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The Odyssey

Part 18

GOD'S WILL

By Rayola Kelley

The Christian life presents many interesting twists and turns. It seems that the way I have been traveling has been constantly under construction. Some of you might relate to my experience. You may think you are heading one way, but the ever-transforming

work of the Spirit can quickly change the terrain of your present life and the direction you are heading. Nothing is for sure except that in God's economy you must expect the unexpected.



There is one thing I have learned in this incredible journey, and that is that you cannot gauge what is going to happen. I have many times tried guessing how God is going to do something to bring resolution. My best logical conclusions proved to miss the mark and my best reasoning never prepares me for the element of surprise that God throws into the midst of my reality. Since such guessing constantly proves to be inept, I have accepted that God is going to be God, and He will never do things according to my way of thinking.

The constant reminder is that no matter how much I size up a situation, I will never come out on top of a matter or manage to nose ahead of God. There will always be an element of surprise that will keep me off balance and require me to put my faith in the character of God and His ability to work out every detail of a matter, regardless of what I see on the horizon.

This brings me to the matter of

God's will. I have learned that if I am in God's will, the outcome will produce the fruits and impact I desire to see. However, my journey has brought me to places where I have had to choose the will of God to see any results; therefore, the challenge of the odyssey has been to learn how to find the will of God in a matter.

Let me first ask, how important is it for believers to do the will of God? We figure that such a question is a no-brainer, but how many of us live according to, and in the will of God? Most Christians determine what might be the best recourse to take and will ask God's blessing on it as they pursue it and count it as being God's will. Such a practice points to wishful thinking. In a sense it is like playing Russian roulette in a positive way. You hope in the end the attempts will ultimately prove to be in line with God's will, hitting the mark of His acceptance and approval (*Romans 12:1-2*). Some Christians assume that if their attitude appears pious and their actions religious that it must be God's will. However, the Bible refutes both practices.

We are told to ask or pray according to His name, but this means we are praying according to who He is. In other words, what we ask of Him will line up to His character and His ways (*John 14:13*). The truth is God cannot honor what does not originate with Him or honor Him. He cannot bless that which is contrary to His will and ways. In the end, prayers that do not line up to the will of God, will be prayers that miss the mark because at the core of them are self-serving agendas and ways (*James 4:3*).

Obviously, we are not to ask God to bless our attempts to serve Him as we shoot in the darkness as to what we think might be important to Him. Instead, we are to first seek His will in order to assure His blessings on what is being done. So many prayers miss the target because the will of God is missing from the equation. We often

think in noble terms when it comes to prayer, but, if we are honest, how much of our prayers are self-serving and are directed towards our will being done? It only makes sense that if we are to pray according to His will, our first order of business is to ask for His will to be revealed to us, seek the means in which we can line up to His will, and knock on all doors until His will is accomplished (*Matthew 7:7-8; 1 John 5:14-15*).

When Jesus was facing the cross, He did not ask what the Father's will was, for He already knew it (*John 4:34*). His request was that in spite of the flesh being weak, that the Father's will be done. Christ came the way of Calvary to fulfill the will of God. His focus was to carry out the will of God to its fullest extent. After teaching the disciples in the model prayer how to best approach the Father, Jesus clearly established by the order of the subjects in the prayer that asking, seeking, and ensuring God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven, was to be their main priority and goal in their prayer life (*Matthew 6:9-10*).

It is for this reason that the Word of God talks about God's will in clear terms. It tells us that God's will serves as the meat of a matter when it comes to His kingdom (*John 4:34*). The goal of God's kingdom is righteousness. When you combine these different aspects of God's will together, we can conclude that the goal and evidence of God's will, will always be expressed in righteousness. It will honor His character, adhere to His plan, and be in compliance to His Word.

In light of the ways of the world, how does God's sovereignty operate? I have often stated that Satan may rule the systems of the world, but God reigns over all creation. In other words, Satan is limited in what he can do, but God is sovereign in all that He does. This brings us to an important reality—that no matter what happens within creation, it does so in line with

God's will. The question is, as believers can we believe and receive such a truth?

It is important to point out that God's will operates on three levels: His *permissive* will, His *providential* will, or His *perfect* will. The level in which man operates within the sovereignty of God's will is determined by the stance or pose of his personal will. In other words, even if man's will is contrary to God, it is within God's permissive will more often than not to allow him to have his way in a matter. In summation, man cannot carry out any matter, without God first allowing it. However, what distinguishes the form of will man is operating in when it comes to God's kingdom are the fruits. God's permissive will often ends in dire consequences, failure, and defeat, His providential will has been known to move some mountains, straighten out some crooked paths, and part some waters along the way so that the saint can advance forward in carrying out His will. However, God's perfect will, will always result in Him being glorified.

It is because God's will operates in three arenas that man is confused by the things that God permits and allows in this present world. It is for this reason God is forever getting a bad rap as He is blamed for the evil of this present world. This evilness is also used as a reason for those who mock, reject, or rage against the existence of God to walk in utter unbelief towards Him. However, there is also another determining factor when it comes to the type of events that parade across our lives. This factor has to do with the second ingredient when it comes to the concept of will, and that is who is ruling in our lives?

The one who rules will greatly impact our will. Jesus brought this out in *Matthew 7:21-23* when Jesus stated that even though there will be those who call Him Lord and do things in His name, yet they failed to do the will of the Father; therefore, they will be rebuked and rejected. God's providential and perfect will can only be done in and through those who are in obedience to His Lordship and Kingship.

When you study Satan in the book of Job, God determined what Satan could do against His righteous

servant. However, it is clear that Job was in right standing with God and under His rule, therefore putting him under His authority and protection. Even though Satan was given the right to do certain things against Job, he had limits as to how far he could go. In fact, God used Satan to establish Job in a greater faith. This proves that no matter how much wickedness is present in an event, God will use it in some way to bring about His will. We can see in the events of today that God is allowing evil to come to full bloom so that He can bring judgment against it and usher in His kingdom according to the many prophecies located throughout the Bible. It is for this reason that believers can seek and stand within God's promises such as *Romans 8:28*, "*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*"

This brings us to an important subject. It is obvious that Satan must come into compliance with God's will when it comes to blood-bought saints, but what about those who are under his rule? How much say does God have over their lives? Granted, Satan must come into compliance to God's will because His sovereignty will always trump Satan's rule, but how much intervention can God display towards those who walk in unbelief without overstepping their will? How would those in rebellion view God's mercy and grace? Would they see both as an overture from God in regard to their souls or would they see these virtues as something they deserve?

The Bible tells us that everything good comes from the Father who never changes (*James 1:17*). Therefore, we must conclude that He is the source of all true blessings, whether they grace the lives of the saved or the unsaved (*Matthew 5:45*). Without God's blessings, none of us would be here. But, when it comes to Satan, he likewise can bless man, but his blessings have an evil, destructive twist to them.

God blesses man because He is a loving Creator. It is His way of reminding man that he is not an island unto himself, and that He has a purpose for creating him. It is with the eternal in mind that man must be reminded that he needs the constant intervention of

the One who is greater than he, the One who must constantly intervene in his life if he is to live and function. Satan blesses man so that he will sell his soul to him in exchange for partaking of the deadly fruits of the world, allowing him to freely pursue the lusts of his flesh and lust of the eyes without any restraints. God's blessings lead to eternal fruits, but eventually Satan pulls the rug of blessings from underneath those who serve this present age as they tumble headfirst into the abyss of judgment and hell.

As I have meditated on this subject, I have concluded that God will always have an ultimate say over all matters. His final say over a situation will become more evident when He judges all matters and everything of this present world becomes His footstool. Meanwhile, the blame for the mess of this present world must never be laid at the feet of God. The prevalent wickedness of today's world is a result of man refusing God's leadership and submitting to the rule of Satan and his world so he can pursue his own personal will and conclusions on a matter.

Sadly, rebellious man is always operating according to God's permissive will and Satan's rule. The more man demands his own way, the further he gets away from God's protection and becomes part of the dark terrain of Satan's plan of destruction. Righteousness becomes fuzzy, godliness becomes adjustable, and moral goodness becomes a joke as man determines what is right and wrong in his own eyes. As man moves farther away from God's rule, he finds himself digressing downward into a whirlpool of absurdity and darkness. It is then that he might realize he has become a ship that is no longer moored to the peer of sanity, but is now adrift on the ocean of life without any anchor attached to the immovable Rock, any purposeful direction, or any heavenly protection. He now will fall prey to the fierce storms and destructive waves of life.

Clearly, there is a very fine line between God's rule and protection, and Satan's rule. As Christians, we must learn to walk this fine line by discerning what form of God's will is in operation, not only in our lives but also in the lives of those around us.

We do this according to each of our walks. We are either walking according to God's permissive will about something, and will end up tasting nominal fruits at best, and bitterness and judgment at worst; or, we could be walking in God's providential will that will ultimately lead us into the place of perfection where He is being glorified in our lives.

This brings me to the subject of the three types of God's will. They are *general*, *collective*, and *personal*. We must be *obedient* to God's general will, *seek* and *submit* to His collective will, and *discern* and *assimilate* His personal will into our lives in order to consecrate them for His purpose and glory.

The *general* will of God is applicable to all and can be found in the Bible. Here are few examples: It is not the *will* of the Father that any perish, but that everyone who sees the Son and believes will have everlasting life (*Matthew 18:14; John 6:40; 2 Peter 3:9*); that it is God's *will* that we must possess our vessels (body) in sanctification by abstaining from fornication (*1 Thessalonians 4:3-4*); and that it is His *will* that in everything we are to give thanks (*1 Thessalonians 5:18*). If God's will is clearly outlined in Scripture, people should not waste their time or God's time about using prayer to get around or justify disobedience towards His general will. Remember those who do the will of the Father confirm that they are rightly related to Jesus (*Matthew 12:46-50; John 1:12*).

The *collective* will of God has to do with finding our place in His Body. As His many-membered Body, the Church, He has united us into one by giving us a commission, a burden, and a calling. In order to carry out this commission, burden, and calling throughout the world, it takes teamwork. In other words, it takes each member of the Body, submitting to one another in the fear of the Lord and allowing the Holy Spirit to place us in the body and equip each one of us according to God's plan (*Ephesians 4:13; 5:21*).

What commission does the whole Body of Christ share?—to preach the Gospel. What one burden does the Body share?—to love one another according to the sacrificial example that Christ left us. What call-

ing does the Church share? It is the call of discipleship—to become a follower of Christ and to train others to be His follower (*Mark 16:15-16; John 8:31; 12:34-35; 15:12-15*). The Gospel gives the Church perspective, godly love is the glue that binds the body together to ensure power and authority, and discipleship gives each of us purpose and direction.

This brings us to God's personal will for each of us. This entails our personal calling, gifts, and mission field. Our calling will determine how we operate in God's Body, our gifts will establish how we will often minister to others, and our mission field represents the burden that will be entrusted to us to ensure God's general will such as salvation and sanctification is fulfilled in the lives of those who are heirs of salvation.

The key about doing God's will is that we must always be prepared by Him to carry it out. The reason for this is because we have our own plans as to how to carry out God's will. Our plans not only limit God, but they can put us in an unpleasant situation. Take Moses. He knew it was God's will to deliver the people of Israel from the tyrannical oppression of Egypt. When Moses witnessed a Jewish man experiencing cruelty at the hand of his oppressor, he stepped in and delivered him. However God's plan to bring about His will was not to deliver one Hebrew at a time, but the whole nation of Israel from its oppression. Moses spent 40 years out in the wilderness of preparation in order to carry out God's will according to God's plan.

I have learned that the safest place in the kingdom of God is His will. However, much of my journey has been about my preparation to first of all learn how to discern His will, secondly, to seek His plan as to how He wants it executed, and third to continue to knock until His will has been fulfilled for His glory.

The question now is what about you? In these dark times are you where you need to be to ensure God's will is being done in your life and through it? †

I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.— Psalm 40:8—Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God—Psalm 143:10a

THE WAY OF THE CROSS IS "THE WAY TO GOD"

By Helen Steiner Rice

If my days were untroubled
and my heart always light
Would I seek that fair land
where there is no night,
If I never grew weary
with the weight of my load
Would I search for God's Peace
at the end of the road;
If I never knew sickness
and never felt pain
Would I reach for a hand
to help and sustain;
If I walked not with sorrow
and lived without loss
Would my soul seek sweet solace
at the foot of the cross;
If all I desired was mine
day by day
Would I kneel before God
and earnestly pray;
If God sent no "Winter"
to freeze me with fear
Would I yearn for the warmth
of "Spring" every year;
I ask myself this
and the answer is plain —
If my life were all pleasure
and I never knew pain
I'd seek God less often
and need Him much less,
For God's sought more often
in times of distress,
And no one knows God
or sees Him as plain
As those who have met Him
on "The Pathway of Pain."

QUOTABLE

God is not impressed with our accomplishments and achievements any more than He was impressed with Babylon's global reputation of military might. What the Lord delights in and takes pleasure in is people who fear Him and find hope in His mercy. Don't get me wrong; God loves us and is delighted when we excel in our gifts and talents and acknowledge them as blessings from Him. But God takes even more pleasure in those who fear Him and hope in His mercy. — *Barry Stagner*

(Commentary on Psalm 147:10-11)

FAILURE

By Jeannette Haley

In the entire world, I wonder if there is even one person who wakes up in the morning and declares, "Today I will do my very best to be a failure!" On the contrary, most people are motivated with a desire to succeed in whatever they decide to do with their life, even if it is "succeeding" in a life of crime. True success in life, by God's standards, is not measured by the means we employ to become a "winner," or even what our goal is, but rather by His Word (truth) and God's perspective (reality). Therefore, many people who are overcomers according to God are wrongly judged as failures by the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Compare the life of Christ with the world's definition of failure as it is so beautifully written in *One Solitary Life: Let us turn now to the story. A child is born in an obscure village. He is brought up in another obscure village. He works in a carpenter shop until he is thirty, and then for three brief years is an itinerant preacher, proclaiming a message and living a life. He never writes a book. He never holds an office. He never raises an army. He never has a family of his own. He never owns a home. He never goes to college. He never travels two hundred miles from the place where he was born. He gathers a little group of friends about him and teaches them his way of life. While still a young man, the tide of popular feeling turns against him. One denies him; another betrays him. He is turned over to his enemies. He goes through the mockery of a trial; he is nailed to a cross between two thieves, and when dead is laid in a borrowed grave by the kindness of a friend.*

Those are the facts of his human life. He rises from the dead. Today we look back across nineteen hundred years and ask, What kind of trail has he left across the centuries? When we try to sum up his influence, all the armies that ever marched, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned are absolutely picayune in their influence on mankind compared with that of this one solitary life...(I understand that this is the original essay by Dr James Allan Francis in "The Real Jesus and Other Sermons" © 1926 by

the Judson Press of Philadelphia (pp 123-124 titled "Arise Sir Knight!").

In order for Christians to not faint under the cruel scrutiny of the worldly mind, or shrivel under the harsh condemnation of Satan, they must get into God's Word, and stay in it. The Word of God is the eternal guide in all that concerns us, directing us into the way of life and everlasting happiness, which is, regardless of outward circumstances, the opposite of failure. We must be careful to compare Scripture with Scripture, meditate upon it, and remain diligent, watchful in prayer, discerning, and wise to test the spirit behind everything. Every believer, regardless of age, background, or gender must "*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. To "rightly divide the word of truth" means never taking a Scripture out of context to prove a point, or build a "doctrine," or establish a belief that is contrary to the whole counsel of God.

Dealing with a sense of failure may start early in life depending on a child's environment, which means the amount of pressure put upon him or her to agree with the standards of others (conform), or to act in an expected manner (perform), or to change habits and attitudes (reform). To conform, perform, or reform in compliance with the will, wishes or demands of others (be they Christian or not) can lead to a false sense of failure due to the fact that all of these states of "self-improvement" through self-effort fall far short of being *transformed* by the Holy Spirit. In other words, God is not asking us to conform, perform, or reform, because it is His will that we allow Him to transform us into the image of Christ. Thus, conforming, performing, and reforming to the standards and expectations of others is not a guarantee against failure. In fact, these very things contribute to personal failure for they are, in and of themselves, dead works of the flesh that are worthless and unprofitable to both soul and spirit. In this condition, Satan has an open playing field to bring accusation and torment to the unsatisfied, longing and empty soul who never comes to a place of rest because of the haunting and mocking fear of failure.

As for myself, in my early child-

hood years I knew I was loved, which set me free to dream big dreams during the various stages of growing up. I remember as a preschooler pretending to sing like the then very famous operetta soprano, Jeanette MacDonald. At that young age I wanted to grow up to be just like her. A few years later I fancied myself singing and dancing with Lawrence Welk and his orchestra. (The truth is, I never could "carry a tune in a bucket.") Then came the "cowboy" years, and with 59 westerns regularly airing on TV, my best friend and I determined to own a dude ranch with herds of horses in Montana when we grew up. My mother, on the other



hand, balked at that idea and told me she raised me "to be a lady," not a cowgirl. Her idea of success was for me to marry a doctor or a lawyer, and have an upper class lifestyle; which, I suppose, any mother might wish for her only daughter. Then, when I was sixteen, I announced to her that I was going to be a missionary at which time she stated I would die some place in Africa. Sometime later when I told her I planned to be an artist, she told me I'd starve to death in some alley. Therefore, I had no doubt what represented failure in my mother's mind.

Have I ever felt like a failure for never being able to sing like an opera star? Nope. Am I a failure for never ending up as a dancer on Lawrence Welk? Nope. How about never becoming a cowgirl in Montana? Nope. Am I a failure because I never met, maneuvered, and managed to marry some aspiring doctor or lawyer? Nope. Does this mean that I have never felt like a failure? No, and that is because of one little word—*sin*. Sin sums up the real definition of failure because sin is failure to reflect, or mirror, the glory of God. It is "missing the mark" and we all have failed in this respect. Sin is failing

God in any aspect of our life where we do not glorify Him. Therefore, in that respect, all humankind is a failure.

We have an enemy who never lets us forget our failures. The accuser of the brethren, our great enemy, Satan, never “shuts up.” *Revelation 12:10* tells us, “*And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.*” [Emphasis added.] One of Satan’s most powerful weapons against us is the accusation of being failures in every area of our lives, physically, mentally, and spiritually. In the physical realm, even though I became the three things that were uppermost in my heart—a servant of God, an artist, and a writer—there have been many a time when the enemy has brought accusations to my mind of being a failure. “You” he hisses, “never became a great missionary like Gladys Alyward, or Amy Charmichael, or Isobel Kuhn. You haven’t even preached as much as any of the notable women in the past, such as, (to name a few from the late 1700’s and early 1800’s) Mary Bond, Susannah McCurdy, Martha Jago, Mary Barrett Taft, Catherine Schertz, Patricia Townsend, Anna Nancy Towle, etc.

Obviously, the accusation of failure by the enemy brings condemnation, sorrow and regret. Condemnation separates us from God who sent His Son to reconcile us to Himself. Instead of condemning us, the Holy Spirit convicts us in order to bring us to the place of repentance. Conviction of the Holy Spirit leads us to agree with God that we are not necessarily failures according our own standards, or those of the world, but rather sinners because we have fallen short of God’s glory. The Bible doesn’t declare that we are all a bunch of rotten failures because we haven’t tried hard enough, but instead it declares that we are all sinners in disposition, separated from God. Jesus came “*not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*” *Mark 2:17b*. We are not made righteous by working hard to avoid failure, but are made righteous through the blood of Christ. “*And from*

Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood” *Revelation 1:5*. Our failures in this life may, or may not be the result of sin. Often our failures are simply the result of just being human. We should never feel like a failure if we have done our best, yet failed. Remember, people who never try to accomplish anything because of fear of failure are failures already.

The Word of God is clear that what the world, the flesh and the devil deem as failure is not in accordance with the will and ways of God. As Christians, what we are called to be are overcomers in this life—to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil. Failure to do so will indeed bring us down to eternal defeat, so it is with sobriety of mind and heart that this article is written.

Beginning with the world, it has its own set of standards that it sets up before everyone as to what defines both success and failure. These standards are like a steady drumbeat that bombards us from the cradle to the grave through countless avenues beginning with parents and family, to teachers and professors, to literature, art, music, television, Hollywood, social media, and other propaganda machines. No one can escape the constant pressure that is exerted upon his or her way of thinking, and worldview by the world’s cultural, philosophical and psychological propaganda.

The world presents a false reality that is hard to resist because, after all, we live in a material world that we relate to with the physical senses, and vain imaginations. Young people are especially targeted to be carefully groomed by the world through appeals to their pride, desensitizing ploys, entertainment, and false promises of happiness to be realized through fame, fortune and power. Even though it is an impersonal and uncompassionate taskmaster, the world is simply irresistible to fallen man until he or she becomes truly born again. “*Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things become new*” *2 Corinthians 5:17*. Jesus warned, “*For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole*

world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul” *Matthew 16:26*? It is tough but true that when a person fails to live up to the world’s standards, the world is quick to condemn him or her as a failure.

The question is should a Christian who is condemned by the world as a failure receive such an indictment? God’s Word assures us, “*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 for ever*” *1 John 2:15-17*.

The Word of God warns us that Satan is the “god of this world” who presents himself as “an angel of light.” Therefore, we can discern and conclude that he is also the evil force that operates behind the scenes on the world stage with the intent of deceiving all mankind. (See *Revelation 12:9* “*And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*”) [Emphasis added.] Consider, “*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them*” *2 Corinthians 4:3, 4*. If the world itself, or those closest to you who know not Christ, or even your own self judges you as a “failure,” then remember the words of Jesus in *John 16*, and especially verse 33 which states, “*These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*”

Concerning the flesh, or the “old man,” it is all about self—the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, which, like the world, will pass away. Failure to the fleshly, self-centered person can be just about anything that opposes or upsets what is of utmost importance to him or her. The flesh sets people up to strive for

unobtainable goals. For example, if a woman believes that “success” depends entirely upon her appearance, then vanity is of the utmost importance to her. Having a bad hair day, breaking a nail, developing a blemish, or gaining a pound is tantamount to the end of the world. If a man believes failure is not being, or possessing the best of everything, then he might well consider himself to be a failure if he loses in a competition, is overlooked for a promotion, drives an older model car, or is unable to afford an impressive home in an upper class neighborhood. These are just a scant few examples of how the flesh can cause a person to condemn him or herself as a failure.

A fleshly person can also easily cave in to an insatiable appetite for addictive substances, immoral practices, bad habits, or any extreme or excessive lifestyle. *Galatians 5:19-21* sums it up best, “*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness [depravity], Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, [malice], wrath, strife, seditions [rebellion], heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*” (Emphasis added.)

As with worldly people, a fleshly person can seek to satisfy their need for recognition, acceptance or attention in a church setting. This is especially true if the church is soft on sin, and tends to placate people who feel sorry for themselves because they feel as if they are a failure, or because others view them as a failure. As Christians, we do people a great disservice when we placate them in their fleshly state instead of confronting them with truth to bring such a soul to repentance and salvation. The Lord Jesus made it clear concerning the power of truth, “*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” *John 8:31b, 32*. Take note that, as with all of God’s promises, this verse is conditional. Nowadays you hear unsaved sinners of every sort quote the last part of this verse as they

smugly apply it to whatever circumstance or situation that confronts them as if it was a magic wand that is going to automatically part the waters for them. But, to repeat what Jesus said, “*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.*” As Christians, we need to guard against quoting God’s Word out of context in order to make it “fit” where it was never meant to “fit” by God!

Finally, we are to overcome the “evil one” or the devil. *Revelation 12:11* tells us how the accuser of the brethren can be overcome by the saints, “*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.*” Satan is defeated by “*the blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*” *Matthew 26:28*. The gates of hell cannot destroy the “*church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood*” *Acts 20:28*. Satan cannot condemn the saved as failures for *Romans 5:8-10* declares, “*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*” Furthermore, our consciences are purged “*from dead works to serve the living God*” *Hebrews 9:14b*. We can stand against the accusation of Satan that we are failures because we “*were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from [our] vain conversation received by tradition...But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*” *1 Peter 1:18, 19*.

Those who have overcome Satan have “*Put on the whole armour of God, that [they] may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*” *Ephesians 6:12*. Overcomers know how to both stand, and withstand, the attack of the enemy. James wrote, “*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*” *James 4:7*. Peter tells us, “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the*

same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” *1 Peter 5:8, 9*.

In conclusion, regardless of what the world, the flesh or the devil may declare as being evidence of failure in a person’s life, those who are able to proclaim with the Apostle Paul, “*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*” *Philippians 3:13, 14* will never taste the bitterness of eternal failure. †

“MEN HAVE FORGOTTEN GOD”

(Excerpted from Southwest Radio Ministries Newsletter, April 2013)

Alexandr Solzhenitsyn was a Russian writer and dissident who helped raise global awareness of the gulag and the Soviet Union’s forced labor camp system from 1918 to 1956. Solzhenitsyn’s chilling words remind us of what happens when man becomes the final authority.

Over half a century ago, while I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of old people offer the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: “Men have forgotten God; that’s why all this has happened.” Since then I have spent well nigh 50 years working on the history of our revolution; in the process I have read hundreds of books, collected hundreds of personal testimonies, and have already contributed eight volumes of my own toward the effort of clearing away the rubble left by that upheaval. But if I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some 60 million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: “Men have forgotten God; that is why all this happened.” (Quoted from Edward E. Erickson, Jr., “Solzhenitsyn—Voice from the Gulag.” *Eternity*, Oct. 1985,

“If we try to operate without faith, we get nowhere. If we try to have faith without obedience, it ends in nothing”
— Rayola Kelley

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

Q: *I am very concerned over the teachings of Roy Sauzek. He has a ministry called "Take Heart" which seems to have a powerful influence over seeking Christians. If you can give any insight into his teachings, it would be very much appreciated."*

A: Browsing his Website, it appears as if he is a Manifest Son of God. One of the major earmarks of these individuals is that they have been given some "new revelation" from God that everyone must adhere to and pursue if they are going to have greater spiritual enlightenment, recognition or power in their spiritual lives. However, there is no need for such revelation, because God has given us all the revelation we need in His Written Word and through His Son (Hebrews, chapters 1-2).

Granted, we can have a greater unveiling of Jesus by the Spirit as the Apostle John did in Revelation 1, but it will not be a new revelation. A good way to test any revelation is whether it is man-centered or Christ-centered. Heretical revelation puts the burden on man to somehow strive, perform, or work towards obtaining greater spiritual awareness, where Christ-centered revelation is simply gaining a greater spiritual awareness of who Jesus is, desires to be, and can be in our lives through the leading or unveiling of the Holy Spirit. Clearly, Mr. Sauzek's revelation has put the burden on people to discover greater spiritual awareness of themselves in order to receive more from God. As you can see it is a subtle transfer of emphasis from Christ to man.

One of the reasons people get caught up with these "so-called" revelations is because they do not really know their position or place in Christ. Because of Christ's work on the cross, believers are placed in their different positions, with their different gifts and callings by the Holy Spirit according to the plan of the Father. A good example of this is that we each are personally placed in the Body of Christ for the purpose of edification of the whole Body, as well as having been seated positionally in high places in Christ (Ephesians 2:6; 1 Corinthians 12:11-19). We all equally have the same

importance in the Body in relationship to its working. As believers we do not work for these positions, but we do have a responsibility to understand what it means to have a right standing with God in these places. Right standing involves active faith that obeys what is right and honorable to God.

As far as being part of the bride of Christ, there is a debate about whether the Church or Israel is the bride. However, because of Ephesians 5, I believe godly marriage serves as an example of Christ's relationship with the Church, thereby, positionally making the Church or Body the espoused bride of Christ, waiting for His return to be united with Him forever. However, the Holy Spirit is the One who searches out those who are part of the Bride through conviction of sin, the contrast of righteousness, and the reproof of judgment, the Father draws such people to His Son, and Jesus invites them to come to Him (John 6:44; 7:37-39; 16:7-13). Once again, man does not have a part in establishing his position or place in the Bride other than accepting the invitation by faith to come (Revelation 22:16-19).

As believers, we should not be caught up with obtaining greater positions or enlightenment in God's kingdom. Keep in mind position points to the type of relationship that must be established and enlightenment points to the type of light we walk in. Relationship points to our type of standing before God, and we must walk in the light or according to the life of Christ in us. The Apostle Paul's desire was to gain Christ in a greater measure in Philippians 3. We also know a humble servant is considered the greatest in the kingdom of God, and if we want more of God, we simply ask Him for more of His Spirit (Matthew 20:25-28; Luke 11:9-13). I have discovered a long time ago that wherever man is striving for the things of God, the simplicity of Christ has been complicated by man in some perverted way (2 Corinthians 2-14).

Many sincere people are truly seeking for something, but what they really desire is a greater or more fulfilling relationship with God like Abraham had. I remember a person once stated that my desire to be deemed a faithful servant by Christ was honorable, but the Lord wanted to call me

"friend." Abraham was a friend of God because of his faith, not because of striving or possessing some special enlightenment or position. After all, friendship is based on an intimate relationship. Jesus stated in John 15:13-15 that He desires to call us friends, for a servant does not have the type of relationship where He can truly share the matters of the throne of His kingdom with them.

I hope this answers your question, and gives you some insight into how you can recognize what some people are really after in their relationship with the Lord.

God bless you in your pursuit for unfeigned truth. †

COMMENTS FROM READERS

"I have researched him (Walid Shoebat) and I was almost convinced of his viewpoint at first, now I agree that he is a distraction meant to steer people away from the truth. Not only are some of his personal claims about formerly being involved in terrorism actually un-verified, but he is really employing eisegesis, rather than exegesis. [Eisegesis is the interpretation of a text, especially a biblical text, using one's own ideas.] He is letting his familiarity and knowledge of the tenets of Islam inform and shape his understanding of the Bible, rather than vice versa. I think the Mahdi/Antichrist similarities are having that very effect and I've watched a lot of folks go off the rails with it. I believe that Islam will be essentially "put down" and rendered powerless in one of the coming battles but meanwhile they are being mightily used by Satan (with God's permission) in laying groundwork." - VA

"Do you think I should have a house church? I have been thinking about doing that. I need to hear from the Lord. There are very few prayer meetings over here, very few. And most people do not know how to pray. We have mostly psychology." - WA

"Wow, 50 books! That's amazing. I am so very blessed to have been a part of your life and ministry, if even only for a short period of time. The **Hidden Manna** information has been so helpful, even apply it to figure out my eight grandchildren." - WA

TORAH, GRACE AND THE BELIEVER

By Anna L. Schwery

Recently, I was drawn to a comment within the GSM Newsletter, which stated, in part: "...We also have Judaizers coming into the churches and enticing the young believers away into Messianic churches and teaching we have to believe the Torah."

I don't really believe the comment was meant to express what my eyes read, and what my heart heard when I read it, but it seems this is a golden opportunity to address the issue of exactly what the definition of Torah truly is.

Without excuse, I am not defending the Messianic madness that seems to have exploded on the scene, but the word Torah is very Biblical, and it seems it's come full circle from what the true meaning is, to what the Messianics are displaying. What is being professed as Torah in their circle of merrymakers is not what the word means in truth.

Therefore, it seems like a good place to begin is with the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, which defines Torah, in part, in the following manner:

The term Torah (but not Pentateuch) is often applied to the whole Hebrew Scripture (i.e., the later books of the Old Testament), or, even more generally, to that and other Jewish sacred literature and oral tradition.

Needless to say, I am not going to defend all Jewish sacred literature and their oral traditions, although some of their traditions are good, much like some traditions we hold as a Believer. In this brief article, I only want to address the singular word Torah.

To begin with, we DO have to believe the Torah! Every word of the 66 books of the Bible is intended for our benefit. *Psalm 119: 44 So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.* This word "law" that The Psalmist has used here is Torah. As a matter of fact, this whole Psalm is dedicated to The Law Of God. There is no psalm in the whole collection of Psalms which has the appearance of having been exclusively designed for

practical and personal improvement, without any reference to national, or even to ecclesiastical relations, than Psalm 119.

Now that we've seen the definition of Torah, how does this affect the Believer who has been transformed by the saving grace of our Messiah? As you have read above, it also involves the word "law." Now we've come down to the quandary of Law or Grace. Can we think outside of the box for just a minute here, and see it all as Law AND Grace? Our Sovereign God is BOTH the Law-giver and the Grace-giver, isn't He? As far back as Genesis 6 we can see that Noah found GRACE (Strong's #02580) in the eyes of the Lord.

The Law of the Lord is perfect, so says the Psalmist (Psalm 19:7). Now we come to the Scripture that explains to us the purpose of the perfect Law:

Ga 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

It's interesting to note that this word "schoolmaster" is actually "pedagogue" which was the servant who had the care of the children to lead them to and bring them back from school, and had the care of them out of school hours. Thus, the law did not teach us the living, saving knowledge; but, by its rites and ceremonies, and especially by its sacrifices, it directed us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. This is a beautiful metaphor, and highly illustrative.

Now we are led to that glorious moment of *Romans 10:4 For Christ is the end of the Law.* This brings us to the end of all of the representative sacrifices as Christ begins with the REAL offering! The Law, Torah, Schoolmaster cannot save us, but it leaves us right at the door of Jesus, the Messiah, where there ALONE salvation is found. The Law convicts us of sin and our need for a Mediator, whereby we place our faith in our Messiah. We simply cannot separate the sacrificial death of Christ from the Law, or it completely obliterates what He has done for us, since we know that the blood of bulls and goats could

never take away sin.

My heart's desire is that this has been a blessing to you and an encouragement. †

(<http://yadbyad.messengers-of-messiah.org>)

QUOTE FROM SPURGEON

"Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines." Song of Solomon 2:15

A little thorn may cause much suffering. A little cloud may hide the sun. Little foxes spoil the vines; and little sins do mischief to the tender heart. These little sins burrow in the soul, and make it so full of that which is hateful to Christ, that he will hold no comfortable fellowship and communion with us. A great sin cannot destroy a Christian, but a little sin can make him miserable. Jesus will not walk with his people unless they drive out every known sin. He says, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." Some Christians very seldom enjoy their Saviour's presence. How is this? Surely it must be an affliction for a tender child to be separated from his father. Art thou a child of God, and yet satisfied to go on without seeing thy Father's face? What! thou the spouse of Christ, and yet content without his company! Surely, thou hast fallen into a sad state, for the chaste spouse of Christ mourns like a dove without her mate, when he has left her. Ask, then, the question, what has driven Christ from thee? He hides his face behind the wall of thy sins. That wall may be built up of little pebbles, as easily as of great stones. The sea is made of drops; the rocks are made of grains: and the sea which divides thee from Christ may be filled with the drops of thy little sins; and the rock which has well nigh wrecked thy barque, may have been made by the daily working of the coral insects of thy little sins.

If thou wouldst live with Christ, and walk with Christ, and see Christ, and have fellowship with Christ, take heed of "the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes." Jesus invites you to go with him and take them. He will surely, like Samson, take the foxes at once and easily. Go with him to the hunting. †