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The Odyssey

Part 14

The Perplexity of It All

By Rayola Kelley

Remembering the spiritual adventures of my past through these articles has allowed me to once again see glimpses into the abiding faithfulness of God. I am where I am, not because of my best attempts, religious efforts, or so-called "cleverness," but because of the faithful, intervention of the Lord in my life.

Many times I have had to be reminded that the spiritual journey is not about making great advancements for God; rather, it is about God being able to have His way in my life in what I have often considered were the small, unassuming ways of insignificance. Let's face it, as Christians we want to



be able to jump the Grand Canyon to victory, and avoid taking the many small steps of obedience that will actually prepare us to confront any deep, wide canyons along the way. Yet, it is because of God's faithfulness that He will not give us the means to jump over high buildings in a single bound until we have been properly prepared and the timing is right.

I have often seen myself at the starting gate, ready to fly out of it like a great race horse. I cannot tell you how many times I have hit my head against the gate and kicked my feet up in the air out of frustration because the gate remained closed to me. I would snort at my circumstances, turn my lips up towards heaven in utter disgust, and wonder where God was in all of it.

When the gate was opened, instead of running forth in great strength, I found that I had actually spent my initial strength on beating my head against the gate and kicking

up a bunch of dirt to show my disagreement towards my circumstances. As the gate was opened before me, and I considered the course I had to run, I realized that unless God showed me mercy and grace, I would never have the means or strength to finish the long challenging path set before me. At such times I always came face to face with my immaturity and inexperience in understanding what it really means to follow Jesus.

As I look back on my spiritual journey, much of it proved to be perplexing. My perplexed attitude did not come because life was bad or things were overwhelming, but because I did not understand what God was doing with me. To me, what looked like the logical way of doing something ultimately proved that I was running in my own steam, trying to fit circumstances into my own ideas, and trying to force God's kingdom to function according to my understanding of a matter. I cannot begin to count the times that I ended up getting ahead of the Lord, and utterly collapsing on the course.

Admittedly, my greatest growth came out of my greatest failures. The Lord would always bring me to a crossroads, where I was forced to choose how I would view and handle a matter. After experiencing what I considered deep chasms of failure, I realized that spiritual success will only come out of learning the lessons of life and applying the Scriptural principles to situations. However, in order to learn such lessons, I had to accept that the major canyon I would initially encounter would be the one caused by being utterly perplexed by the challenges before me.

I don't know about you, but the challenges of my life have always caused me to be a bit perplexed. Matters never turned out the way I thought they should. I noticed, depending on how I handled such times that it would determine if regrets dug deeper canyons of despair or whether a bridge of

resolution would be built over the present canyon that loomed before me by the intervention of God. I realize that my perplexed attitude was caused because I could not change the events that had happened, or were happening, but I could determine the type of terrain that would be either prepared by consequences or by the hand of God.

In this article, I would like to share a few of the lessons I have learned through the years about how to positively affect the terrain of our spiritual lives.

Faithfulness: The Bible is clear that if God cannot trust you with small matters, how can He trust you with great responsibilities (*Luke 16:11-13*)? How we handle ourselves in the gate is just as important as how we handle ourselves on the course. However, due to our high opinion of ourselves we often want to start from the top, but the only way is down from such a position. The problem with starting from an elevated premise of personal greatness is that one fails to see the necessity of being faithful with what would naturally be considered insignificant. However, learning to recognize the importance of small matters, gives one freedom to appreciate the preparation that comes with being faithful in more challenging matters. I realize every small responsibility prepared me to recognize what was important to God. I learned great service to Him came by way of serving others in what seemed like small, insignificant ways.

Restoration: The problem with running our own race in our own strength is we often burn bridges behind us. In our strength we run over people, in our conceit we critically judge and condemn them, and in our inexperienced zeal we can, and will, leave God behind. Sadly, in the wake of the fallout, we will cause other people's hearts to become perplexed towards us.

Through the years, personal relationships have been ripped and torn by my immature handling of matters. I realized that God would never open the gate until the offenses I caused in others were addressed. In fact, the Scripture that the Lord gave me to bring this point home was *Matthew 5:23-24*, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother, hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to the brother, and then come and offer thy gift." This lesson was greatly reinforced in my life during a vulnerable event.

There was a time when I was utterly broken by the strong conviction of sin upon my life by the Holy Spirit. As God began to bring healing and restoration to my life, He showed me that to bring a completion to such healing, I would have to address those I had offended. In fact, I could not go on spiritually, and I could not offer anything to Him in the way of ministry until past offenses were scripturally dealt with. It was obvious that if a tearing occurred in the past, unless it was properly dealt with in the present, it would continue to tear and cause offense to grow like a cancer. Wherever offense is present due to the failure of properly facing and addressing it, there will be no opportunity for restoration. Without restoration, there is no means to minister to a person. Until the offender does everything in his or her power to bring resolution, he or she will walk under the cloud of suspicion, thereby lacking credibility or authority to speak into people's lives and lead them any further in their Christian walk.

God's heart is always reconciliation, and the essence of any ministry is not preaching, teaching, singing, and serving, but one of reconciliation (*2 Corinthians 5:19-20*). It is all about relationships. It became obvious that I could not lead others to healing and restoration, if I failed to travel that way in my own personal life. To be honest with you, I did not know where to start. I had been involved in a religious cause that had nothing to do with salvation, and realized I probably had offended many along the way over something that had truth, but lacked eternal substance.

At this time, I must address the idea of who is right and who is wrong when it comes to offense. Most offenses are caused because a person's pride has been hurt. Therefore, a person can be right about what they are proclaiming and wrong in attitude and conduct because of pride. To have right standing with God means that our heart attitude is right before God and ultimately we do right by those involved. As Christians, we have a tendency to justify our personal wrong attitudes and conduct at the expense of someone else being wrong in his or her thinking and conduct. However, the Bible does not give us any right to act unbecoming of our high calling as a Christian towards others, regardless of what they are doing (*Romans 12:13-21*). The Lord had clearly showed me that I will always have the Christian responsibility to do what is Scripturally right towards someone else, regardless of the offense he or she may have caused in my life. As Christians, we must keep in mind that those who offend us, or who we may blame for bringing out the worst in us, will not be standing beside us when we stand before the Lord to answer for our lack thereof to do what was righteous in regard to them. However, the unresolved offenses we have caused others because we failed to do what was scripturally right will be present, and not only will we have to personally own them, but we will feel the sharp sting of their accusations, and experience the deep shame of regret in light of the truth.

It was at this time that I asked God who I needed to go to and ask for forgiveness in order to bring about healing of past hurts, and resolution to past regrets for my obnoxious ways. True to His faithfulness, He showed me each person I had to humble myself before, and ask their forgiveness. I began to see how, when I did seek reconciliation, it brought not only healing to myself, but the stigma that was attached to it fell to the wayside, allowing the cloud that hung over me to lift, giving my spirit the liberty to once again soar in His glorious currents.

I have to admit, I was a bit surprised when He showed me those that I had to seek forgiveness from. Even though those I had to humbly submit to were not Christians, they showed tre-

mendous grace, and a desire to forgive and restore me to a viable relationship with them. The beauty about a couple of these people is that one became my boss, and the other one defended me in another incident that occurred years later. As I look back at that incident, I can see how God's principles governing restoration produced incredible results in my life.

Ordained: The next lesson I learned is that a matter must be ordained by God for Him to bless it and be glorified in it. God cannot honor what He has not ordained. Many times we get caught up in the idea of something working without first checking in with the Lord and Shepherd of the sheep. In our minds we cannot be wrong about a matter because we have intellectually figured it out and cannot see any flaws in it. Since it feels right, we assume that it must be right. But, the truth of the matter is if God is not behind it, He will not ordain it. Without the ordination of God on something, it does not matter how great something is or how wonderful it looks, it will not fly with God or His sheep.

The problem with what much of the Church does for God is based on worldly standards and ideas. We must keep in mind that God's ways are contrary to the world and man's best. He does not care about how good someone does something, because such emphasis rarely has anything to do with Him being exalted; instead, it has to do with people, programs, or activities being preferred, carried out, enjoyed, exalted, and even worshipped. For example, we think God is impressed with professionals, whether it be in the arenas of teaching, music, or preaching. However, God looks at the hearts of people, and true to His character, He will only anoint what He has ordained, exalt what is pure, and will honor what truly honors Him. God seeks true worshippers and searches to and fro for those in whom He can show Himself mighty to, and through (*2 Chronicles 16:9; John 4:23-24*).

Because of worldly criteria being instituted in Christian practices instead of God's principles, much of what we do in the Christian realm is all about feeding the flesh. We want people to be entertained so they will

be attracted in some way, and come back for more, and we want them to feel good about themselves regardless of what their spiritual status may be so they will fill the church pews. The problem with feeding the flesh is that such an environment will never produce spiritual people who have a healthy love and fear for God and His Word.

Our criteria for those who serve in the church should be simple, is God calling them and is God ordaining them? Do they truly care about the sheep, and will they properly prefer the welfare of the sheep over their own agendas and ideas? Every minister must first prove their ministry to the sheep. A good test for a servant of God is if the congregation does not have the faith or confidence in them to serve its best interest in some position, is he or she willing to humble self by serving behind the scenes such as cleaning toilets, washing dishes, and serving tables?

Clearly, it does not matter what a person's abilities or talents are if God is not interested in using them in a certain capacity, no matter how good he or she might be. In such situations, His presence will be absent. He alone can show us what He will approve of and who He will use. If His approval is missing, then so will His Spirit be missing. And, if His Spirit is missing, His sheep will not have the necessary liberty to do business with their God.

Just Do It! Another important lesson I had to learn was about obedience and righteousness. I remember when I was operating in my own strength, things never really went right. I would become so frustrated because I was trying so hard. I could not understand why my effort did not make a difference. I would wrestle before the Lord as to why things went amuck. It took me a long time to realize that I was not doing things in His strength.

The hardest aspect of facing why I was taking matters into my own hands is because I wanted to control my reality. In other words, if things went wrong, I could console myself that I tried, and it just did not work out. It allowed me to either become a victim or a suffering martyr. If things went right, then I could pat myself on the back. In summation, the sin of pride

was once again behind the compelling notions about my strength and my take on how things should be done.

As I came face to face with my personal treachery, I realized that doing it God's way was so much easier. When I tried to do it my way, I had to go through a lot of mental gymnastics to figure out how I could work my personal angle to make something work. The mental gymnastics set up my emotions to fly high with expectation, but as soon as everything went haywire, my emotions took a nosedive, crashing into the landscape, leaving a big crater of despair behind. However, when I sought God's way of handling a matter, the only decision I had to make was that I just needed to do what He revealed to me, whether it was through Scripture or inspirational wisdom that came from the throne of God through the leading of His Spirit.

Doing it God's way is a matter of having the assurance that His ways are perfect, and the expectation gives us confidence that the fruit of His ways will prove to be righteous. Admittedly, every time I have done it God's way, the end results have far exceeded my expectation. Not only did God do things in a practical way, but it all came together nicely, creating smooth waters.

I still have a tendency to want to pull my sleeves up and jump into situations to ensure the end results, but God has graciously put reins on me. Granted, there are times I have pushed past His restraints, and I always end up experiencing the anxiety of knowing, that at best the only thing that will come out of it are substandard fruits that have no eternal substance.

Every time I come up to challenges, I try to remember what His Word instructs me as to the principles I need to apply. Once my responsibility is clearly established, the next thing I tell myself is, "Well Rayola, now you just need to do it." It's that simple. There is no real complication because if I am honest with myself, I usually know what is right up front. If I really believe the Word, I know what principle applies. If I want my faith to be validated, then I need to obey what the Word says. In the end, I simply need to do what is right before God, in light of His plan and purpose for His sheep, and in line with my testimony and high

calling as a Christian. Once I do what is right, I have learned that perplexity usually dissipates because the perverted ways of the flesh have been put down and God's ways properly exalted.

It Belongs to God: The final lesson I had to learn is if God does not do it, it will have no lasting effects. I must constantly remind myself that if a matter is not the result of His work, it will have no eternal benefits. The sheep (believers) belong to Him and I must constantly seek His perspective to be faithful to my high calling in regard to them, an obedient servant in His kingdom, and trustworthy with His business. I must remember that all belongs to God and I am simply being called to be faithful with the small matters, a humble servant in my duties, and a willing follower of Christ in my walk.

My final conclusion to this matter is quite simple. The more I keep my Christian walk practical, uncomplicated, faithful, and obedient, the more I will avoid becoming perplexed about the quality and happenings of my life. †

GREAT QUOTES

"The Church did the most when the Church was the least like the world." - G. Campbell Morgan

"A hundred years ago they read less about the Bible and more out of the old Book itself!" - C. L. Goodell

"At any point in all of Eternity, we can say, 'This is just the beginning.' How wonderful for those who are with Christ. How unimaginably dreadful for those who are not." - Leonard Ravenhill

"Let me never become a slave to crowds." - A.W. Tozer

"The Christian who has stopped repenting has stopped growing." - A.W. Pink

"This is God's universe and He does things His way. Now, you may have a better way of doing things, but you don't have a universe." - J. Vernon McGee

"A time will come when instead of shepherds feeding the sheep, the church will have clowns entertaining the goats." - C. H. Spurgeon

THE BLUNT SWORD

By Jeannette Haley

Not too many people these days (in Westernized nations) are armed with a sharp sword for protection from attack, although fencing is still popular in some circles. My all-time favorite sword-bearing character was, and still is, Zorro (played by Guy Williams). Everyone who knows me well knows that I have had a “crush” on him for most of my life. Once the weekly black and white Zorro series began to air on TV, kids everywhere displayed their enthusiasm for this latest hero by painting or carving “Z” on sidewalks, fences, buildings, trees—you name it. That was probably the first “graffiti” I had ever seen.

If you look in the Strong’s Concordance, you will find that the words “sword” and “swords” is extensive, beginning with *Genesis 3:24* and ending with *Revelation 19:21*. The Scriptures equate the sharp two-edged sword with the Word of God. *Hebrews 4:12* says, “*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*” The Greek definition of “quick” means “to live, life, lively.” Only the Holy Bible (and basically the KJV) is alive, or the living Word. It never grows old, dull, or dead. The more a person reads it, believes it, studies it, memorizes it, meditates on it, practices it, uses it, adheres to it, hears it, speaks it, sings it, and prays it, the more alive and powerful it becomes. It is living food for the soul and spirit of mankind. Concerning “food,” Job declared, “*Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food*” *Job 23:12*. How many of us pause when we read these beautiful words, and honestly ask ourselves if we had to choose between our spiritual food, God’s Word, and just enough to eat in order to maintain our physical life, which one would we prefer? It depends on whether we desire a “sharp sword,” or prefer a “blunt sword.”

In *Hebrews 4:12* the word “*sharper*” means “decisive” as in a single blow, not repeated hacking or cut-

ting. This decisiveness is what makes the Word of God “clear cut” in understanding, for example, the Ten Commandments, and God’s other moral laws. There are no “gray areas” or “wiggle room” where sin, transgression, trespasses, and iniquity (or any part of God’s Word) is concerned. No wonder the Word of God is under such heavy attack in these evil days—days that mirror the wickedness which reigned in the days of righteous Noah, and brought destruction on the entire world. Evil-doers despise the Truth, and God’s Word is The Truth. “*Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil*” *Psalms 56:5*. (Emphasis added.) Peter, speaking of the Apostle Paul, wrote, “*As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction*” *2 Peter 3:16*. (Emphasis added.)

Thus, twisting (wresting), changing, altering, watering down, modernizing (to fit our godless culture), perverting, profaning, polluting, diluting, reinterpreting, as well as adding to, or taking away from the true (original) Word of God, will end in the destruction (eternal damnation) of all those who dare to flaunt their idiocy in God’s face. In case you wonder, the fact remains (and has been proven, see: http://www.av1611.org/kjv/kjv_easy.html) that the most accurate, unadulterated, and anointed Bible version for the English speaking people is the King James Version. If you are in love with whatever “version” you are used to, please at least have a KJV handy for comparison. You might be surprised at some of the blatant changes the newer “versions” have that alter the intent and meaning (spirit) behind it.

God warns in *Deuteronomy 4:2*, “*Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.*” We read of the sacredness of God’s Word further on in *Deuteronomy 12:32*, “*What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.*” Another warning can be found in *Proverbs 30:6*, “*Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and*

thou be found a liar.” Then in the last book of the Bible, in the last chapter we read this chilling warning, “*For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book*” *Revelation 22:18, 19*.

In spite of all these God-breathed warnings, how many false so-called “apostles,” “prophets,” “teachers,” “preachers” and “Christian workers” are daily twisting and perverting God’s Word through their profane lying lips, silly sermons, ungodly utterances, fantastic fables, and extravagant entertainments? “*For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light*” *2 Corinthians 11:13, 14*. Satan’s number one goal is to attack God’s Word by mocking and discrediting it (*Genesis 3:1*), provoking people to disobey it (*1 Chronicles 21:1*), ignore it (*1 Samuel 28; 1 Kings 13:20-22*), flee from it (*Jonah 1:3*); misquote it, (*Matthew 4:6; 2 Peter 3:16*), and use it for personal gain, “*Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock*” *1 Peter 5:3, 4*. The Holy Spirit’s warnings are to be personally heeded today, and not heedlessly relegated to history, or only leaders of the Church, or the Jews, or to anybody else. These words are written to you, and to me, who are living in these perilous times, today. “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron*” *1 Timothy 4:1, 2*. “*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap*

to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" 2 Timothy 4:3, 4.

Why do so many people flock to the "big name" popular heretics, and false prophets that are popping up faster than weeds, supporting their unscriptural books, profane music, psychobabble garbage, and ungodly, worthless teachings? Why are most of the so-called "Christian" bookstores bulging at the seams with worldly junk, vain books (false doctrine), and carnal music, (much of it reeking of the New Age and the occult): and, yes, I'm going to say it, even satanic "music?" The reason is because people have an inner need to be religious, even if godliness and Spirit and Truth are in no way involved. People want to fulfill the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and live out the pride of life without conviction, without a guilty conscience, without true repentance, which means forsaking and turning away from their fake religious façade, and getting real with God. People want to feel good—feel good about themselves without holiness ("without which no man shall see the Lord" Hebrews 12:14b); feel good about their lusts, unclean sexual perversions, and fornications; feel good about their slothfulness, and lack of spiritual diligence; feel good about their independence from obedience to God. Yet, the truth remains. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water [the Word] and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" John 3:3, 5-7. (Emphasis added.) Do you believe that professing Christians who live for the world and their flesh will end up in Heaven? If so, consider what God says: "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. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?"

Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10.

We need to remember that the Word of God is sacred, holy, divinely inspired, Spirit-breathed, and is not just another religious book. Jesus said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" John 17:17. We need to remember that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" 2 Timothy 3:16. The Bible cannot be compared to any other book, inscription, record, or writing in this world, or the world to come, for it is the eternal Word. Jesus, God incarnate, is the Word as John 1:1-5 declares, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" Matthew 24:34. Peter wrote, "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" 1 Peter 1:25. No man can destroy the Word of God, although Satan has tried to erase it from the earth from the beginning of the creation, and having failed to do that, he never ceases from trying to demean it, mock it, cast doubt on it, twist it, outlaw it through his wicked governments, and do all he can to keep people from studying it. Nevertheless, "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" Psalm 119:89. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever" Isaiah 40:8. What great comfort and joy these words should bring to our hearts!

Can you say with the Psalmist, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul" Psalm 94:19. The comforts of God are not created out of thin air by our own imaginations, flights of fantasy, and vain imaginations, but are established in the bedrock of the infallible, un-

changing Word. Merely wishing, and hoping, to be blessed, and undefiled does not procure this reality, and leaves you with nothing but a useless, "blunt sword." Here is how to acquire the "sharp sword:" "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word [God's Law]. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments [moral responsibilities]. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes [ordinances]. With my lips have I declared all the judgments [verdict] of thy mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies [records], as much as in all riches. I will meditate in thy precepts [doctrine], and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word" Psalm 119: 9-16. (Emphasis added.)

The sad truth is, multitudes of Christians who own a Bible have never read it from cover to cover, let alone studied it, meditated on it, memorized portions of it, or even truly understand it. How ill-equipped this makes the army of God! Try to imagine, if you will, hordes of well-trained, and well-equipped experienced soldiers of the enemy going out to battle against an army of untrained, disenfranchised, confused, ignorant, undiscerning, spiritually immature novices armed with their little blunt swords that resemble plastic picnic knives instead of the highly effective two-edged sword that they should, and could, have at the ready. While this may be amusing, it does nevertheless, illustrate an alarming truth, and serve as a warning, and wake up call to every professing Christian of the absolute necessity of being a student of the Word in all sincerity and sobriety. The only weapon that defeats Satan is the skilful use, through faith, of the two-edged sword of God's Word - "It is written...." Satan couldn't care less about your theological training and degrees, or the hours you've spent watching the Truth Bashing Network (TBN), or how many philosophically religious sayings you can quote, or how many years you've parked yourself in the same pew, or how high you can jump or how loud you can shout, or how many Christian

bumper stickers are on your vehicle. Satan is not fearful of the blunt sword of weak Christians who huff, puff, and bluff their way through life, believing that they can just “wing it,” to defeat Satan and impress others. Nope. That isn’t going to work, and the enemy will have you for dinner. All such things only serve to give you a false sense of security, and make your sword blunt, and totally ineffective. Therefore, let us not be as the five foolish virgins whose lackadaisical attitudes, indifference, and carelessness kept them from being prepared and ready when the Bridegroom came, for when He shuts the door, it is shut. Period. No man will ever be able to pry it open, and enter in. It will forever be too late.

The eternal Word of God is like an artesian spring, bubbling up from an inexhaustible source (God) that will never run dry, or fail to satisfy the thirsty soul. Jesus declared, “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” John 7:38. (Emphasis added.) Blessings are promised for those who reverence God’s Word, in heart and deed, such as we read in Joshua 1:8, “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth: but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.” (Emphasis added.) Jesus promised, “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.” (Emphasis added.) In Luke 11:28 we read another promise from the lips of Jesus concerning the Word of God, “Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.” (Emphasis added.) Again, the Lord promised, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” John 5:24. (Emphasis added.) The book of Revelation contains this promise of a blessing, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand” Revelation 1:3.

As I told an astonished unbelieving neighbor many years ago, my Bible is the most precious and valuable item that I own. What can be compared to the value of the Word of God? Would you exchange the eternal Word for the temporary Lotto? Who can put a price on it? “Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold” Psalm 119:127. “The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver” Psalm 119:72. What is greater in power? “He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions” Psalm 107:20. What can give more comfort? “Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me” Psalm 119:82? What in this world is purer? “Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it” Psalm 119:140. What can bring greater joy to our hearts? “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts” Jeremiah 15:16. “The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes” Psalm 19:8. What can bring wisdom to your heart? “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” Colossians 3:16. What guides and gives direction for your life? “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” Psalm 119:105. What gives understanding? “The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple” Psalm 119:30. These are just a few of the manifold blessings of God’s Word.

How is your sword? Is it quick and sharp as a two-edged sword, or is it rusty and blunt from neglect? Let the words of the prophet Isaiah challenge you: “Seek ye out the book of the Lord, and read” Isaiah 34:16a. Consider what Jesus said, “Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” John 5:39. Do you want to learn? Romans 15:4 tells us, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” Do you want to keep your sword sharp? Then

“*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*” 2 timothy 2:15.

In conclusion, we read these awe-inspiring, soul-shaking, astounding words describing the Apostle John’s vision of Christ in the Revelation, and the twoedged sword of the Word of God as follows: “*And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength*” Revelation 1:16; “*Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth*” Revelation 2:16; “*And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God*” Revelation 19:15. Finally, we read of the sword of the Lord, and the destruction of His enemies in verse 21, “*And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.*”

May the Lord’s Spirit stir us up afresh to lay hold on the precious Word that He has given us. May He stir us up to bring the unadulterated Word of God back into today’s “seeker-friendly” churches. May we remember Jesus’ words in Matthew 4:4, “*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*” and, finally may we allow the Word to cleanse, restore, and empower each of us personally to live the life God has called us to live for our good, and His glory. Amen. †

QUOTES FROM GSM

“Human beings are strange creatures—they can hate other people because they are not perfect, and at the same time hate God because He is.” - Jeannette Haley

“Preaching the truth costs you, and you can expect to never be popular with the majority.” Jeannette Haley

“What is not ordained by God cannot be used by God.” - Rayola Kelley

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

DO I LOVE MYSELF?

Q: *I am confused as to what my attitude needs to be towards myself. I have been told that I must love myself, but the Bible instructs me to deny self. Is there some middle ground or truth between these two instructions that will make sense to me as to what kind of attitude I must adopt towards myself to ensure a healthy, godly perspective?*

A: You are not the only one who is trying to find the godly balance between these two ideas. Granted, they appear to be contrary to one another. How can you love or prefer yourself, while trying to deny yourself at the same time?

To me the right answer lies in terminology. It is important to point out that according to our understanding of the words we use, they will erect an idea or image in our minds as to how it will look or manifest itself. For example, when we think of loving someone, we think about being absolutely caught up with that individual. Therefore, to love self in this way would prove to be contrary to the instruction that declares before we can be a true disciple of Christ, we must first deny any such preference towards self.

Another concept of love is to make someone preeminent. To make self first would be classified as idolatry, for only Christ must be in such a position. Again, to love self in this manner would be sin and destructive.

The reality of self is that it is quite in love with its idea of who it is. It naturally prefers itself over others. Its main agenda is to survive regardless of who is sacrificed in the process. Self wants to be adored, honored, worshipped, and coddled. It is for this reason we are told to love God first, and our neighbor second in order to keep the perspective of self in the right arena.

It is also for this reason that the Apostle Paul gave this instruction in Ephesians 5:28-29, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church."

This brings us down to the prob-

lem. It seems that many people are destroying their lives and bodies (temple). This disregard for themselves has caused many in the Church to try to encourage a right attitude. I have even struggled with it and sought the Lord about it. The truth is that these people are not destroying themselves because they hate their bodies or themselves, but because they are pursuing those things that are pleasing to their flesh and pride. They perceive that they have a right to experience such things because it makes their flesh and the pride of the self-life quite happy. Clearly, a person in this state is serving self rather than abasing it. Although in the end they may hate their lives, and are tormented in their souls about the emptiness that is produced, they still do not really hate themselves.

The terminology that I sense would be best to use in this matter is self-respect and not self-love. Self-respect has a lot to do with doing what is conducive to what one perceives is honorable and right in a situation. In self-respect people do right according to their conscience, character, and moral convictions. They refuse to betray themselves, knowing that, if they do, they will not be able to face themselves.

In my opinion self-respect is what is missing today. If people do not know how to respect themselves, they will have no idea how to respect others. This respect also includes our attitude towards others' rights to hold to their personal convictions and property. Also, to love our neighbor as ourselves means to show proper respect and consideration to them.

I do hope this brings another perspective to you in light of this subject.

PURITY

"Purity is that state where you do what is right. Innocence is not purity, but ignorance. The problem with thinking that innocence is purity is that it keeps a person from being prepared emotionally and mentally for what is happening. People need to enlarge their world through learning what is going on beyond it." - Rayola Kelley

Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.— Matthew 5:8

CLOSING THE DOORS

FOR ISRAEL

By Joel Joseph



The Romans invented the name "Palestine" in the 2nd century with the express purpose of blotting out the Jews. God invented the name Israel. It is 3000 years old. The Roman church has spent almost its entire existence trying to eliminate the Jews in one way or another, the inquisitions being the worst. The funny thing is that will all soon bow to the Jews! The Muslims bricked up the Golden Gate (image above with palm tree) to prevent the prophecy coming to pass saying that the Messiah will return and enter Jerusalem through this gate! Have they got a surprise coming! In fact all anti-Semitic attacks on Israel and the Jews have been for one underlying reason and that is Satan's plan to keep the Jews from salvation. The problem is much deeper and in many cases more subtle, but the same evil spirit is there. It simply manifests in a different way.

Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) - This is shocking to say the least. Since the death of **TBN** founder, his wife has taken over the reigns as President. She has now terminated all end-time ministries on **TBN**. A few years ago, all those appearing on TBN were forbidden from making any comments on Islam or Muslims showing them in a negative way. (I have email documentation from some who were warned, and others who were removed). The husband removes truth about Islam and the wife removes truth about Israel. Talk about stabbing yourself in the eyes!! Be assured of one thing...it will backfire on them! So now this institution has closed the doors of truth to Israel and opened the doors for her enemies! **TBN** your days are numbered! You

Continued pg. 8, column 3

COMMENTS

"I really appreciated reading Rayola's response to the "silly" question addressing whether Jesus appears to people today. I've heard of Jesus appearing to varying individuals, but it's the most interesting where the Muslims are concerned. And remember He appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus (this is after the resurrection) and actually was blinded by the Lord until Ananias appeared to him and actually called him "brother". - AR

"I read your February newsletter, and it was excellent! I especially was just drawn to yours Jeannette as it was beautifully written and powerful! It reminded me once again that what really matters is not what we do our talents, gifts etc. for God, but that it is our walk with the LORD and our obedience and open and willing heart to serve Him in whatever capacity He Has us and to be faithful. Your article just made me cry it was just so AWE-SOME and really touched my heart. Both your articles were interwoven in the same theme again and you just really draw the reader in with your writings so elegantly put. Basically, as Rayola put it in her article that "Life Happens" with its ups and downs and challenges, but God uses all of it for His glory. We just need to trust Him as He knows best and all things work for good to those who love him and are called according to His purpose." - ID

"Now Pastor _____ is allowing his son to preach. That is what most of them are doing, handing the baton over to the kids. It is alright if they have the anointing. [GSM: You can't 'pass down' the call and ordination from God. Only God can give the call and anointing.] It is New Age over here. I just got off the tel. from a sister that was upset because I had sent her stuff on *Jesus Calling* [GSM: New Age book]. She does not want anymore of that [info] because she relates her getting her joy back from reading that book, that and *Daily Bread*. Most of the other churches are following Bill Johnson from Bethel in Redding [GSM: A cult]. Some of the others have gone for the psychology [GSM: Unscriptural]. Paul wouldn't

have passed the test, nor Peter or any of the others. Debra would have never been allowed to lead an army, and Priscilla would have been kicked out of the church as well as Junia, and any other women that had an opinion or spoke up in the church. - WA

"I sent this [article] on to some friends who attend a 'fellowship?' where the 'Purpose' stuff has been pushed and preached on for the last few years, in fact from the time the first book was published. But they still stay there, despite the marriages that have broken up within the group and other like events. There just does not seem to be any way to shine light into that darkness." - UK

"Rayola - VERY good article! [*The Compass* - December Newsletter]. And, I'm not being 'flippant' by any stretch of the imagination, but as I read through Rayola's analogy, all I could think was "Location, location, location! Jeannette - Spot on, Girl! After Part 1 and Part 2, there should be NO doubt whatsoever as to the course we should live out our life! This Scripture came to mind, and it's one that the 'Name It and Claim It' crowd has probably NEVER owned or 'claimed': *1Pet. 4:13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. WHO IS REALLY SAVED?* Rayola's Q & A Corner - Rayola, thank you for doing such a wham-bang explanation of this question! It's one that we ALL wrestle with on a daily basis for the most part! I'm THANKFUL to God that I don't have to wrestle with that question when it comes to GSM! May Adonai bless you all richly from His hand of abundance!" - FL

"People need to stand up for their rights, if we don't we will lose them...we Americans...just whine and do nothing. Our government is demon-possessed!! They are controlled puppets, most don't even know it. It's like they're under a spell. We are under a cloak of darkness and if Christians don't see, they will never see it because God has blinded their eyes. It's a personal and national spiritual battle and we must stand and fight however the Lord directs us." - AK

Closing the Doors Con't. from pg. 7

will become more and more irrelevant. This does not make all of those still there anti-Semitic instantly, but it strongly assists in closing the doors for Israel in so many ways. It also now identifies all those appearing on **TBN** as part of this new spirit within this organisation of opulence. Isaiah 66:4 "So will I choose their delusions, and bring their fears upon them; because when I called, no one answered, when I spoke they did not hear; but only did evil before My eyes, and chose that in which I do not delight." Today many Christians will tell you that they love the Jews, but when the pressure is on, they will throw them under the bus and deliver them to the gas chambers. When the pressure is on they will go with the one they secretly love - the world. The church has got so much Jewish blood on its hands, but the amazing thing is that a Jewish Lion is roaring now, and He will spill the blood of His Jewish enemies! The two biggest culprits regarding closing the doors for the Jews are a major part of the church and almost all of the mainstream secular media.

Here are a few verses of profound importance: Ezekiel 38:7-8; Isaiah 51:19-22; Isaiah 42:16; Micah 7:8-9.

The church is unaware of just how enslaved and influenced it is by Babylon through the Catholic church. It has been completely re-characterised by Rome. This was done intentionally to keep the Jews out of the church. You may not agree with this, but to me all the trappings of Rome including Christmas, Easter, Lent, infant sprinkling and the rest are spiritual dirt with an evil air hanging over them. The Bible calls it all "the depths of Satan."

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QUOTES FROM A.W. TOZER

"May God deliver us from the easygoing, smooth, comfortable Christianity that never lets the truth get a hold of us."

"Everything is safe that is committed to the Lord, and nothing is really safe that is not committed."

"Without worship, we go about miserable."