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The Odyssey A Matter of the Heart Part 15 By Rayola Kelley

The greatest struggle in my Christian life is coming to terms with what it means, or what it takes, to be victorious. The Bible is a book that is honest about man's plight, but it also reveals what it means to be overcomers. Overcoming is not an option; rather, it is a necessity if we are to enter the



kingdom of God. Revelation 21:7-8 confirms this, *"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and the murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."*

The Bible is clear that those who live according to, and by the flesh, will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21). And, for those who are part of the world, they are enemies of God and will stand judged with the world. The Apostle John summarized it in this way, *"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. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever"* (1 John 2:15-17).

Through the years I have tried to discover the "pattern" or a "method" that would always ensure spiritual victory, but I found that no one

"method" ever really worked in every situation and the only sure "pattern" I could follow was the one set forth by the example of Jesus. The Bible is clear that as believers, if we are to abide in Him, we must walk as He walked (1 John 2:6).

In the previous Scripture reference of 1 John 2:6, the Apostle John tells us what it means to abide in Him. I realize that, as the branch, I must abide in Jesus to ensure that His life pulsates through my inner being. However, what does it take to abide in Christ?

Through the years I have learned that there is only one way to abide in Him, and that is to remain humble before Him. Humility is a state that usually occurs after one has been broken. For Christians, that generally means we have become broken over our sin. The problem today is that sin is white-washed as a way to allow people to feel good about their sinful plight, minimized to accommodate the politically correct environment, and reclassified so people can be happy in this present world in spite of facing eternal damnation in the world to come. So many people are like the thief on the cross who taunted Jesus to prove His deity and power by sparing him of the cross he was so worthy to bear. He had no remorse for his ways, no recognition of his deserved status, and no fear of God. He was caught up with his wicked life in this present world, and had no concern for the world to come. He was a lost heathen through and through.

We know the other thief had a different perspective. Even though he started out taunting Jesus, he became aware that Jesus was who He said he was. Although dying on the cross, the thief was also broken about the reality of his plight in light of the One who was innocent, undeserving of death, and yet ready to die for him. To be broken means you are broken in spirit and that the different arenas of your soul are contrite or repentant. This means that

instead of being stiff-necked, your *will* is submissive before God. You are also *intellectually* in agreement with God's evaluation about a matter. In other words, He has been able to reason with you about your sin so that it can be properly addressed (Isaiah 1:18). And, finally there are those unstable *emotions* that roll according to fleshly feelings and worldly affections. Instead of being subject to pride and the lust of the world, they have been made tender towards the Lord by the Holy Spirit. In summation, your bent must be changed from self and the world to point heavenward to ensure right standing in Christ, right standing before God, and right standing in your walk.

This brings us to what was the difference between the two thieves on the cross. They both were criminals, rightfully dying for crimes they were guilty of. They both started out mocking Jesus, but the truth of the cross of Jesus ultimately brought a division between them. The truth is, all people will fall on one side or the other of the cross of Christ. The cross is a dividing point between light and darkness, life and death, and truth and deception. It brings people to the valley of decision where people will make the ultimate choice about their spiritual destiny. For those who insist on being heathens in this world, they will choose to be more so unbelieving and mocking towards the things of God, but for heirs of salvation, it will cause them to face their spiritual plight of sin and death, humble themselves in true repentance and cry out for mercy, forgiveness, and salvation.

This brings us to that which determines what side of the cross people will find themselves on. It comes down to one factor: the attitude of the heart. The heart attitude is the one thing that will influence the decisions people make towards God and life.

We know that according to the parable of the sower and the seed

that our heart represents the ground, and the Gospel, the seed. Our heart will prove to be either hard (stiff-necked), stony (selfish), worldly (idolatrous) or open (tender) to the seed of the Gospel. All heart conditions fall into one of the above categories. For instance, a proud heart is a hard heart, a fickle heart a stony heart, and a divided heart, a worldly heart.

But, what determines the condition of the heart? There are three main elements. They are agendas, priorities, and emphasis. Each of these elements will determine the environment of the ground of the heart. For example, when it comes to agendas, if you have a hard heart, your agendas usually prove self-serving. If you have a stony heart, agendas will be according to feelings and affections. If a person has a worldly heart, agendas are prone to be according to that which exalts the person based on worldly ways such as titles, positions, degrees, etc., and if you have an open heart towards God, it will desire to honor God above all else. Sadly, our agendas become what we measure ourselves with as far as our personal worth and success.

If you have wrong priorities, the hard heart will be more caught up with promoting personal kingdoms, the stony heart its personal preferences, and the worldly heart its worldly lusts to ensure happiness and success. When it comes to the open heart there is only one priority and that is to glorify God. Priorities often determine what we value personally as to what we consider will enrich our lives and bring satisfaction.

This brings us to emphasis. It is not unusual for people to start out with a decent emphasis, but the challenges of life and the influences of the world can greatly change or affect the emphasis of the heart. Emphasis will ultimately determine the causes we chase after. For example, the hard heart can display the instinct of a predator, ready to pounce on anything that gets in the way of its pursuits. The stony heart can prove to be unpredictable. Its emphasis is often affected by moods and proves to be unstable when confronting the matters of life. The emphasis of the worldly heart is greatly perverted by the

world's attitude. For Christians, a wrong emphasis can prove to be an unhealthy mixture where nothing gels well, leaving a leanness in the spirit and a battle in the soul. For the tender heart towards God, it has one emphasis, Christ and Him crucified.

In my spiritual odyssey, I have had to come face to face with my heart attitude towards a matter in order to discover what it means to be an overcomer. The Bible is clear that the heart is wicked and deceitful, and that we cannot possibly know the extent of its perversion (Jeremiah 17:9). In other words, we cannot trust our hearts, especially if they remain in their original state because such a heart cannot rightly judge a matter because it is carnal in attitude, selfish in preference, and worldly in its philosophies.

It is important to understand that the attitude of the heart determines how we look at something. If the heart is hard, it can only see its particular take on reality. If it is selfish, it tends to take on a sentimental attitude that can prove to be mushy, silly, unrealistic, or harsh. If the heart takes on the worldly perspective, it will judge all matters according to the world's façade and ways.

As I realized that a wrong heart condition was capable of making me right in my own eyes regardless of whether I was right or wrong, I needed some way of testing it. Eventually, I discovered that the attitude I took on about something was the actual manifestation of my heart.

We all can have attitudes. For some, attitudes can change hour by hour and minute by minute. One minute an individual may have a decent attitude and the next a foul one. However, I am not talking about fleeting attitudes that roll in on the tides of challenges and circumstances; rather, I am talking about the attitude of the heart. This attitude goes much deeper. It reflects the mood the heart is taking on towards something.

The heart attitude will determine how you approach something and your ultimate behavior. For example, the reason many people fail to believe God is because they do not properly fear Him. The fear of the Lord is an attitude that has been established by a prevailing mood of healthy respect towards a holy God, and a dread of displeasing

the One who holds your very soul in His hands.

Those who have a healthy fear of God display behavior conducive to their attitude. Granted, they may not feel like doing that which is consistent with their attitude, but they know that it is far better to remain true to what is so, than to give way to fleshly feelings that are as unstable as the waves on the ocean.

It is for this reason that when I decide to do that which is right, I never stop to take my emotional temperature, or allow my logic to weigh in, or wait for my will to give its approval. I know myself well enough that when it comes to spiritual matters, my emotions want to see if all my feelings are in agreement before I do something, my logic will convince me to make sure that before I do anything the end results will serve my purpose, and the will prefers to procrastinate until the emotions and logic are both on board. It is for this reason that I simply choose to walk by faith. I know how easy it is to become a procrastinator towards the things of God. Other words for this type of procrastination are "slothfulness" and "lukewarm."

It is easy to forget that the soul is still weighed down by the influences, workings, and activities of this present world. The soul will not volunteer when it comes to spiritual matters; rather, it will follow the leading of the heart attitude. If the attitude is of this world, the arenas of the soul will become more carnal, but if the attitude that is being established is that of Christ, the soul will be transformed as it ascends upward towards that which is righteous and excellent. Even though our soul may make us feel like hypocrites in our spiritual walk at different times, as Christians, we must remember that if we waited for each aspect of our soul to line up to God, we would never finish the course. The reason is because the spiritual life in us will always be baffled by fleshly emotions, sidetracked by logic, and oppressed by the will. That is why faith is the mooring line of the heart that connects each believer to the ways of God that are clearly revealed in His Word.

A tender heart towards God simply means that it can be moved by the

Holy Spirit regardless of what is happening on the surface. It is inspired by the deep currents of God's perfect ways, nourished by eternal truths, and maintained by His promises. It is humble in disposition, meek in its outlook, and godly in its ways.

This brings us to another aspect of the deception of the heart. Like the two thieves on the cross, we see the same two mixtures in our churches. We may sense that someone is struggling or hiding something in their lives. We may even question if they have a real testimony of salvation. We tend to classify people who talk the talk but who fail to walk the walk as hypocrites. When the heart attitude is wrong, it is the natural inclination for those who are in the religious world to try to veil it. For example, a hard heart will put on heavy robes of self-righteousness to hide its condition, the stony heart will put on fig-leaves of good deeds, and the worldly heart will put on the garbs of grandiose causes. However, under each false covering is the deception and preference of the heart to maintain its original, lost state. It is for this reason that Jesus made this statement in John 15:22, *"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin."*

As Christians, we need to be honest about our heart condition. It will manifest itself in the prevailing mood of our attitude. This is the only way we can establish if we have a humble disposition before God. In our fallen state we all start out like the two thieves on the cross, but if the reality of Jesus' redemption has broken our hearts and brought true contrition to our souls, we cannot help but agree with Jesus, and seek His forgiveness and redemption.

Receiving the gift of salvation is a matter of the heart (Romans 10:9, 10). The reality of our great need to be saved must reach into our heart, and break it in order for God to give us a new heart in our born-again experience. The beauty about Christ's redemption is that God does not change our heart like King Saul or enlarge our heart like Solomon; rather, He gives us a new heart, inclined towards Him, sensitive towards His Spirit, and capable of responding to His Word in sincerity (1 Samuel

10:9-10; 1 Samuel 4:29; Ezekiel 36:26).

What does the attitude of your heart tell you about your disposition? Have you come to a humble state, or are you hiding behind some garb to give an impression of being a Christian instead of living as a Christian? It is up to each of us to test and guard our own hearts to ensure that they have been made new by God and that the Spirit of God renews them daily to ensure the integrity of our agendas, priorities, and emphasis. †

COMMENTS

"Things are heating up over here big time, Common Core and friend is fighting alone, she can't believe there aren't any other Christian parents or even teachers that are taking a stand." - WA

"Everything we do seems to get harder and harder to accomplish. I get very upset and grieved at how people don't care and don't have any sense of responsibility any more. Truly a society of lovers of self. I can imagine you are tired! There are days I talk to the Lord about how I don't know where the energy is going to come from. The bones and muscles don't work well any more and I don't bounce back from things either. It seems like time is flying by though and I stay busy 24-7. I know the shape of our country is so very sad but I just have to tell myself continually that the Lord is in control and we too [America] have to forsake Israel so they will look to the Lord. Hang in there and LOOK UP!" - TN

"I pray you and Rayola are doing well. I had a dream about you both recently. You came to stay with us because God pressed on your hearts and gave you both a word to share with the churches here. A warning that we are abandoning God and adopting false beliefs. Not sure if that was a dream from God or not but regardless, I thought that I would share. And you can visit us anytime! Thank you for sending us your newsletter. They sure bless me! How is your ministry going? Is there anything we can pray for you?" - WA [GSM: Pray for strength to run the race, work in the harvest field, and cross the finish line victoriously!]

Continued next column

"Comments" - Continued

"Jesus WARNED us!! Matt 7:15 - There is going to be more and more and more of this kind of stuff. [Heretical movies such as the newly-released "The Son of God".] A lady to whom I showed the Way and the Lord took her into His family, phoned me the other day and said she did not want to continue with the Bible studies she was going to. I encouraged her at the beginning to stick with the Authorised version. She said the study was like the tower of Babel, they were all reading from different versions, and her head was spinning, as some of it was so different from her Bible. New versions are appearing regularly, we cannot be in agreement or in tune with one another if we are singing from different song sheets!!!" - UK

"Wow! Thanks Jeannette. I did not watch the series The Bible, either. Didn't feel I missed anything even though others said it was good. Nice to know truths we don't always hear from the horse's mouth. Seems Christians ears are really 'tickling' in these last days." - OR

"Thanks Jeanette. I'm really not surprised by this article. [*The "Son of God" Movie Is NOT What We Think-Do you Know The Voice of Your Master—Web Site: The Last Hiker*]. Think the Holy Spirit has been holding me back on all this hoopla. Have no desire to see it. The Bible works for me." - ID

"I read this also, and I agree with the author. Jesus warned us, that in the last days.... let no man deceive you. VERY DECEPTIVE MOVIE....stay away and do not give money or your time to this movie." - AK

"I watched that movie, and you know, it made me sick and I was upset at all the misinformation they used. I said to [husband] that is not biblical. SO I was thrilled to read this article. YEP - sent it on to everyone, but so many of my friends loved the movie, so I put I agree with this article, so they would at least know where I stood, and they can't say they didn't hear." - OH

"Really good newsletter this month!" [February issue] - OR

“S” DOESN’T ALWAYS STAND FOR SPRING

By Jeannette Haley

Those of us who live where there are four distinct seasons, such as we have in north Idaho, look forward with great expectation to that comforting “S” word—spring. This doesn’t mean, though, that the weather takes note of the official day in March that announces its beginning. There are times when you feel like spring is still far off into the future. But, eventually spring does arrive bringing with it a refreshing upsurge of renewal, new life, and that wonderfully strange, illusive inner rush of “spring fever,” that stirs within the hearts of even the older folks. When “S” stands for spring, (and sunshine) it is a happy letter indeed.

Sadly, not all “S” words bring cheer to the weary in heart. Consider such words as self, sin, suffering, sorrow, separation (from God), and Satan which all begin with “s.” Thankfully, there is an “S” word that overrules and overcomes these “s” words, bringing great joy and relief—that word is *Savior*.

There is one “s” word in particular that either embodies, influences, or gives impetus to the afore-mentioned “s” words of self, sin, suffering, sorrow, separation, and Satan, and that word is *selfishness*. What is the essence of selfishness, and how does one discern it in his or her own life? This may seem like a no brainer until you begin to realize how deceptive, deep rooted, and destructive selfishness really is. It is deceptive because it is so easy to see in others, but almost impossible to detect in ourselves due to the fact that the roots of selfishness are intertwined with a personal pride that can be devastatingly destructive to others if threatened. The Apostle John called it the “*pride of life*.” “*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*” 1 John 2:16.

Pride is generally accompanied with fear, anger, and often slothfulness. It is devilish, or of the devil, whereas self-respect is an acknowledgment borne out of gratitude, and humility for the uniqueness, and high calling of humanity in light of Jesus Christ, who created man in His image,

and who will live forever, either with God, or in outer darkness of eternal damnation and torment. True self-respect in a Christian reflects humility, sobriety, calm assurance, gratitude, faith, good-will, benevolence, strength, endurance, uprightness, and the fruit of the Spirit. The Christian with self-respect is secure in his or her life in Christ, and place in the Body of Christ, and is void of competitiveness, jealousy, envy, and strife. But, “*He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife*” *Proverbs 28:25a*.

The prideful soul, on the other hand, loves him or herself with an obsessive type of ungodly, independent, rebellious, devilish, selfish, and self-centered introspection. Such a person is consumed with self, and exhibits the wicked and insidious mannerisms, reflections, reactions, and attitudes of self-gratification, self-survival, self-satisfaction, self-interest, and self-exaltation. Selfishness must be first, it must always give the appearance of being the best, it must come out the winner, it must always be right, and it must get in the last word. Since selfishness and pride go hand in hand, both are as insatiable in their fleshly and emotional lusts, and cravings as is bottomless quicksand, which sucks its victims ever deeper into self-pity, anger, bitterness, and vindictiveness. The Bible says, “*The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined*” *Psalms 10:2*. Such “devices” may well include the wicked games people play—games that are subtly deceptive, cunningly crafted, and polished to perfection. When self is reigning, such games become a point of great personal pride, and mockery. “*Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment*” *Psalms 73:6*. As a nation, we are being conditioned to accept such deception, delusion, and destructive policies from our godless, immoral, demon-possessed politicians, but to accept, tolerate, encourage, and uphold such wicked games and hypocrisy in our churches, and among any people who profess to be “Christians” is unthinkable!

What do such individuals do when they go before God to pray? How many are like the Pharisee who “*stood and prayed this with himself, ‘God, I*

thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican” *Luke 18:11*? Oh! The depth of the insidious roots of pride, especially religious pride, intertwined with gross selfishness, where Satan dwells in the darkness of the wicked soul that will sell itself for a bowl of pea soup as did Esau, or Judas Iscariot who betrayed Christ with a kiss. Who can know the depths of the darkness of selfishness, and sin that cruelly manifests in the wicked betrayal of the innocent, while justifying itself with the lies of hell. For “*The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him*” *Psalms 37:32*. God declares, “*Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins*” *Proverbs 10:12*. There is an oft quoted saying that sadly sums it up, “Christian soldiers are the only ones who shoot their own wounded.”

Just to be clear, let me say this: There is a big difference between a wounded, hurt, or offended soldier and a person who is in rebellion, and decides to sin. To quote David Cloud of Way of Life Ministry, “Those who are disobedient commonly mistake correction for persecution and reproof for assault.” Such selfish, prideful people can easily turn biblical correction and reproof into a self-serving platform for self-pity. All too often well-meaning, but undiscerning Christians see such a person as a “poor victim” rather than a sinner badly in need of repentance, and can do much spiritual damage in their rush to lavish such a person with misdirected sympathy.

How do you know if you are selfish or not? Jesus makes it clear that a person cannot serve two masters. “*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon*” *Matthew 6:24*. The principle here is you cannot serve the dictates of your flesh, satisfy your selfish desires, feed your pride, give way to your self-centered obsessions, agendas, and plans, and serve Christ at the same time. It all comes down daily to whom you are serving—God, or self. If all you think about from dawn to dusk is how to

come out on top of everybody else, or how to gain notoriety, or how to get attention, or how to be a winner in this world rather than overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, then you are selfish. If everything is always about you, if all you ever talk about involves you in one way or the other, if all you care about is what concerns you, if everything you plan is for your benefit, if morning, noon and night everything is about how you look, how you feel (emotionally), how others respond, or act towards you, what others think about you, how you can prove you are the best and the brightest, then you are selfish, and will more than likely sacrifice others in your quest to satisfy this selfish pride—and to come out looking good with fake nobility in the process.

To repeat, how do you know if you are selfish? How about the love test? Let's look at the "love chapter," *1 Corinthians 13:1-13* and put it in a church setting. Beginning with verse one, here is the talk test. You know what they say, "Talk is cheap." Here is how God puts it, "*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*" Oh Christian! Do you stand up in church and speak in the tongues of men, or even in the wonderful tongues of angels, but lack love? Are your religious gifts of more value and importance to you than genuine, unfeigned love of the brethren? If so, you are nothing but a self-centered, irritating noise. The "talk test" applies to every Christian from the pulpit to the pew.

Moving on to verse 2, here we are confronted with the "power test." "*And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*" This is a biggie. What Christian wouldn't want the gift of prophecy, and to be able to understand all mysteries, and have all knowledge? What Christian wouldn't want to have all faith, and faith so great as to work miracles? Yet Paul writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that even though a person is gifted with all this, and does not have love, he or she is nothing! Did you get that? NOTHING!

Just so much hot air, and that is all. Nothing is nothing. Nothing doesn't amount to anything—not in this world, or in the next. Rather shocking when you think about it, isn't it? Even if you have all this power, Paul says without love, it is nothing. We see "big" names in ministry today, and "big" churches and "big" movements with so-called "big" miracles, yet almost all of it is for nothing but selfish and self-serving agendas (big money) that are totally lacking love. It is all worthless and good for nothing. In the near future, when we stand before the just Judge of the entire world, and give an account of our lives, all these so-called "great works" that are done from a selfish and prideful heart will be as the chaff which the wind blows away. (See *Matthew 7:21-23*.)

1 Corinthians 13:3 gives us the "good works test." "*And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*" As Christians, we know that we are to do good works, because love manifests itself in good works, and because faith without works is dead. What Paul is saying in this verse is even if we give everything we have, and offer our body to be burned (which benefits no one), but have not love, it profits us nothing. The reason for that is, the whole show is for selfish, and self-aggrandizing reasons. The only way there can be any eternal value in good works of any kind is when such works come out of a genuine heart of unfeigned love. And, the only way to have such a heart is to have a new heart. "*And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh*" *Ezekiel 11:19*. When selfishness reigns, the heart is a stony heart. Jesus said, "*But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it: Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended*" *Matthew 13:20, 21*. Again we see that selfishness and pride is easily offended. How many people are there who are sitting in churches while lacking "root in themselves," and are offended by the

Word? I suppose in this day and age of growing apostasy and departure from the truth of the Word of God the question is, how many churches consistently actually preach, and practice the Word? After all, if those entrusted with the care of God's sheep truly love Him, they will be faithful to feed the flock of God with the truth whether it offends people or not. Oh, that God would send men and women into the harvest field of the world who are filled with His Spirit, His love, and His truth rather than filled to the brim with their own selfish agendas, and "politically correct," self-serving causes!

Concerning offenses, make no mistake, there is a big difference between forgiving a person and trusting and respecting him or her. Trust and respect must be earned. Many people assume that if you forgive a person, then you must carry on with things as they were. Not only is this untrue, it is often unwise. There are always consequences for our sins. "*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*. *Proverbs 18:19* says, "*A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.*"

On the subject of trust, "*Jesus did not commit himself unto them [people], because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man*" *John 2:24, 25*. Jesus knew that the hearts of men could not be trusted. "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it*" *Jeremiah 17:9*? Before the betrayal of Christ, at the feast of unleavened bread, Jesus told His disciples as they ate, "*Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me*" *Matthew 26:21b*. Even Jesus' disciples knew that they could not trust in their own hearts and motivations for they "*were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I*" *Matthew 26:22*. After this, we know that the Son of God was betrayed by Judas Iscariot, and denied by Peter. The Apostle Paul admitted, "*For I know*

that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing....” Romans 7:18.

Continuing on in *1 Corinthians* 13:4 we see the “attitude test.” Here we read that love is long suffering, and kind. Love is not jealous and envious, nor does love exalt itself, neither is it prideful. The selfish soul is generally impatient, and anxious to get on with its own agendas and plans, even if it means running roughshod over others. It may be longsuffering to a point, and even display some kindness based on emotions, but as selfishness begins to kick in, patience grows thin and eventually dissipates altogether. This is when going the second mile can become a real source of irritation, and even anger, especially if there is no fanfare, applause, recognition, or praise offered.

The Apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Corinthians, “Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; By pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned” *2 Corinthians* 6:3-6. [Emphasis added.] Genuine love never envies the talents, successes, promotions, or possessions of others, but rather rejoices when others are blessed with such things. In the *Song of Solomon*, 8:6b we read, “*jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.*”

The opposite of “vaunting” yourself up, and being “puffed up” with arrogance is self-abasement. There can be no unfeigned love for others if you are constantly exalting yourself. “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” *Romans* 12:3. And, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the

things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ 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 death of the cross” *Philippians* 2:3-8. What a difference the Church of Jesus could make in this world if only God’s people would, without hypocrisy, choose to obey God’s Word, and let the light of His love shine!

To continue our “attitude in action love test” we read in *verses* 5-7, “Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil: Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth: Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” True love does not misbehave in an inappropriate manner such as exhibiting rude, obnoxious, crude, or unmannerly outbursts, and out-of-order attitudes and actions. “Seeking not her own” tells us that love does not demand its own way, or play wicked games in order to further its own agenda at the expense of others. Furthermore, love is not touchy, or easily provoked; but, the self-love of a prideful, selfish person can be like a ticking time bomb, waiting to go off at the slightest provocation, or imagined insult.

The selfish person has a challenge behaving in a mature and wise manner, especially when the focus and attention is on others, which goes hand in hand with evil imaginations. A good example is Judas Iscariot as recorded in *John* 12:5, 6, “Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? 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.” It makes one wonder how many people, then and now, have considered and rightfully concluded that the nature of his humanistic religious outburst was not only inappropriate and unreasonable, but downright wicked. After all, humanism with its weak religious sugar coating is a counterfeit replacement of what real Christianity is all about—Jesus Christ!

Concerning iniquity (moral devia-

tion), how can a Christian with the love of God in his or her heart possibly rejoice in sinful behavior such as fornication, or any form of perversion, including perversion of the truth? A selfish heart is likely to rejoice in the perversions of its choice while resenting the truth, because the truth exposes and brings to light such evil imaginations and deeds.

Finally, in *verses* 7, and 8a we read concerning charity, “Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth.” This is a tough “truth test” for the selfish and proud person. Trying to fake these aspects of love and godly character would be like trying to rock climb up a sheer granite cliff face with no desire whatsoever to suffer hardship, or truly have faith that it can be done, while feeling too hopeless to care. Such a person hasn’t the heart to endure, or the necessary dedication to “pay the price.”

For most of my life I thought that love was made up of strong emotional feelings, attractions, and attachments. God in His mercy brought Rayola into my life, who in time got it through my hard head, by teaching and example, that real love is a commitment—a commitment to do right by the other person. This is what Jesus meant when He taught that His followers should do unto others as they would have others do unto them. It’s not all about feelings, and thrills and chills, and all those strange, awesome, and wonderful sensations that often accompany springtime! That may be a tiny part of it, but real love is a steadfast, loyal, faithful, dependable, honorable, selfless commitment to always do right by the other person. Jesus said, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” *John* 15:13. Come to think of it, perhaps we could all learn a great deal about unfeigned love from the average family dog!

In conclusion, there is another “S” word that separates the selfish sinner from the saint, and that word is servant. Jesus calls those who belong to Him servants. He taught them, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him” *John* 13:16. We are told in *1 Peter* 4:1, 2 “Forasmuch then

as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." We all need to ask the Lord to show us His perspective on self, sin, slothfulness, suffering, sorrow, separation, and Satan. When He shows you how prideful selfishness, and sin, breaks His heart—how it destroys our lives, separating us from communion and fellowship with Him—then hopefully true brokenness, and genuine repentance will take place at the foot of the cross upon which the most selfless act of love the world has ever seen, or ever will see, took place. †



THE CONCEPTION OF GOD By A. W. Tozer

"It is my opinion that the Christian conception of God current in these middle years of the twentieth century is so decadent as to be utterly beneath the dignity of the Most High God and actually to constitute for professed believers something amounting to a moral calamity.

". . . That mighty burden is his obligation to God with every power of mind and soul, to obey Him perfectly, and to worship Him acceptably. And when the man's laboring conscience tells him that he has done none of these things, but has from childhood been guilty of foul revolt against the Majesty in the heavens, the inner pressure of self-accusation may become too heavy to bear.

"The gospel can lift this destroying burden from the mind, give beauty for ashes, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. But unless the weight of the burden is felt the gospel can mean nothing to the man; and until he sees a vision of God high and lifted up, there will be no woe and no burden. Low views of God destroy the gospel for all who hold them.

"Among the sins to which the human heart is prone, hardly any other is more hateful to God than idolatry, for idolatry is at bottom a libel on His character."

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

TWO TYPES OF REPENTANCE

Q: *Are there different types of repentance? What I mean is, when King Saul was confronted by Samuel for disobeying God, he said he obeyed God. When Samuel confronted him again, he said he had transgressed the commandments, and to pardon his sin, and let him worship as he didn't want to be rejected as the king over Israel.*

A: The answer to your question is a big **yes!** The Apostle Paul made this statement in 2 Corinthians 7:10, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."

Godly sorrow leads to real repentance. This means that a person is sorrowful that he or she affronted God with disobedience and betrayed Him by dishonoring Him. In such times a reproach is brought to God's very character. King David, who understood godly sorrow put it best, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest and be clear when thou judgest (Psalm 51:4).

There are more than a few examples in Scriptures that show the other repentance: that of worldly sorrow. When you consider Saul, he was not sorrowful over displeasing God because of his disobedience; rather, he feared paying the consequences for his actions—that of being rejected as king. His show of repentance did not have anything to do with righting his relationship with His Creator, but keeping God off his back in order to maintain his position as king. The main purpose for godly repentance is to get on the same page with God about a matter to ensure reconciliation with Him and restoration of relationship.

Another good example of worldly sorrow is Esau. He did not value his birthright; therefore, he sold it. Since blessings walked hand in hand in maintaining the birthright, Esau lost the blessing as well. He was sorrowful over losing the blessing, but not over his casual or disinterested attitude towards his birthright. When he was bemoaning his loss, he lied by implying his brother stole both from him

(Genesis 27:36). However, God had a different take on it.

It says that God hated Esau, but loved Jacob (Romans 9:13). There is a debate as to what this Scripture implies, but the one thing that is clearly brought out is that Esau was considered a fornicator, a profane person (Hebrews 12:16-17). Even though he showed sorrow, it was a fleshly sorrow, tied to self-pity of the old man and the world's way of avoiding the consequences. Since his sorrow came from that which was not of God, it tells us he could find no place of repentance.

True repentance comes from a state of brokenness, not over the personal cost of sin, but over what it does to God and one's relationship with Him. To those who have true sorrow, they will be more concerned over their broken relationship with God than paying some worldly consequence. They will fear displeasing God more than losing something that has no real eternal value to it.

Another man who showed worldly repentance was Judas Iscariot (Matthew 27:3). It says that he repented, but he never really owed up to the fact that he betrayed the Son of God. He acknowledged he betrayed an innocent man, but he never repented for the selfish motive and ruthless attitude that opened him up to become an instrument of Satan. Instead of humbling himself before God, confessing his real sin and seeking forgiveness and restoration, he went out and hung himself.

Real repentance will always result in reconciliation with God. The real tragedy of sin is that it breaks relationship with God. Godly repentance will first seek to have this relationship restored. †

WHAT GOD HATES

"These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood. An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift run running to mischief. A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren."

- Proverbs 6:16-19 -

A CALL TO ANGUISH

By David Wilkerson

This message is a partially transcribed excerpt from an original message spoken by David

Wilkerson. The full message is titled: "[A Call to Anguish](#)." and can be downloaded from "[www.sermonindex.net](#)."

And I look at the whole religious scene today and all I see are the inventions and ministries of man and flesh. It's mostly powerless. It has no impact on the world. And I see more of the world coming into the church and impacting the church, rather than the church impacting the world. I see the music taking over the house of God. I see entertainment taking over the house of God. An obsession with entertainment in God's house. A hatred of correction and a hatred of reproof. Nobody wants to hear it any more. Whatever happened to anguish in the house of God?

Whatever happened to anguish in the ministry? It's a word you don't hear in this pampered age. You don't hear it. Anguish means extreme pain and distress. The emotions so stirred that it becomes painful. Acute deeply felt inner pain because of conditions about you, in you, or around you. Anguish. Deep pain. Deep sorrow. The agony of God's heart.

We've held on to our religious rhetoric and our revival talk but we've become so passive. All true passion is born out of anguish. All true passion for Christ comes out of a baptism of anguish. You search the scripture and you'll find that when God determined to recover a ruined situation... He would share His own anguish for what God saw happening to His church and to His people. And He would find a praying man and take that man and literally baptize him in anguish. You find it in the book of Nehemiah. Jerusalem is in ruins. How is God going to deal with this? How is God going to restore the ruin? Now folks, look at me... Nehemiah was not a preacher, he was a career man. But this was a praying man.

And God found a man who would not just have a flash of emo-

tion. Not just some great sudden burst of concern and then let it die. He said: "No. I broke down and I wept and I mourned and I fasted. And then I began to pray night and day. Why didn't these other men... why didn't they have an answer? Why didn't God use them in restoration? Why didn't they have a word? Because there was no sign of anguish. No weeping. Not a word of prayer. It's all ruin.

Does it matter to you today? Does it matter to you at all that God's spiritual Jerusalem, the church, is now married to the world? That there is such a coldness sweeping the land? Closer than that... does it matter about the Jerusalem that is in our own hearts? The sign of ruin that's slowly draining spiritual power and passion. Blind to lukewarmness, blind to the mixture that's creeping in. That's all the devil wants to do is to get the fight out of you and kill it. So you won't labor in prayers anymore, you won't weep before God anymore. You can sit and watch television and your family go to hell.

Let me ask you... is what I just said convicting to you at all? **There is a great difference between anguish and concern.** Concern is something that begins to interest you. You take an interest in a project or a cause or a concern or a need. And I want to tell you something. I've learned over all my years... of 50 years of preaching. If it is not born in anguish, if it had not been born of the Holy Spirit. Where what you saw and heard of the ruin that drove you to your knees, took you down into a baptism of anguish where you began to pray and seek God. I know now. Oh my God do I know it. Until I am in agony. Until I have been anguished over it... And all our projects, all our ministries, everything we do... Where are the Sunday school teachers that weep over kids they know are not hearing and are going to hell?

You see, a true prayer life begins at the place of anguish. You see, if you set your heart to pray, God's going to come and start sharing His heart with you. Your heart begins to cry out: "Oh God, Your name is being blasphemed. The Holy Spirit is being mocked. The enemy is out trying to destroy the testimony of the

Lord's faithfulness and something has to be done."

There is going to be no renewal, no revival, no awakening, until we are willing to let Him once again break us. Folks, it's getting late, and it's getting serious. Please don't tell me... don't tell me you're concerned when you're spending ours in front of internet or television. Come on. Lord, there are some that need to get to this altar and confess: "I am not what I was, I am not where I am supposed to be. God I don't have Your heart or Your burden. I wanted it easy. I just wanted to be happy. But Lord, true joy comes out of anguish." There's nothing of the flesh that will give you joy. I don't care how much money, I don't care what kind of new house, there is absolutely nothing physical that can give you joy. It's only what is accomplished by the Holy Spirit when you obey and take on His heart.

Build the walls around your family. Build the walls around your own heart. It will make you strong and impregnable against the enemy. God, that's what we desire. †

WORDS FROM THE WISE

"J. H. Newman said, in the year of his ordination: 'Those who make comfort the great subject of their preaching seem to mistake the end of their ministry. Holiness is the great end.' God gives us comfort when we need it, but we have need also for counsel as well as comfort, and for reproof and restraint. That is why the 'promise box' and similar selections are no sufficient substitute for the Bible. . . . Take the *Bible*. Let God speak to you through his own book. . . . God cannot desire that the only use we make of his Book is to treat it, in moments of crisis, like a lucky dip. We must *study* the Bible. Obviously, so far as the Book is concerned, God can guide most those who study it most.

"We shall study it first with *prayer*. As we take it in hand, let us recollect ourselves in the presence of God. The Book has been written by men specially guided by the Holy Spirit, and it will only be understood, in all its richness, by those who have the same divine help." - From *God Does Guide Us* by W. E. Sangster (1900—1960)