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THE REALITY OF GOD

Part 18

By Rayola Kelley

As we watch events unfold on both the international and national stages, it is becoming quite clear that Jesus' second coming could be just around the corner. Although the events are unnerving, as Christians we have a sure anchor that holds us to the unseen Rock of Ages. We have a glorious future awaiting us, and the season of testing and trials we may very well be embarking in this time of our journey will be temporary and will give way to another season: that of glorious hope and expectation.



The question is why is it that Christians can live in such expectation? The answer is clear because we believe and hope in a living God. However, our God is not just any God, He alone is God and He is Creator, all-powerful, immutable, and all-knowing. His attributes find their springboard in His holiness. They are wrapped in His goodness, held together by His mercy, and disturbed by His grace. He knows how to give good gifts to those who are His, preserve the saints' souls regardless of the testing, and ultimately bring each heir of salvation into the fullness of His redemption (*Ephesians 1:11-14; 2 Timothy 4:18; James 2:17*).

Every attribute of God confirms our expectation concerning His righteous ways being carried out, His promises being fulfilled, and His perfect will being brought to full fruition. However, some of the Christian Church comes across as being divided, critical, and lacking vision and victory. Clearly, there are those who are caught up with what I call "non-essential" doctrines and lack concern about whether believers are being firmly established on the foundation of

Jesus. These very same people often do not see the urgent need for believers to be prepared to be followers of Christ into the discipline life of self-denial, cross-bearing, and reasonable service.

As we study the last of the end days, there is one admonition that can be found concerning Christians: they must be ready, prepared for His coming (*Matthew 24:42-44; Mark 13:33-37; Luke 21:34-36*). We need to keep in mind that the Jewish people were watching for Jesus' first coming, but were not prepared to receive Him (*John 1:10-11*). The reason is because they were looking for their Messiah to come as victorious King and not as a suffering servant.

Through the years I have heard the various takes on Jesus' coming, but the one thing that seemed to be missing the most is what it would mean for the Christian to be prepared for His coming. It was often fudged over by assumptions that if you are a Christian you really do not have to be worried about being prepared. In most cases, the hope of His coming is being emphasized, but not the reality of what it means to be prepared for His coming in order to endure to the end. However, any responsible hostess knows when a visitor is coming to his or her home for an event, he or she can spend anywhere from a couple of days to a week preparing for the person. My question is what are Christians doing to prepare for Jesus next great visitation?

The one thing I have asked through the years is when are we as Christians going to agree with God about what He says about the matters of life, righteousness, and godliness in His Word? When are we going to believe it enough that we apply it to our life by assimilating it into our attitude and actions? Certain aspects of the Bible may not be written to us, but every bit of it has been written for our edification, growth, and maturity (*1*

Corinthians 10:1-11). It is full of examples, instructions, admonishments, and warnings.

Sadly, instead of approaching the Bible to simply believe its truths, apply its principles, and strive to maintain the intent of the spirit behind it, we take the bits of the Word that appeal to our preference towards something, while nitpicking the rest to death with an intellectual fervor. In essence, a person is going to interpret a matter to justify his or her confusion or unbelief towards a subject. This is how many piece meal together theology they can agree with, and this is why we have a very sober warning in *2 Timothy 2:15*, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," *Romans 1:18* tells us why we must rightly divide the word of truth, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of them, who hold the truth in unrighteousness."

Everything in the Bible exists to bring us to a better understanding of who God is so we can rightly discern how to apply something to our lives. It is obedience to the full counsel, intent of the Word that ensures an overcoming life and of exercising faith that ends in victory, and one might ask why. *Hebrews 11:35* tells us so we can come out experiencing a better resurrection. The Word of God is clear there are no in-betweens as far as what constitutes godliness and no shades of gray when it comes to righteousness. The problem is it is easy to hide behind fuzzy lines and shadows of gray, but I am often reminded of what my friend, Pastor Phil Skoog once said, "Casual Christianity leads to causalities."

We do not adjust the Bible to our way of thinking; rather we are to adjust our lives to line up to the Word of God. We do not become the final authority as to what we believe based on how we interpret a matter, rather, the Word

must reveal whether our understanding of something clearly lines up to the complete counsel of God's Word. If it does not, we are not to hold to our own take on it, we must let go of our stubbornness to be right (stiff-necked), and submit to the Word to ensure the integrity of what we end up believing.

Through the years I have heard various interpretations and takes on different Scriptural subjects. To each person, his or her interpretation is right and in his or her mind any wise, clearly thinking individual would have to agree with the conclusion. Often times these people think, "if only they would listen to me," or "if only I were allowed to present my case they would see that it is true." The truth is even if people listen, they will most likely come out confused because personal interpretations often fly in the face of acceptable, fundamental, tried and proven beliefs. On the other hand, if such a person is not confused by someone else's interpretation, but holds to the fundamental beliefs that have been scripturally tested and taught, such an individual comes out more so convinced about what has been established as fundamental truths. After all truth will never change and if a matter has to be constantly adjusted, then it is not the truth.

How can people know whether their understanding of God is reality (truth) or whether it is an assumption or presumption? How can they know if their conclusion about a matter maintains a right spirit that ensures the integrity of truth? How can each of us know if our insight about God is based on spirit and truth or if it is based on personal preferences that cannot stand under the scrutiny of proven Scriptural principles, theology, and doctrine?

In order to properly answer this question, we must keep in mind that the hardest person to discern is ourselves. We perceive our conclusions are right, without realizing that we may be failing to discern or test a wrong spirit (motive, intent, and focus) behind our conclusions. We can rigorously stand for what we believe, while being blind to the simple fact that we are failing to stand on what is true. The question is can we know whether we are of a right spirit and standing on

the true Scriptural foundation, thereby, assured of being upright in our life before God? After all, we cannot know how deceptive our fickle heart can be when challenged with the error of personal prideful attitudes, concrete opinions, and faulty foundations (*Jeremiah 17:9-10* refer to *Hebrews 2:13*).

I say all of this because as we consider a greater reality of God, we must know how to discern our own attitude about who God is and His truths to receive greater revelations about Him. Attitude determines not only how we will approach a subject, but the mood that will influence our approach. For example, if I have a foul (prideful disposition) mood because my attitude about something is wrong, then my handling of the truths of God will prove to be incorrect because the spirit is incorrect. It takes the right spirit (Holy Spirit) to ensure a right attitude when approaching God's Word in order to receive it by faith in the right way.

The question is how can I discern the spirit behind me when I approach the Word of God? The first thing I need to honestly examine is why am I approaching the Word: to seek the truth of it or seek to adjust the teachings of the Word to my understanding? Am I approaching it because I love God and want to know Him and His will, or am I doing it out of some religious duty? Is the Word of God my food or is it a platform in which I promote my own personal take on theology? Is my desire to see people converted to be true followers of Jesus according to His Word, or am I like the Pharisees of Jesus' day who were trying to make converts to their own way of thinking?

It is only after we have tested our motive can we properly discern our agenda. When it comes to the Word of God, there are two main agendas that determine the spirit behind our presentations: a burden for souls or personal causes. A good way to discern between the two is to reconcile whether there is a genuine concern for one's spiritual standing that the Lord has impress you to address or whether it is all about how something made you feel, and therefore, you are going to set the record straight to control the outcome of something. At this point the Lord is being tacked on at

best as the target must be made to see the error of his or her offending ways and straighten up like a good obedient dog.

Through the years I have had to discern my true agenda. As an immature Christian, most of my initial times of trying to straighten someone out about what I considered were wrong notions or activities were nothing more than personal causes. I cannot tell you how many times that I failed to truly edify someone, and ended up causing great offense and division between the person and myself.

It took a while for the Lord to teach me that causes are based on personal zeal, but often lacks a true understanding of acceptable righteousness (*Roman 10:2*). When it comes to personal causes God's take is not part of the equation; rather, it is assumed that it is also what He would naturally agree with because it has a religious bent to it. The truth is personal causes have nothing to do with God or His Kingdom. It is all about a person's self-righteousness.

Eventually, I realize that what distinguished the difference between my causes and God's true concerns were the fruit. I remembered the Lord laying on my heart to share some things He had been teaching me to a Christian women's group. The initial steps of obedience helped me learn about the first lesson: To ensure God's presence in a matter, He must first ordain it.

I approached the head of the woman's group, expecting to be turned down. Instead the woman was receptive and set up the time for me to share. This revealed to me the second lesson: If a matter is ordained by God, He will prepare the way and right time for it to be delivered.

As I wrestled before the Lord about what He wanted me to share with the women, I learned the next lesson: Self must be completely out of the way or God's message will be defiled and rendered totally ineffective. It is important to realize the matters of God are not platforms in which we expound and promote personal causes with rigor passion; rather, they serve as opportunities to minister the life of His Son to others to bring salvation and healing to lost and wounded souls.

It was at this time I realized personal causes are a matter of the fleshly, carnal man. Anytime a person operates in the flesh, he or she will be in the wrong spirit. If the spirit is wrong, there is only death in the presentation because life will be absent. This is a vital lesson to know in any presentation that has to do with God.

Confusion often comes because the Bible is clear about such things as reproving sin along with how to conduct self in regard to other Church disciplines. However, in a world that emphasizes God's love and tolerance, such stands can come across as too harsh or unloving to our soft, worldly palates (*Matthew 18:15-17*; *1 Corinthians 5*; *Ephesians 5:6-13*). It is at this point the Christian can take hold of the reigns and attempt to confront or deal with moral, spiritual matters in his or her own intellectual strength.

At such times offenses often occur because people never respond the way we think they should; therefore, we take offense for what we consider is rejection of the truth or instruction. However the offense we often feel at such times is often an affront against personal pride and not a matter of the sin of commission (trespass against God's moral law). Again these two factors are something we must properly discern. When one is personally offended, he or she naturally wants personal pride to be placated, but to do so is a grave sin of idolatry that blinds the instigator to his or her own character deviation and causes those who bow down to this idol to partake of sin.

Pride is something we must all contend with, but few recognize it when it is prompting one's ego to react to those things that has offended it. Peter tells us in *1 Peter 4:8* that love covers such offenses, but to assimilate God's love at this point requires us to deny our pride any audience and apply the cross to become dead to the demands of the self-life so we can follow Christ in His example of love, mercy, forgiveness, and grace. However, when a person is at odds with God, that is a whole different matter. That person needs to be reconciled back to God through the brokenness of repentance and confession of sin to be cleansed from the

unrighteousness working in his or her life and to be restored back into a relationship with God.

The Bible is clear how we are to approach matters. If we are to confront sin working in someone's life it must be done in the right spirit of meekness and always for the benefit of the person's spiritual well-being (edification), in light of the ministry of reconciliation (*2 Corinthians 5:18-19*; *1 Corinthians 8:1*; *Ephesians 4:11-16*; *2 Timothy 2:24-26*). As believers our foremost calling is to ensure that every person God entrusts us with is reconciled to God. If we have been knocked off our pinnacle of self-importance because of someone personally making us upset, uncomfortable, or offended, the problem and test will always rest with the matured Christian as to how it will be handled, and not the one who was unknowingly used like a sling shot (most likely by God) to bring that Christian to the place of pliability before His feet in order to learn what He wants him or her to understand.

This brings me back to the valuable lessons I had to learn. If God ordains it and self is out of the way, then God can show His approval by anointing what is being presented. It always has and always will be God's work. If His stamp is not on something, it will prove vain and useless. It is the presence and anointing of the Holy Spirit that sharpens the edges of God's truths to penetrate the sleepy, dull Christian in order to spiritually awaken him or her to challenge, and change him or her. What will follow spiritual awakening is preparation for the Christian to become the salt of the earth and serve as a reflection of the true light of the world to those who are seeking the Bread of Life.

Why is it important to ensure a right attitude towards God? The reason is because the truths of God cannot be properly received and assimilated into our lives unless we have a right heart attitude towards Him. I can't know God if I am looking through a defiled or limited, controlled perspective. I must cast aside what I think I know about Him and truly seek God out so that I can know Him from the premise of a right spirit in order to receive truth with genuine faith that in turn will enable me to properly handle

it.

Next month we are going to consider how God presents Himself to man in order to ensure that we adopt a correct attitude about who He is and needs to be. Meanwhile, it is up to each of us to ask the Holy Spirit to prepare us to not only desire to know Him, but be ready to receive what is revealed to our heart no matter how much it may challenge our present understanding. †

QUOTES TO PONDER

"The devil, as the god of this world, has the right to give wealth and power to whomever he will if they will worship him. Just look who serves him. World leaders are into the occult: dictators, presidents, popes, international bankers, rock stars. The movers and shakers all have sold their souls to the devil for riches and power, only to be destroyed. This has gone on ever since Adam fell. Nothing changes." - Jack Chick

"The anointing follows brokenness. There cannot be any anointing without brokenness." - Rayola Kelley

"No rapid growth in Christian maturity will be attained until the first indispensable step 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?'" - From *The Joy of Following Jesus* pg. 76, by J. Oswald Sanders

"What we need to-day in the Church of Jesus Christ is to clean out the folks that are not Christians, and get down to those who have been born again, and filled with the Holy Spirit. If you only have a little clean group of men and women after that order, God can build on that kind of a foundation a superstructure that will be to the praise of His Glory throughout the eternal ages." - From *God's Blessed Man*, pg 25, by J. Gregory Mantle (1852-1925)

"In being reborn, there is the impartation of life by the Spirit's power, and the one who receives it is saved. In the baptism with the Holy Spirit, there is the impartation of power, and the one who receives it is fitted for service." - R. A. Torrey

**DARE TO DISCERN
THE HOLY SPIRIT – Part One
By Jeannette Haley**

*“But ye are not in the flesh,
but in the Spirit, If so be that the
Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if
any man have not the Spirit of Christ,
he is none of his.” – Romans 8:9b*

In this Dare to Discern series I have touched on different subjects such as discerning spirits, fruit, error, cults, heresy, false prophets, angels, and demons. But did you know that Christians also need to know how to discern whether the Holy Spirit is in us, in our lives, and in our churches, when He is manifest (present, moving, working and speaking)?

Even though born again believers confess that they believe in the Godhead (triune God) as “God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost” many have a very limited knowledge of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit, and fewer still have an intimate relationship with Him. Yet consider that the Holy Spirit can be found throughout the entire Bible from the beginning to the end (*Genesis 1:2 to Revelation 22:17*). *Romans 8:16* tells believers, “*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*” The question is do you have that witness in your spirit?

It must be understood what the Holy Spirit is, and what He is not. The Holy Spirit is a Person. To define a person: A person must have a mind—he or she is able to think and act upon his or her thinking; a person has his or her own will; a person possesses self-identity and emotions and is able to react cognitively. (For further study, see Let Us Reason Ministries for a comprehensive list of Scriptural references on the Person of the Holy Spirit: <http://www.letusreason.org/Trin4.htm> and <http://www.dtl.org/trinity/study/person.htm> for an extensive list of proof texts. For a list of names of the Holy Spirit, see: <http://godonthe.net/HolySpirit/snames.htm>).

What the Holy Spirit is not: He is not “the force” of eastern mysticism as presented in Star Wars. (Note: The Anti-Christ “*in his estate shall...honour the God of forces; and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour...*” *Daniel 11:38*. [Emphasis added.] He is

not “Divine Science” as the cult of so-called “Christian Science” teaches. He is not the “spirit of some holy person who has once lived in the flesh which is what spiritualists believe. The Holy Spirit is not “the invisible active force of Almighty God that moves his servants to do his will” nor is He “God’s Active Force, but not a person” as the Jehovah’s Witnesses teach.

Scientology ignores the Holy Spirit and followers are urged to “follow their inner spirit.” In Mormonism the Holy Spirit is explained this way: “The Holy Ghost is a ‘personage of Spirit.’ He does not have a body of flesh and bones, like the Father and the Son. He is ‘the influence of deity, the light of Christ, or of Truth’ and He ‘can only be in one place at one time’ although he emanates from Deity like electricity or the universal ether... which fills the earth and the air, and is everywhere present.”

In the Unification Church the “Holy Spirit is a female Spirit. She also cleanses the sins of the people in order to restore them, thus indemnifying the sin committed by Eve...the Holy Spirit, being female (negativity) in working on earth. There must be a True Mother with the True Father, in order to give rebirth to fallen children as children of goodness. She is the Holy Spirit.”

As for Unity, they believe that “the Father is Principle, the Son is that Principle revealed in the creative plan, and the Holy Spirit is the executive power of both the Father and the Son, carrying out the plan.” In addition they believe “Spirit is substance...that invisible, intangible but real something which as its indestructible core and cause stands under, or at the center of, every visible thing in existence.”

In Wicca (which, by the way, is gaining in popularity) they say “It really matters little whether we associate with the divine as the ‘Father, Son and Holy Ghost’ or ‘The One, Goddess and God.’” In their rituals “divine forces or nature spirits are invoked.” Wiccans believe in “multiple spirits rather than adherence to one Holy Spirit” (Of course these “spirits” are demons.)

Basically, the New Age Movement (which embraces many esoteric beliefs and practices, mysticism, Eastern religions, mind-science religions,

and a whole host of Satanic deceptions far too numerous to mention here) declares that the Holy Spirit “reveals itself through progressive revelation.”

Then there are those who practice the mysteries of ancient paganism, or magic, and refer to Lucifer as the “Light Bearer” and call him the “Holy Spirit.”

Is your head spinning yet? Never forget the warning, “*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son*” *2 John 9*. “*What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s*” *1 Corinthians 6:19, 20*.

Here are a few facts about the Person of the Holy Spirit in a nutshell: *Romans 8:27*, the Holy Spirit has a mind (proving he is personal). *Romans 15:30*, He has love which only those with intelligence and personality express. *Ephesians 4:30*, He can be grieved. *Hebrews 10:29*, He can be insulted. He can also be blasphemed. *Matthew 12:32* tells us all sins committed against the Son will be forgiven but the sin against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. This certainly affirms that He is neither a force nor a mere creature. Only an eternal sin cannot be forgiven, which means it is against the eternal God.

God desires that His children grow to maturity in Christ, leaving behind their spiritual life on the “low lands” of immaturity, compromise, tolerance, assumptions, superstition, and willful ignorance of the Person and power of the Holy Spirit. If we are to grow and mature as Christians we simply cannot afford to ignore the high calling of God to not only learn of Christ through His Word as revealed by the Holy Spirit, but to worship Him in “Spirit and in truth.” (*John 4:24*.) It is up to each individual to consecrate him or herself (set self apart for God) in order to answer the high calling of God to individually and personally “*know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable*

unto his death" *Philippians 3:10*. We learn of Him (through the Word), and we know Him (by personal experience) as we walk with Him, obey Him, and discern the voice, and work of the Holy Spirit. "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" *1 John 2:27*.

Does this, then, mean that we have no need of man to teach us anything? No, it does not. In the current February issue of *The Berean Call*, Tom McMahon answers this question: "Peter tells us that the Bible did not have its origin in the thoughts or will of men; rather, holy men of God spoke and wrote what the Holy Spirit communicated to them (2 Pt 1:21). Not only did the Scriptures come by the Holy Spirit, but we're told that to truly understand God's Word, we must have the Holy Spirit to teach us (1 Cor: 2:11-14). So no one can deny the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit regarding both scriptural inspiration and illumination. However, by taking the position that you plan to exclude everyone but the Holy Spirit in learning what the Word of God says, you've already missed part of the Holy Spirit's instruction.

"Teaching is a function of believers in Christ. The Great Commission includes the command to teach all nations to observe all things that Christ taught His disciples (Mt 28:19-20). One of the principal ministries in the body of Christ is that of teacher (1 Cor: 12:28); the selection of elders includes as a criterion the ability to teach (1 Tm 3:2); and Galatians: 6:6 tells the person who is taught to share in all good things with him who teaches. God has gifted the church with these individuals who have the ability to teach 'for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,' and this process is to continue until 'we all come in the unity of the faith' as well as maturity in Christ (Eph: 4:11-13). If you read on in Ephesians you will find that teachers are also given to help us grow in discernment (v. 14), even to recognizing false teachers. At best, to deny the value of those whom God

has gifted as teachers is to miss His grace and ministry to His own, through His own.

"We can appreciate the frustration you have with teachers who miss the mark, either in part or for the most part. The Scriptures are not naïve with regard to the problem of false teachers. Paul warns about them with tears (Acts: 20:30-31); Peter and John also raise strong concerns (2 Pt 2:1; 2 Jn 7). When the full counsel of Scripture is considered, you can see that avoiding all teachers doesn't solve the problem of false teachers. A godly teacher (who can instruct in discernment) is merely a vessel of the Holy Spirit; for anything to be truly worthwhile from such an individual, it must be the work of the Holy Spirit within him. However, when a teacher relies upon his own wisdom or flesh rather than the Holy Spirit, he has, at the very least, polluted the truth. Granted, human vessels are not the most trustworthy instruments, but God has chosen them for service and has given safeguards: His Word and His Spirit.

"When John wrote 'ye need not that any man teach you (1 Jn: 2:27) he wasn't contradicting those Scriptures previously mentioned. He was referring to false teachers (v. 26) and stating that the anointing of the Holy Spirit (v. 20) would enable the believer to discern what was true and what was false. Being like the Bereans (Acts: 17:10-1) is the biblical solution to recognizing whether or not a teacher is in line with the truth. Remember, it says they received 'with all readiness of mind' Paul's teaching and searched the Scriptures daily to see if what he had to say was true to God's Word. Paul taught under the power of the Holy Spirit, and it was the same Spirit who enabled those Berean Jews to recognize scriptural truth. That's the way it has to be for godly teachers and those who want to learn and grow in the faith, no matter how confusing and deceptive the days become."

God's will is that we become "complete in Him" (*Colossians 2:10; 4:12*) but this cannot be accomplished if we, like spoiled children at a dinner party insist on picking and choosing what we will "accept" and what we will "reject" in our lives, homes, and churches when it comes to the Word,

the Spirit, and the truth. Our God is One God, the Godhead is Three in One, and the universal Church (the Body of Christ) is one Body. Therefore, any attempts by man to fragment, separate or divide this Oneness will meet with judgment. Knowing this, then, why is the third Person of the Godhead "separated" by being ignored, shunned, vexed, grieved, and quenched by most churches, while in some religious circles and movements He is grossly misrepresented and outright blasphemed? You cannot divide Christ. You cannot divide the Godhead. You cannot have God without Christ, and you cannot have Christ without the Holy Spirit. "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one" *1 John 5:7, 8*. What this verse means is that the Spirit puts His identifying mark on a matter, the water (God's Word) confirms a matter, and the blood reminds and ties each believer into an everlasting covenant. In the end, these three will serve as witnesses against those who reject the Holy Spirit, disobey His Word, and show contempt towards the covenant that was established by the blood of Jesus.

There may be no singularly simply answer to the question of why there is such a profound difference between the power of the Spirit-filled pilgrim Church and the post-modern Church (which is largely man-centered, not Christ centered.) However, one thing is certain and that is church history offers a broad perspective that cannot be dismissed concerning the powerless state of contemporary churches, which, sadly, also reveals a systematic failure to disciple people in the whole Word of God as Jesus commanded. While there may be a fair supply of regurgitated milk, most of what is being served up to the Body of Christ in our era (in addition to people-pleasing, ear-tickling "sermonettes" from cheer leaders for Jesus) comes through "Christian" TV, "best-selling" books, movies, and other media, and is nothing more than flesh-pleasing "cotton candy" for the soul. The Holy Spirit is not in it, nor did He inspire it.

Consider the reason Jesus sent the Comforter to us—to “reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” *John 16:8b*. When was the last time you were convicted of sin to the innermost part of your being in light of the holiness and righteousness of God, and repented in fear of the judgment to come?

Without the manifest presence and power of the Holy Spirit in our lives and churches we are facing a serious and sobering reality—only a remnant will have enough oil to keep their light burning through the long, dark night that is coming. Jesus asked, “Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth” *Luke 18:8b*? If you are not born again of the Spirit, you are not saved. Period. Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water [the Word] and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit” *John 3:5-8*. (Addition mine.)

The Holy Spirit is indispensable to the Body of Christ. After His resurrection Jesus surprised his gathered disciples by appearing among them even though the doors were locked. This is when He commissioned them for service and said, “Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost” *John 20:21, 22*. To quote from Ken Butcher’s book, *The Church – What On Earth Is It?* “Jesus imparted the breath of new life to the embryonic spiritual ‘body of Christ’ just as when Jehovah Elohim first gave life to Adam’s physical body He ‘breathed into his nostrils the breath of life’” (*Genesis 2:7*). Ken explains, “At that moment that small ekklesia received the Holy Spirit and was joined to Christ in the Spirit: ‘he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him’” *1 Corinthians 6:17*. He reminds us, “James says of the natural body: ‘the body without the spirit is dead James 2:26.’ Is the spiritual ‘body of Christ’ any less dead

without the Spirit of Christ? Can she be any more than a lifeless shell?”

Before His ascension into Heaven, Jesus told His followers, “... behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” *Luke 24:49*. [Emphasis added]. Then they returned to Jerusalem and went into an upper room where the disciples, including the women and Jesus’ mother, Mary, and His brethren “continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.” (*Acts 1:13,14*). Try to imagine that you lived in Jerusalem at this time, and you were a follower of Jesus. Try to see yourself in one accord with the disciples in prayer and supplication, waiting for the “promise from on high.” Imagine you are part of what happened as recorded in *Acts 2:1-4* “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost....”

If the Body of Christ is to experience revival, it is clear that whenever we gather together with other believers to seek the Lord, pray, and worship Him, we need to all be in “one accord.” This means agreement in the Spirit, and in truth. In the Lord’s Prayer for His disciples, He said, “Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth...And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one: as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me” *John 17:17, 19-23*. [Emphasis added.] Without this oneness in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in our assemblies,

there can be no true revival because the Holy Spirit will not descend on that which is defiled with “mixed spirits” such as outlined in the fourth paragraph of this article. To be in one accord also means that brokenness and repentance for sin has taken place.

Ken Butcher explains, “The corporate unity of the disciples provided a holy and welcoming receptacle for the Holy Spirit. He empowered the union between Christ and His body and between the members of the body. His indwelling presence released supernatural power and gifting to ‘the body of Christ’ and many acts of power took place through the Holy Spirit. He came to dwell in the church. He came to stay. God no longer dwelt in a ‘temple made with hands’ but in the living temple made up of the many members of ‘the body of Christ’. Each member was a temple of the Holy Spirit and was joined by the Holy Spirit into one corporate unity that comprised the greater temple of ‘the body of Christ’. Not long after the day of Pentecost those assembled were filled with the Spirit again: ‘when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit’” (*Acts 4:31*).

In the early church one way the presence of the Holy Spirit was manifest was through the operation of spiritual gifts. Paul referred to the gifts of the Spirit functioning in “the body of Christ”. In *1 Corinthians 12:7-11*. In his letter to the Ephesians Paul wrote, “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling” *Ephesians 4:3, 4*. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bound or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” *1 Corinthians 12:13*. Ken Butcher explains, “If someone had not been baptized by Him into the one body, that person had no part in that body. This baptism is not water baptism or necessarily the same experience as receiving Holy Spirit power and gifting for service and witness (these things may be experienced concurrently but often it is not so). This baptism is about the individual being bonded, incorporated and subsumed, into the one ‘body of

Christ' by the regenerative action of the Holy Spirit. Participation in the *'one Spirit'* is the essence of *'the unity of the Spirit'*. This is an organic unity through the common interconnecting life flow of each member of *'the body of Christ'* by the Spirit of Christ.

"The more *'the body of Christ'* experiences the reality of an ungrieved Holy Spirit the greater the experiential awareness of the spiritually organic unity between the members and their Head and between each of the members. But if the Holy Spirit is so intrinsic to *'the body of Christ'* why is there such little awareness of His presence now? Why is Pentecost a distant historic memory in many churches rather than an ongoing reality? Has the Holy Spirit been offended?"

My answer to Ken's question is an unequivocal "Yes!" Next month we will continue this study of the Person of the Holy Spirit. †

"GO YE THEREFORE"

From *Reflections on the Gospels* by Vance Havner

"Go ye therefore." We build churches today and wait for the people to come. Here we are bidden to go after them in the highways and hedges. Too many churches are glorified clubs that have forgotten about the shepherd seeking the sheep.

"Disciple all nations." Soul-fishing is the Christian's business. We are not to uplift, reform, cultivate them, but to bring them to know the Lord. We have forgotten our commission and are out proselyting, calling the righteous to repentance, instead of bringing men to Christ.

Then we are to baptize them into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Notice, discipling and baptizing go together, and we have no business separating them. In Acts, baptism immediately followed conversion. There was no thought of using one's opinion about being baptized or not, it was the very next step. At Pentecost, in Samaria, in the case of the eunuch, Cornelius, Lydia, the jailer, they obeyed at once.

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Not just to know them but to observe them. †

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

CONFUSING WORDS OF JESUS?

Q: *"I have been studying what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. There are a couple of parts that I have stumbled over. I realize that this may be a two-part question, but I hope you will answer both of them. The first one is found in Luke 9:60. What did Jesus mean when He instructed the one man to, "let the dead bury the dead," and then exhorted him to go forth to preach the kingdom of God? The other question is about what Jesus said in Luke 22:35-36. When He first sent out His disciples it was without purse, supplies, and shoes, but before His crucifixion Jesus made this statement, "But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it and likewise his script: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one." These two statements are a bit confusing to me, especially the last one where Jesus also stated that those who live by the sword would die by it. It does not make sense that He would change His instructions."*

A: As always there are different takes on Jesus' statements. The first one was clearly in relationship to following Him into a consecrated sold out life. Jesus will always put his finger on those things that would cause any of His followers to look back at the old life, preventing them from finishing the course set before them. Often those things that can cause a follower of Jesus to fail his calling or take detours have to do with worldly lifestyles and obligations. These lifestyles and obligations can create misdirected loyalties and cause followers of Christ to miss their high calling, as well as small windows of opportunity to truly be about the Lord's work.

Your question is in regard to the second statement made to a person seeking to be His disciple. It is important to consider Jesus' first response to one seeking to follow Him. His first reply was in regard to what some would consider normalcy as far as having your own home. Jesus did not have His own place where He could lay His head, revealing that sometimes the heavenly call requires a person to leave behind what is con-

sidered normal and rightfully his or hers to pursue. This pointed out that the disciplined life of a disciple would not be in line with what the world considers a "normal lifestyle," and would speak of that which would be considered out of the norm.

In the situation that you made reference to, the second individual was asking Jesus whether he could finish up what were considered to be personal obligations before following Him. His request to bury his father was honorable but not practical. Most believe this man's father was not yet dead. In essence, he would have been waiting around for his death to happen first so he could be assured of carrying out his obligation. It is for this reason Jesus challenged him to be about the kingdom's business of offering the message of life. Most of the activities surrounding a person's death are attached to worldly practices, and those of the world are for the most part dead in their sins. Jesus was saying in short, let those who are dead to the things of God oversee the activities of the world, but you need to be about my business.

In the second incident you asked about there were specific instructions to the disciples when they were first sent forth by Jesus. In their three years of following Jesus, He had been the source of His disciples' training, needs, and leadership, but the cross and His death, burial, and ascension was before Him. Clearly, the dynamics were changing, and I think this was Jesus' way of bringing a sobering point home to them, mainly that changes were occurring and they had to be prepared.

Clearly, sticking with the literal meaning of this instruction would cause confusion. This brings us to understanding the principles being promoted. A person never leaves home unless he or she has the means to sustain him or herself. It is clear that for the most part, the Disciples of Christ were provided for, because those who lived by the Gospel were to be supported by it; but, no doubt they were being encouraged to carry what they needed to avoid being a burden to others. Paul did tent making so he would not be a burden to the Thessalonians while serving as an example (*Acts 18:3; 1 Corinthians*

9:13-14; 2 Thessalonians 3:8). We also saw in the case of Peter and John in Acts 3 when they encountered the lame beggar that they admitted they had no silver and gold to give, but what they had to offer was Jesus Christ of Nazareth who could heal him. Therefore, the idea of a purse could also point to carrying the real spiritual treasure with them, ever being prepared to offer the Pearl of Great Price to whosoever was seeking for heaven's true riches.

According to Strong's Concordance, the script was a wallet or leather pouch in which they could carry food. Once again, these disciples had to travel everywhere on foot. It would be practical for them to now carry food with them as they fulfilled the great commission to take the Gospel to the whole known world. We also must remember that the Apostle Paul instructed Christians to shod their feet with the Gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15). They were to shore up and ensure their walk in a spiritual way, and be prepared to advance forward with the real bread and meat from heaven.

There is nowhere in Scripture where it is recorded that the disciples actually picked up a literal sword and carried it with them. At this point in time I think it would be safe to say that Jesus was preparing His disciples to realize that a great spiritual battle was before them and that they must be prepared to fight a good fight. He warned them before He sent them forth the first time that He was sending them as lambs among wolves (Luke 10:3). As the great Shepherd, He would ensure their safety and well-being. However, once Jesus was physically gone, they had to learn how to be wise as serpents but harmless as doves, knowing that they would be delivered up to their enemies where they would be used as witnesses for His sake (Matthew 10:16-19). This shows the attitude of meekness and not the aggression of a warrior with a physical sword to swing.

We know that when it comes to the armor of God, the Word of God serves as the sword. Jesus made reference to the truth being a sharp sword that would even divide family members and the writer of Hebrews reminds us how effective and power-

ful God's Word is. It is an offensive weapon and not a defensive one (Matthew 10:34-39; Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12).

When we consider confusing statements we need to ask the Lord to give us clarity about the intent and purpose for such statements. The way you can test something as to whether a conclusion is correct is whether the subject lines up with the complete counsel of the teachings and examples found in God's Word. †

O LOVE THAT WILT NOT LET ME GO

O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

O light that foll'west all my way,
I yield my flick'ring torch to thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in thy sunshine's blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be.

O Joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain,
That morn shall tearless be.

O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.

George Matheson (1842—1906) said about this hymn:

"My hymn was composed in the manse of Innellan [Argyleshire, Scotland] on the evening of the 6th of June, 1882, when I was 40 years of age. I was alone in the manse at that time. It was the night of my sister's marriage, and the rest of the family were overnight in Glasgow. Something happened to me, which was known only to myself, and which caused me the most severe mental suffering. The hymn was the fruit of that suffering. It was the quickest bit of work I ever did in my life. I had the impression of having it dictated to me by some inward voice rather than of working it out myself. I am quite sure

that the whole work was completed in five minutes, and equally sure that it never received at my hands any retouching or correction. I have no natural gift of rhythm. All the other verses I have ever written are manufactured articles; this came like a dayspring from on high." †

ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP TO GOD

From *My Daily Pursuit*
By A. W. Tozer, pg. 34

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings, which cannot be uttered.—Romans 8:26

The notion that anyone can worship without the Holy Spirit is not only wrong, but dangerous. The notion that we can crowd the Holy Spirit into a corner and ignore Him, quench Him, resist Him and yet worship God acceptably is a great heresy, which we need to correct. Only the Holy Spirit knows how to worship God acceptably.

We have worship leaders trying to replace the Holy Spirit. I think this is reprehensible. The one who stands before an assembly and leads the worship should be the one who has submitted himself to a fresh work of the Holy Spirit. The best preparation for worship is not rehearsal, but surrender.

Some of our best hymns came from men and women so utterly broken before God that only God mattered.

The apostle Paul says that it is impossible to pray without the Spirit, and the most powerful prayers are those in the Spirit. Likewise, we cannot worship without the Holy Spirit. I think it is time that the church of Christ should rethink this whole matter of the place of the Holy Spirit in the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Come, blessed, holy, heavenly Dove,
Spirit of light and life and love,
Revive our souls we pray!
Come with the power of Pentecost,
Come as the sevenfold Holy Ghost,
And fill our hearts today.

A.B. Simpson (1843– 1919)