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## THE REALITY OF GOD

Part 17

By Rayola Kelley

Because it is February, perhaps some of you expect me to talk about the most popular attribute of God: His love. Granted, I will be talking about God's love but in light of another aspect of God. Clearly, His love was manifested on a cross over 2,000 years ago (*John 3:16*). Through Jesus, God's love physically touched people with healing, graced their life with hope, revealed mercy through forgiveness, and was made available to all who would receive by faith His eternal life. In other words, you cannot know His love without possessing His very life because His love does not stand apart from who He is and His very life, for God is love (*1 John 4:8*).

The problem today is that many people hide behind their so-called "concept" of God's love, while justifying defeating aspects of their personal life. Sadly, the presentation of God's love is often riddled with fleshly nonsense and tainted by worldly presentations. For the most part, people's definition of God's love is not anywhere near to the real attribute that constitutes God's agape love, which is clearly described in *1 Corinthians 13*. God's love is opposite of the pride and jealousies of the self-life, the lusts and euphoric feelings of the flesh, and the sentimental worldly philosophy of tolerance towards sin.

As we try to come to terms with the fact that God is love in order to properly understand what it means for love to cover a multitude of offenses (*1 Peter 4:8*), we must do so in light of all of His attributes. This means that God alone is a face of true love, and as we really consider His love we must above all else acknowledge that it is honorable because it is moral, sacrificial because it is selfless, always preferring that which it loves over itself,

and excellent because it is righteous in its dealings. In essence, it is committed to have right standing before God and do right where others are concerned.

These very manifestations of God's love are clearly displayed on the cross that Jesus died on. It is clear that we do not deserve such love. It is offered and has been made available by way of His grace, and we can only receive it and appropriate it in our lives by faith. God's love is holy (pure) towards us; therefore, He desires what is best for each of us, and will not remain indifferent to any moral deviation that would cause our soul harm. In other words, godly love will not rejoice in the presence and practices of iniquity in our lives (*1 Corinthians 13:6*). As I have said in the past, "You address sin in love, but you never overlook sin in the name of love."

This brings us to the real matter of God's love. It must be the motive and inspiration behind everything we do. The more His love abounds in us, the more we can effectively walk in His love and the more we will learn what it means for God to be love. It was because of His love that God could do nothing else but provide salvation for His creation. He could not let sin claim people as its slaves, or death claim souls as its victims. His love not only could not stand silently by, but it went beyond reasonable service and offered a sacrifice that would silence the death sentence pronounced upon all sin and disobedience by His righteous law.

This brings me to a very important point. God's love is nothing to hide behind to justify moral deviances or failures; rather, it is to serve as a point of trust when our world is caving in. When things are going wrong, will we trust that God loves us in the purest and most honorable sense? Will we choose to believe His intentions towards us are good regardless of the overwhelming present challenges of

life? Will we choose to believe His Word about all matters pertaining to life and godliness and respond accordingly? The truth is when life throws the unexpected at us the first thing we usually question is whether God loves us or not. The key to trusting God is not trusting an unrealistic concept of His love, but choosing to trust Him in His sovereignty.

Last month I talked about breaking out of our theological boxes in order to discover greater heights in God. Clearly, the problem with maintaining a controlled understanding of the Lord is that we are susceptible in missing what is important and vital to His heart. In other words, at best we try to maintain a status of a servant; and in so doing we fail to become a friend of God like Abraham, who could be entrusted with the deep concerns of the Lord (*Genesis 18:17; James 2:23; John 15:12-17*).

The Lord may want us to come higher especially when fear (of losing control or of the unknown) raises up in us to resist such a notion. He may want us to understand what is important to Him so we can be effective in our Christian walk and pursuits. The problem is that many have boxed the Lord in, and such individuals often find themselves stuck in a quagmire of frustration, unable to rise above the ceiling of their personal conclusions or estimation of spiritual realities to receive a greater revelation of the Lord.

I understand such a spiritual quagmire because I have been stuck in one. I wanted to control my understanding of God so that I would know how to act and respond to matters. I did not realize it but I wanted to keep one step ahead of Him to avoid becoming completely dependent on Him. I wanted to determine His pace so that I was privy to anything coming down the road to keep my faith and character from being tested, tempted, tried, and found wanting.

In essence, I wanted to be an



exception to the rule when it came to God's dealings, preparation, and work in my life. Although Job is a real example of patience in a time of great testing, I wanted patience without going through the deep valley of loss, misunderstandings, and despair. What I wanted to avoid was facing the sovereign move of God in my life and trusting Him during daunting circumstances. I wanted to be able to understand everything so I knew how to act and respond, while maintaining a semblance of victorious Christianity.

The truth is there is never any victory unless there has been a series of failures along the way. There can be no character unless it has been tested as being inept, then forged in the fires as a means to refine it. Regardless of how sincere one may be as to becoming a person of great faith, faith will never be brought to the level of endurance and maturity without first going into the ovens and learning what it means to trust God when all seems lost and hopeless.

It was also in my heart to soar in the heights of God but I did not want to experience Him going into the depths of my soul, exposing darkness, weakness, moral deviance, and foolishness. I wanted to jump the Grand Canyon of obstacles without first leaning to be faithful to take small steps of obedience by obeying the Word and following after the Spirit, ever strengthening my Christian walk as a means to begin to run the race of the Christian life.

The reality of my Christian life is that without realizing it I was afraid of facing the sovereignty of God. The question is what does the word "sovereign" mean? Recently, I read a couple of definitions. One is, "having supreme rank, power, or authority." The second is "greatest in degree, utmost, or extreme." Both definitions clearly show that God is not only above all as our Creator, but He is first in all happenings and has preeminence in all matters. He is supreme in all He does, possessing the final say in all that happens. There is nothing that gets past Him without His permission, nothing that happens unless He allows it, and nothing that occurs that surprises Him or throws Him off of His plan.

The sovereignty of God reminds every believer that we will more often

than not find a curtain enveloping our carnal understanding when it comes to the matters of God. The reason for such darkness is because there are mysteries about God that mere man in his fleshly state will never be able to unravel and there are veiled secrets that God is not obligated to share with any of us. And, when we find ourselves encountering such times, it becomes intense darkness to us, testing our faith, challenging our inner resolve, and stripping our character of any facade.

At such times we want to look to our theology for understanding, but we often find it shaking and in some areas crumbling. We want to run to our logic, but we are met with an onslaught of confusion. We look under every rock to see if we are missing some hidden deviance or secret clue, but heaven remains silent. There is no light penetrating the darkness and no conviction of the Holy Spirit to bring light—all there is, is just consuming darkness.

When we consider the concept of sovereignty, we must acknowledge that there is not one person or being who can claim that they possess such supremacy. It is the one aspect of God that can throw a person's faith into crisis. It is the one characteristic that many have tried to understand by boxing it in with various theologies and religious debates and formulas. In spite of the confusion, this is the one aspect of God that reminds each of us as Christians that regardless of the confusing reality around us, the wickedness that seems to reign unabated in the world today, and the foolishness which rules from the heights of arrogance is that God is still God, reigning from His throne.

At such times the last thing we usually consider is God's sovereignty. We become desperate to find any means or method to cause God to take away the darkness. It is then that the questions flow in like a rushing river to test our resolve. Questions envelop our inner being, and if the matter is not resolved soon, questions will also come from others who are being left astonished by the events that may be intruding into their reality.

The questions are inevitable as people struggle with injustices, foolishness, and death that plagues the

world around them: "Where is God in all of this war and destruction?" "How can a loving God allow such evil to reign?" "If God is holy and just, why does He allow innocence and purity to be offered up on the various altars of the world without bringing great recompense upon the offender?" Each question serves as a platform for limited logic and immense confusion that will lead a skeptic into unbelief where he or she "simmer in the juices of anger and despair," which results in a blanket of hopelessness settling on his or her soul. Every believer struggles with not succumbing to unbelief and hopelessness as he or she wrestles with the "whys" of life, while understanding remains far from them. In such times, circumstances can make a mockery out of God's different attributes, thus bringing the credibility of all of His attributes into question.

As it becomes clearer that the world we live in is plunging into global insanity, as believers we must come to rest by faith on one aspect of God—that is, He still reigns because of, and according to, His sovereignty. Nothing happens that He does not allow. No leader is in a position that He Himself has not placed there. No wretched event has caught Him off guard, and when it comes to His saints, Herbert Lockyer Sr. said it best, "The mightiest ruler must wait his permission before he can place a finger on a child of God."

In agreement with the above statement, an unknown source also made this affirmation, "The Lord may not have planned that this (circumstance) overtake me, but He has most certainly permitted it. Therefore though it were an attack of an enemy, by the time it reaches me, it has the Lord's permission and therefore all is well. He will make it work together with all life's experiences for good" (*Genesis 50:20; Romans 8:28*).

Once again we must wrestle with the "whys" of life. It is hard to accept that all the wrong that is taking place in the world and in our small existences is permitted by God. We look at injustice and ask how the just God could allow it to happen while seemingly remaining quiet as it wreaks havoc in the lives of the innocent. We look at immorality's absurdity being touted as normal and right, and wonder how

long a holy God is going to allow its insipid boasting to continue before He brings it down into the throes of hell. We watch evil, cultist, anti-Christ beliefs try to take the world by force and wonder how long God will allow His truth to be stomped on or degraded, His principles mocked, His righteous ways marked as being wicked, and His saints persecuted for their genuine faith. We wonder....

The world is clearly upside down. It started with the entrance of sin in the Garden of Eden and continues today because Satan is the god of this world's systems (*2 Corinthians 4:2-4*). As the father of lies, Satan has wrapped this world in his lies with anti-God, self-centered, New Age philosophies, worldly propaganda, and irrational indoctrination. As a murderer from the beginning, his goal is to destroy purity, innocence, and souls (*John 8:44*). As a religious being, Satan rides high on the waves of false beliefs, idolatrous, superstitious practices, and pagan ways to exalt himself above the God of heaven (*2 Corinthians 11:2-14*).

It is natural for people, including Christians to struggle with God's sovereignty. It is the one aspect of God that is beyond mere man's comprehension. He cannot even begin to attempt to try to understand its ways and when he tries to figure it out or explain it, he sounds indifferent, judgmental, and/or foolish. He often ends up contradicting his own creeds and ends up looking like a hypocrite.

How important is God's sovereignty? Well, let me put it this way, if God was not sovereign, His will would never be carried out to completion. As stated in the past, there are three aspects to God's will in operation in the world. There is His permissive will, His providential will, and His perfect will.

For example, God permits wickedness to reign for a season to test His people's faith and to bring wickedness to fruition in order to righteously judge it. For Christians, the Lord has been known to let go of the reins or permit His people to do their own thing because of their freewill, but eventually they begin to pay the consequences as leanness takes hold of their souls. At this point, believers often come back to the Lord in brokenness and repentance.

God's providential will occurs when we give Him permission to have His way in a matter. Sometimes this occurs after He has permitted us to go our own way and do our own thing. When we see that our ways are becoming sour and bitter to our very souls, we turn back to Him in repentance, humble ourselves and give Him permission to have His way regardless of the cost. His providence is then set in motion as He sets up circumstances, opening and closing doors to bring the person to a place of consecration. It is in this place that we can begin to discern and know what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God, and be prepared to obediently walk in it (*Romans 12:1-2*).

Job tasted God's providential will without understanding it. He did not know that God allowed Satan to bring grave financial, emotional, and physical losses to him to prove that the Lord had a man in the world that would not curse Him after practically losing everything. God knew that Job's struggles would be great, but He also knew that in the end Job would always land on the great runway of faith and come to rest on what he knew was true about his God.

We cannot imagine how unbearable Job's losses were: his wealth, his family, and his health. Like Job's companions it is easy at such times to sit in our chairs and pews, and play God as our theology kicks into high gear and we become the ultimate authority as to why such things happen. As you read the arguments in Job, Job's companions incorrectly accredited Job's losses to God. Their logic was that Job had some unknown sin that was being judged even though they had known the righteous character of Job in the past. The truth is God permitted Satan to attack Job; therefore, Satan was the source behind Job's losses, not God. God set the boundaries in which Satan could operate, showing His supremacy and authority over all matters. Was it God's perfect will that Job experience this affront? No, but it became part of God's providential will because He knew the outcome. The Lord set the boundaries, knowing that ultimately Job would tenaciously choose the way of faith, while maintaining the integrity of his testimony regardless of what came at

him, and that in the end God's perfect will would be realized in Job's life.

As we study Job's companions' arguments, they were right about God, but wrong about the situation. They correctly acknowledged who God was and His ways, but they were accrediting God with works He was not behind. In each argument you can see a greater desperation growing in them as their attacks became more aggressive. The question is why did they need to get Job to see it their way? The answer is found in the argument of the last man who confronted Job. His name was Elihu. He was an upstart who had quietly sat and listened to the debate. He did not know Job, but it is obvious that he agreed with the logic of Job's companions. It says that Elihu's wrath was kindled against Job, "because he justified himself rather than God" (*Job 32:5*). It also goes on to say that Elihu's wrath was also kindled against Job's companions because, "they had found no answer, and had condemned Job."

Most Christians might find themselves agreeing with Elihu. No matter what, God must be justified, cleared of any wrongdoing, injustice, etc. However, there was one problem, God was not behind Job's losses—Satan was. God did not need to be justified. Granted, He allowed the events, but it was in complete knowledge of the outcome. He knew Job's character, the endurance and maturity of His faith, and He sovereignly allowed it to happen. He knew in the end that what Job needed to see (know) would not only humble Job, but bring resolution and healing, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (*Job 42:5-6*). There is no indication that Job was ever informed about Satan's part in his plight, but it did not matter, because Job had seen God and his faith towards Him stood justified.

The question is if God did not need to be justified by Job's companions then what was the big to-do about? It was about each man maintaining his own theology. They were trying to defend God on the basis of an assumption that found its premise in their theology about God and life. In their mind God would not allow bad

things to happen to a righteous man; therefore, there had to be something wrong with Job. They wanted Job to agree with them, even though Job would have lied to do so because he knew differently. But, Job was not about to sacrifice his integrity so his companions could keep their particular creed of God intact, regardless of their clever presentations.

Clearly, Job's companions did not have all the facts. However, they would have avoided the whole matter if they had landed on the one aspect of God that would have covered everything: God's sovereignty. These men could not accept that God was still being God when it went contrary to their creeds. They could not fathom that God was still God when nothing made sense and seemed senseless. They simply could not abide by the fact that God's sovereign moves are often clouded in darkness, hidden from man's understanding, and kept a mystery, because faith, not understanding is required to walk through the darkness surrounding such times.

Job clearly teaches us that at the end of all great darkness, is not understanding of a matter, but a greater revelation of God. All man needs to know is that he can trust God in His sovereignty because He is holy, loving, kind, merciful, longsuffering, and faithful. The circumstances and darkness at times may seemed to fly in the face of God's endearing attributes, but choosing the way of faith allows a person to land on the largest, eternal runway that keeps every truth intact: that of God's sovereignty. God's sovereignty enables a person to coast into the hanger of complete rest, trusting that that the Lord is in control and His intention towards each of us is honorable and will ultimately prove to be the wise and excellent way of God bringing His servant into His perfect will.

Is there something you are wrestling with? What are you trying to hide behind? We can stand on the attributes of God, but the only thing we can hide behind regardless of the events is His sovereignty. God will never cease to be who He is. He is supreme and has the final say when it comes to the matters of the Universe, His people, and His creation. In the end, He will remain God and nothing will be able to prevent Him from bringing forth His will. ✠

## **DARE TO DISCERN "DISCERNING DEMONS"**

**By Jeannette Haley**

*"And they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." – Revelation 12:11*

Last month I wrote about angels, focusing on the holy angels of God in particular. Since that time Rayola reminded me of another true account of an angel that is such a beautiful and encouraging story that I would like to share it with you in the beginning of this month's article.

When the Lord first brought Rayola and I together as a ministry team we spent a lot of time in Arizona where we met different Christians and ministries with which to fellowship. One of the most precious sisters in the Lord we came to know was a young lady by the name of Andrea who was 26 at the time. Andrea suffered from brittle bone disease. Her powerful singing voice belied the fact that she was severely handicapped and only 26" tall.

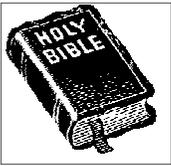
Andrea worked full-time from her wheel chair in the Christian bookstore owned by her sister and brother-in-law with whom she lived. As we became better acquainted with this personable and committed soldier of the cross she shared with us about her childhood and subsequent challenges. For many years as a young child living in a care facility she was relegated to lying all day on a cart, and every day at the same time an angel "walked through the wall" and played with her. This faithful messenger from God came daily in this manner until Andrea turned sixteen. That is when she finally received a wheel chair to sit up in, which greatly changed her life, and after that day she never saw the angel again.

Encounters with angels always spark our interest, even though the Bible is replete with accounts of angelic visitations, interventions, and angelic prophecies. The point is, they are very real, but so are the fallen angels and demons. As with most spiritual topics one has to be careful to maintain a balanced, biblical approach. In recent years there was a

burst of "angel mania" among Christian circles that accelerated into an unhealthy preoccupation with them, almost to the point of "angel worship." The same can be said concerning the subject of fallen angels and demons, or any other aspect of the Bible and the Christian faith. As we have noted before, *any truth taken to extremes can become an untruth.* That is why Jesus said, *"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"* Matthew 4:4. Acts 17:11 tells us about the Bereans, *"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."*

To properly study the Bible, we must approach it to believe it, and to receive what it says even if we cannot immediately understand all of it according to our predetermined ideas and concepts. God's Word will never neatly fit into our personal perception, or worldview which is based on our religious conditioning, rigid conclusions, carnal tendencies, or emotional leanings. *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts"* Isaiah 55:8, 9. If we approach the Bible with the idea that all we need is a literal, surface reading with a little fact gathering here and there to add to our carefully guarded, dusty theology, we shall soon enough discover that the fathomless "ocean of eternal treasures" has deposited our "boat of discovery" high and dry on the sandy dunes of deadness. Have you ever tried to row or sail a boat in the sand? Without the water (the living Word) and the wind (the Holy Spirit) your boat isn't going anywhere.

While preparing to take a trip through the Bible, here are some "travel tips" that will help your journey to be adventurous, exciting, memorable, enriching, challenging, life-changing, and rewarding: 1) Look for Jesus Christ, His attributes, His works, His ways, His wisdom, His holiness, His power, His love, His plan, His responses, His provision, and His Word to you personally. 2) Look for and



study types, shadows, and patterns. The Bible is full of types, shadows and patterns of Christ, such as revealed in the

Tabernacle, etc. 3) Examples. Keep in mind that the historical events and God's judgments in the Old Testament were written for our example. Make it personal by gleaning the eternal lessons God has given for your instruction. 4) Principles. While a literal reading is "milk," the real "meat" of the Word is learning and understanding the principles and intent of Scripture. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal this to you as only He can. Ask God for divine revelation, then act on it and share it with others. 5) Doctrine. Doctrine is what we respond to: it is how we are to live the Christian life after we are saved. We are not saved to sit, but we are saved to adore and worship God, learn of, follow, and obey Jesus. Every born again believer, not just a select few, are called to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and to be the "salt" and the "light" in this dark world. 6) Note the warnings, judgments, and conditions that accompany God's promises. 7) Meditate upon God's Word, memorize and obey it!

Oswald Chambers said, "There is a difference between being saved and sanctified by the sheer sovereign grace of God and choosing to be the choice ones, not for heaven, but down here. The average view of Christianity, that we only need to have faith and we are saved, is a stumbling block. How many of us care anything about being witnesses to Jesus Christ? How many of us are willing to spend every ounce of energy we have, every bit of mental, moral and spiritual life for Jesus Christ? That is the meaning of a worker in God's sense. God has left us on earth, what for? To be saved and sanctified? No, to be at it for Him. If we are 'footing it' bit by bit, and living in the otherworldly spirit while in the world, we are developing our personality, and are of far more worth to Jesus Christ than those who have entered into the experience of sanctification but have never gone on any farther."

So, what does this have to do with discerning demons? Everything if we believe all of God's command-

ments and instructions. The Bible tells us to "test the spirits" (1 John 4:1) and to not be "ignorant of the wiles of the devil" (2 Corinthians 2:11) yet many Christians view the subject of demons as irrelevant in our modern day and age, and something to be ignored altogether. After all, they reason, we live in America! No demons here, like in those stone-age pagan tribes--right? Wrong! (Demons are not restricted by national boundaries, nor are they affected by time and space.) Some Christians react to the mere mention of discerning demons as if swallowing a dose of castor oil was more to be desired. On the other end of the spectrum are those who believe that demonology should be front and center of everything. However, if we are to believe what the Bible tells us, both reactions are out of balance, and we need to study and pay attention to those things that the Lord has revealed to us. We are living in perilous times, Satan knows that his time is short, and we need to be awake, and prepared, and declare with the Apostle Paul, "*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith*" 2 Timothy 4:7.

Concerning discernment, *Hebrews 5:14* says, "*But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*" Every Christian needs to pray and ask the Lord for wisdom and discernment, knowing that we are in a spiritual battle, we are living in the last days, and we need not shy away from gaining spiritual knowledge and experience, for God's will is that we go on to maturity. *Hosea 4:6a* says "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.*" Discerning of spirits is an ability given by the Holy Spirit that allows a person to determine if the source of a particular spiritual manifestation originates from God, the devil, the world, or man. In *Ezekiel 44:23-24* the Lord is saying what ministers of the people are to teach, including, "*And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.*" How desperately the Church of Jesus Christ needs to learn how to discern what is of God and what is not in these end times!

Many years ago there were three great "sister" teaching churches in the greater Seattle area—churches where the Holy Spirit was moving, and where people were being saved, set free from demonic bondages, spiritually (and sometimes physically) healed, and where solid biblical discipleship and teaching was continually available. I will always be thankful to the Lord for leading me to one of these churches at a time when I was hungering and thirsting for more of God—for more than a mere, mundane, casual, dead-end Christianity of weekly pew warming for the rest of my life. Thankfully, the Lord teamed me up with an on-fire, experienced evangelistic woman who took me "under her wing" in a ministry of follow-up visitation with people who had either visited the church or who indicated they had certain needs. What was especially "educational" for me during those years was the outward manifestations of demons, and how to deal with them.

The years of training and experience that I received from her, as well as the late evangelist and author Betty Swinford is invaluable, and something that no amount of academia could ever equal, *because there is no school like the school of the Holy Spirit.* Both women "had the goods," both were fearless, both had different approaches, but both knew how to discern and deal with demons and demonic strongholds in peoples' lives. And, Jesus used them mightily. Why? He used them because they were available to be used.

The question for many people is are demons really as active today as they were in Bible times? The answer is an unequivocal YES! The Bible also makes it clear that in the end days demonic and occult powers will escalate. Jesus warned, "*For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect*" *Matthew 24:24.* He also said, "*Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven*" *Luke 10:19, 20.* In *Mark*

16:17a Jesus said, "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils." The other question people ask is if Christians can "have" a demon. The truth is, through the years we have encountered Christians who have been demonically oppressed in different areas of their life. At this point, let me state two things: A true believer cannot be possessed, but he or she can be oppressed. Secondly, demons are not something a Christian should go in search of, or be enthusiastically looking for. (Discerning, yes—chasing after, no!) If you are walking in the Spirit, you will know when you encounter a demon—they usually manifest. (See Galatians 5:16; Luke 4:33-35; Acts 8:7; Acts 19:12-17; 16:16-18.) Furthermore, there is no such thing as a "deliverance ministry." Every born again, humble, Spirit-filled, obedient, discerning Christian who is well versed in Scripture, and who is "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might" (Ephesians 6:10) can be used of God to overcome demonic strongholds.

Some demonic manifestations (and we have experienced all of these in people) can be such things as hissing, snapping, snarling, sneering, spitting, foaming, lewd cursing, threats, screaming, unnatural voices (guttural, whiny), lying, contortions (sometimes resembling reptiles), trembling, writhing, mocking, uncontrollable unnatural laughter, crashing to the floor, extreme self-pity, roaring, emitting a sulfuric odor and other bizarre exhibitions. Always watch people's eyes! We have seen eyes in people with demons change from a natural color and shape to a swamp green, reptilian shape. At this point you probably want to beat the world's record in sprinting, but God does not tell us to fear, faint or flee, but to fight. He tells us to stand, resist, and use our sword (the Word.) (See Ephesians 4:26, 27; 6:11; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8, 9; Revelation 12:11.) What we are to flee from is youthful lusts. (2 Timothy 2:22.)

God would not have us to be ignorant of our enemy, or how he takes advantage of open doors that undiscerning Christians give him. One of the first steps a Christian must take in order to safeguard against Satan, and to be an effective worker in the lives of others, is to examine his or her own

heart for any unconfessed sin, including the sin of pride. Pride is of the essence of Satan and is a huge open door for the enemy. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" 1 John 2:16. The battle with personal pride is a daily battle. Paul said, "I die daily" 1 Corinthians 15:31. Humble yourselves before going into any spiritual battle and "Submit yourselves...to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" James 4:7. Satan must be able to recognize the authority and power of Christ in you or the result can be devastating as evidenced in Acts 19:11-20. It is also futile, and dangerous, to get caught up in a conversation, or argument, with the devil as Eve did. Demons are very verbal, and love to get you caught up in arguments in order to gain attention. The Word of God, which is Truth, is your only sword. Quoting your favorite "Christian celebrity" or quoting from any source other than the Holy Bible will have no effect whatsoever and the end result can be disastrous.

Never forget that Satan is the father of lies, and that lies and delusion are two of his main weapons. For example, believers must discern what the spirit is behind such things as occult and New Age books, New Age hypnotic music, (and hard rock, pagan music), movies with occult or supernatural overtones and anti-biblical themes, video games, social media, symbols, jewelry, and so forth, much of which can be found in Christian bookstores. If it cannot pass the *Phillipians 4:10* and *2 Peter 1:3-7* "test," or line up with "Spirit and truth" (*John 4:24*) and sound doctrine, the spirit behind it is wrong. You could end up with "another Jesus, another spirit, and another gospel"—a counterfeit Jesus that is in reality a religious spirit. (See *2 Corinthians 11:4*.)

Beware of New Age practices that have in recent years swept through Christian churches in the guise of "new revelations" and "visualization" (mind-science practices and control which is witchcraft); altered states of consciousness through contemplative meditation and prayer, which entered the west from India in the form of Transcendental Medita-

tion, and is a wide open door to demons; any form of Yoga which is Hinduism and therefore demonic; and any form of the occult such as automatic writing, mediumship, fortune telling; astrology; Ouija board, and reading occult books such as "A Course in Miracles" (which is the New Age bible) and so forth. The bottom line is Christians need to pray for discerning of spirits, and turn away from any involvement with those things that God condemns and that open a door to the demonic realm.

Demonic oppression can also occur through other means such as the wrong laying on of hands (*1 Timothy 5:22*) (this is how witches and pagans in the occult transfer spirits, or demons to others); unforgiveness (*Matthew 18:23-35*) and bitterness, (*Hebrews 12:15*); anger (*Ephesians 4:26, 27*); fear (*2 Timothy 1:7*); spiritual void (*Luke 11:26*); rebellion (*1 Samuel 15:23*); pornography and lust (*1 Thessalonians 4:7*; *Hebrews 12:16, 17*; *James 1:14, 15*; *1 Peter 2:11*); a hindering spirit (*Daniel 10:13*; *Acts 18:8*); spirit of anti-Christ (*1 John 4:3*); unclean spirit (*Matthew 12:43*); seducing spirit (*1 Timothy 4:1-16*) and unresolved issues that are the result of unconfessed sin, drug or alcohol abuse, homosexuality, and abortion. Personal assaults from others such as physical or verbal abuse and molestation—the results of such are usually shame, guilt, and an unclean spirit.

An oppressed Christian will find him or herself in a state of spiritual lethargy. This can translate into a lack of desire for Bible reading and study, difficulty in praying, and unbelief which can digress into skepticism, cynicism, and mockery. Some oppressed Christians struggle with overwhelming fear, condemnation, hopelessness, and depression while others wrestle with confusion and frustration. Jesus came to set the captives free, but for the most part the Body of Christ is not trained, prepared or equipped to help their struggling brothers and sisters find the deliverance they need so that they can go on to freedom and maturity in Christ.

God tells us to maintain a "love for the truth" (*2 Thessalonians 2:10, 11*) at all times in order to safeguard our spiritual lives from demonic counterfeits. An example of this is a young

woman with whom I was acquainted many years ago. Every time we talked, her conversation centered on the Holy Spirit. It became clear that the Holy Spirit, not Jesus Christ, was her emphasis, and even though I loved her dearly as a friend, being around her for any length of time made me nervous and uneasy. For those of you who have not heard this story before, I'll repeat it here: One morning in my personal prayer time, I asked the Lord to grant me a ministry just like that of a certain "great late female evangelist." (Of course, that was when I was a skinny, zealous young thing, with a voice.) Thank God, He knows our hearts and knows what His will is for our lives. I can imagine Him smiling as He gently pats His enthusiastic children on the head as He passes by, telling us to "watch and wait" while He works out the best for us. However, I learned a lesson through this about familiar spirits because later that day this particular woman called me on the telephone. Much to my surprise she said, "If you want a ministry just like so-and-so (she named the person), then you have to...." I about fell out of the chair! Right then I knew that what made me hesitant and nervous around her was not *her* but a familiar spirit. As time went on it became more apparent what spirit she was operating under. A few years later a day came when I set up an appointment to meet with her in a restaurant to gently confront her about it, hoping she would confess it and pray to be set free. However, the familiar spirit had already warned her the night before (she told me that right up front) and her wall was up. Her demon was so agitated she kept jumping up and down in her seat. Tragically, she wasn't willing to give up the power the familiar spirit gave to her, and I have not seen her since.

A familiar spirit is a spirit that "familiarizes" itself with a person and then relays information about that person to someone else who (if they are a Christian) can think they are hearing from the Holy Spirit if they do not have discernment of spirits. Witches, mediums, and sorcerers rely on familiar spirits for information and power over the lives of others. From the Old Testament through the New Testament and continuing into the days in which

we live God's command to Israel (and the Church) in *Deuteronomy 18:9-14*, still stands: "*When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.*"

In the New Testament we read of the young woman, a soothsayer, who divined by a familiar spirit called Python (or python spirit) who followed after Paul, Silas, and the brethren, crying out, "*These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation*" *Acts 16:17b*. We read that she did this for many days until Paul's spirit was so grieved that he "*turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour*" *verse 18b*. One of the lessons we learn from this event is that demons can and do reveal truth, (most often half-truths) but this cannot glorify God or benefit man in any way because the source, the spirit behind it is evil.

Jesus commissioned the Apostle Paul "*To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me [Jesus]*" *Acts 26:18*. May we, go on to maturity and as the Body of Christ, likewise keep ourselves "*in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life, And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh*" *Jude 21-23*. ✠

## QUOTABLES

"I refuse to preach a ho-hum Gospel!" - Pastor Rob Greenslade

"God does not judge by His love, but by His holiness." - Rayola Kelley

"The greatest lie the Devil ever told was that you could win souls with entertainment." - Charles Spurgeon

"Homosexuals want to eliminate the King James Version because it establishes absolute morality, and the consequences you will pay for those absolute morals." - Rayola Kelley

"The Great Awakening was the result of solid doctrinal preaching that addressed itself to both the heart and the mind. It was preaching that dared to expose sin in the church. And God used it to sweep thousands into His family." - Warren Wiersbe

"Now, when we show that the Bible teaches the doctrine of total depravity, we are not claiming that there is no good in man, but that there is no good in man *that can satisfy God.*" - Donald Grey Barnhouse

"There is no such thing as purifying the impure. Evil things never get purer, but more vile. All impurity, all evil must be cast out. You can never make Satan holy." - Smith Wigglesworth

"Truth, not doctrine is foundational. Doctrine stands on God's unchangeable truths. Doctrine is a manifestation of what you know is truth. Doctrine cannot save you, a Person saves you." - Rayola Kelley

"There can be no depth of discernment without discipleship." - Jeannette Haley

"No rapid growth in Christian maturity will be attained until the first indispensable of *submission to the lordship* of Christ has been taken. The key question that determines whether or not He has been given that place of authority in the life is, 'Who makes the decisions?'" - J. Oswald Sanders

"I believe in the old-fashioned genuine call to the ministry by the power of the Holy Spirit—men set apart, picked out by God. You can turn men out of colleges, theological schools and universities as fast as you can turn out carpet-tacks, if you want to and when you have done it you haven't a preacher, nor a teacher, nor a Christian worker." - Paul Rader

## RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

**Q:** *Perhaps you might not be able to answer this question, but I would like to know if Jacob wrestled with an angel in Genesis 32:24-32 or was it Jesus in His pre-incarnate state?*

**A:** Like most people I have my opinion about the man with whom Jacob wrestled. All I can do is share my conclusions with you and you can make up your own mind. Let me first state my conclusion. To me it was Jesus in His pre-incarnate state.

There are a few reasons why I came to this conclusion; namely, Jesus made it clear that no man had heard the voice of the Father or seen His shape for we know He is spirit, and that Jesus was the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form (*John 4:24; 5:37*).

With that said, it is also clear in Scripture that one person of the Godhead was seen by people such as in the case of Abraham when the LORD (Jehovah) appeared to him in *Genesis 18*. What he saw were three men, two were later identified as angels and the other one he addressed as "Lord" or *Adonai*. At the end of his conversation with the Lord, we are told that, "And the LORD went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place."

In *Joshua 5:13-15*, Joshua encountered a man. He introduced Himself as the captain of the hosts of the LORD. Clearly, "captain" points to the One who leads all the host of heaven, and there is only one captain, the Lord. The one thing that confirms that the Old Testament Joshua encountered the future New Testament Joshua (Jesus, is the Greek word for Joshua), is that Joshua worshipped Him. If He was a mere man or an angel, it would have been blasphemous for Joshua to show such homage. Only the true God of heaven deserves such worship. (See *Matthew 4:10*.) In fact, that is a good test to consider as you read about these encounters between mere man and spiritual entities. Angels refuse worship and true saints of God would not worship anyone but God.

In *Daniel 3*, when the three Hebrew men were in the fiery oven, a

fourth man appeared. It was King Nebuchadnezzar who made this statement, "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God" (*Daniel 3:25*). Note the word "form." It means shaped like the Son of God.

At the beginning of *chapter 32*, Jacob actually saw angels of God. We also must remember that in *Genesis 28* he had a vision of the LORD God standing at the top of the ladder that reached from earth to heaven, and Jacob clearly knew who He was. Fear came over him because He saw God and lived. In fact, *John 1:18* makes this statement, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." In order to see God, a person would have to see the full glory of God which would entail the complete glory of all three persons of the Godhead Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It was made clear in *Exodus 33:19-20* that no man could look into the full glory of God and live. It is for this reason God's glory always had to be veiled in darkness, behind a curtain, or an outward form, such as the humanity of Christ.

Let's consider a couple of facts here. Jacob wrestled with this man until the breaking of day, seeking a blessing. It is clear that he was not wrestling with an angel or he would have been identified as such, but on the other hand Jacob would not be seeking a blessing from a mere man. Only God is the one who can bless.

The second thing has to do with the blessing, which was a new name. It is clear that God alone reserves the right to change or give a new name to one of His servants. Consider what *Revelation 2:17* tells us, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." (Emphasis added.)

To me another clue that it was Jesus in His pre-incarnate state is that Jacob's thigh was put out of joint. When man has an intense encounter with the Lord, he never walks away

the same. In fact, his encounter with the Lord reminded him to walk humbly before the Lord. Isaiah in *Isaiah 6*, felt the live coal from the altar of heaven against his lips, and the Apostle Paul, who had seen great things, was given a thorn in his flesh in order to avoid self-exaltation (*2 Corinthians 12*).

Can you imagine if Jacob had wrestled all night with the Lord and walked away with only a blessing? Satan could have used it to tempt him into thinking he had managed to somehow gain victory over the Lord in his own strength. We must remember that all blessings from God are a matter of His grace and are nothing we have acquired or obtained in our own strength.

I have always asked God to keep me from touching His glory. I want Him to keep me reliant on Him, walking softly before Him when He so graciously entrusts me with matters concerning His kingdom. Jacob limped the rest of his life, no doubt remembering who did what. In my mind, the Lord humbled him so he could walk in accordance to the blessing of his new name which also gives the final clue as to the identity of the man, "Israel, a prince prevailing with **God**." (Emphasis added.) †

## COMMENTS

"Thank you for your powerful messages of late. We know we're in the 'last days'. Our world is in such a mess! Only Christ can 'fix' it! - WA

"We have a new pastor....There is such a move in the Spirit. We are seeing people saved, filled with the Spirit— healings almost every service. A real call to prayer and hunger for God in all our people. It's so exciting to see almost all of our congregation pushing into what God is doing. You can see such growth in people. .... I so appreciate the newsletters and the music you have sent this year. Thank you.—OR

"Your writings have broadened our horizon greatly. We thank you always for what you do." - ID

"Always enjoy your teaching ." - ID

"Thank you both, for all that you have done, are doing and will do for me through CHRIST! I truly feel GOD working in my life and am excited about what he has for me in the future. Your guidance and thoughts have helped me so very much in my walk with the LORD! - ID