is to try, in as many ways as is humanly possible, to share Christ. Prayer for an unsaved soul can sometimes span decades. We may even "go overboard" in our attempts to demonstrate the love of Christ to him or her. Unfortunately, our best efforts may only serve to keep

him or her on the fence so that he or she is not forced to get real with God. In other words, we can be very good at "enabling" people to dig in and maintain their status quo.

When to let go? The answer is, when the Holy Spirit impresses you to let go. I remember many years ago I prayed every night for the salvation of a certain individual, even though it was with great effort on my part because I never felt led to do so. I was shocked one night when, in the middle of interceding for him, God spoke to me and distinctly said, "Stop praying for him. He is going to hell." The Lord may impress you to let go emotionally because obsession with the plight of your loved one is destructive to your own well-being. Sometimes we hang on and refuse to let go because of guilt, or because we believe that somehow we can control the situation, and if we were to let go, then something horrible will take place. This is where we need to trust and obey, even if it means letting go many times.

Following are some examples of when God spoke to His servants to "let go," and not pray. To Moses God said, "And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward" Exodus 14:15. To Joshua God said, "And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face" Joshua 7:10? To Jeremiah God said, "Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee" Jeremiah 7:16. And, Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" 1 Corinthians 5:5. These are somber words to ponder.

Consider Jesus, who "let go" of the glories of heaven in order to come to us by way of the virgin Mary. Jesus, "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

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death of the cross” *Philippians 2:6-8*. Therefore, just as Jesus “let go” in order to become the acceptable sacrifice for our sins, so too must we let go of our sin, let go of the world, let go of the “old man,” and let go of every idol, and all that hinders our life in Christ; that we may take hold of Him, the One who has promised that He will never let go of those who place their trust in Him. †

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

HOW TO EXAMINE YOURSELF

Q: *I know this might be a silly question, but the Bible makes reference to examining yourself. What does it mean to examine yourself?*

A: There are two main matters that we must examine about ourselves: Whether we are ready to partake of communion, and whether we are of the true faith (*1 Corinthians 11:28; 2 Corinthians 13:5*).

The idea of examination is to prove, try, or test something to see if it would meet with approval. It involves discernment, scrutiny, and discipline. In summation, would our spiritual condition and our faith be approved of God?

In the matter of examining ourselves in relationship to communion, we must first discern what spirit we are operating in. The Bible is clear that the unseen must be properly discerned (*1 Corinthians 2:10-15*). By discerning the spirit that is in operation, we will be able to determine if we have a right heart attitude. If the heart is not right, it will not be open for one to properly receive on any front, whether it be truth, instruction, communion, or edification.

A closed heart simply represents a stiff-neck. A stiff-neck is based on prideful rights that can harbor and justify ungodly ways that range from anger, to unforgiveness, to bitterness, etc. Such a stiff neck will refuse to repent or come into submission to that which is righteous and approved of God. Those in this condition should not only refrain from taking communion, but they need to believe the promise of *1 John 1:9*, and humble

themselves before the blessed New Testament Priest, to once again confess their sins and seek forgiveness in order to find restoration of the soul.

It is vital that Christians not only examine themselves during communion to ensure the integrity of the experience, but periodically in their walk. A wrong heart attitude towards matters of heaven will ultimately produce unacceptable fruit. It is for this reason Jesus stressed that people will know, not only others by their fruit, but they will also know where they are as to their spiritual condition before Him. However, it takes a love for truth and integrity to examine ourselves in the light of God's penetrating Spirit and Word to know our present standing with Him.

When it comes to the test of our faith, it is the way to prove our point of reliance. It is easy to delude ourselves about where our faith rests. We can say all the right things, but in our heart we could be relying on that which is worldly, selfish, religious, and destructive. In a sense, we are testing our foundation. Are we really grounded in the Christ of the Bible, upon His Word, and in line with the leading of His Spirit?

If individuals are relying on something other than God, promoting something other than the reality of Christ, or exalting any cause other than the Gospel, regardless of how religious or good it might be, it is idolatrous. Such a foundation is shifting sand and will not withstand the test of truth. It will not edify others, nor will it be approved of God because such idolatry always operates outside of the accountable and protective boundaries of His Word.

As you can see, the greatest personal examination will always bring us back to who our head (source) is, which is influencing our attitude towards life (Christ or Adam), who we are serving (God or sin), and who or what we are exposing ourselves to and coming into agreement with the Law (judges the flesh) or the risen Christ. (See *Romans 5-7*.) It is important that we examine ourselves to see if there is any idolatry in our lives, because like the rich young ruler, eventually out of love, our holy God will shake our foundation and put His finger on any idol that may be present in

our hearts and minds. Sadly, many people who are not prepared to face their idols will stiffen their neck against the truth and will maintain their idol, insist on their way, while demanding they are right.

The harsh truth is that we cannot afford to be in wrong standing with God in the matters of spirit, truth, attitude, and conduct. We must remember the warning of *Matthew 7:21-23*. As Christians, we have been given the tools and avenues to ensure right standing with God, but if examined, we must be prepared to be found wrong in order to be made right before God to ensure we are approved of Him. †

SMITH WIGGLESWORTH

“Pentecost has made me rejoice in Jesus. God has been confirming His power by His Holy Spirit. I have an intense yearning to see Pentecost, and I am not seeing it. I may feel a little of the glow, but what we need is a deeper work of the Holy Spirit in order for God's message to come full of life and power and sharper than a *two-edged sword*’ (*Heb. 4:12*). At Pentecost, Peter stood up in the power of the Holy Spirit, and three thousand people were saved. Not long after this, he preached again, and five thousand people were saved.

“I am positive that we are on the wrong side of the Cross. We talk about love, love, love, but it ought to be repent, repent, repent. John the Baptist came, and his message was *“Repent.”* Jesus came with the same message: *“Repent”* (*Matt. 4:17*). The Holy Spirit came, and the message was the same: repent, repent, repent and believe. (See *Acts 2:38*.) What has all this to do with Pentecost? Everything! It is the secret of our failure. Daniel carried on his heart the burden of the people. He mourned for the captivity of Zion, he confessed his sin and the people's sin, and he identified himself with Israel until God made him a flame of fire. (See *Daniel 9*.) The result: a remnant returned to Zion to walk in the despised way of obedience to God.

“Weeping is not repentance; sorrow is not repentance. Repentance is turning away from sin and doing the work of righteousness and holiness. What can we do to receive the baptism? Repent!”