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THE REALITY OF GOD

Part 19

By Rayola Kelley

Some readers might wonder why I am driving home the reality of God. The reason is simple, many people hold to other so-called “realities” besides God. Granted, there are many who tack God on to their various adopted “realities” to try to confront the unpredictable challenges of life and their need for some type of religion, but the character and ways of God is not the test of their perceived reality. It seems obvious that many individuals are trying to escape the harsh reality of the world in which we live. Some escape through such things as alcohol, drugs, pornography, sports, entertainment, books, mind-altering techniques, excessive exercise, and so forth. Clearly the list goes on.

Thanks to the constant use of internet, iPads, Facebook, and Twitter as a way to communicate with others, people can easily become divorced from reality. It is becoming increasingly apparent that they want to either control or completely escape the reality of this present world by creating a different reality more acceptable to their taste. Let's be honest, the environment that is firmly in place in America has conditioned people to prefer some type of fantasy to reality, but a growing number of Americans are becoming dissatisfied with such an empty diet of ridiculous fluff.

Originally entertainment was so people could escape reality for a short time, but now it is reversed. People must now search for reality in order to escape from the emptiness of their fantasies and pursuits. Even though some of the most popular TV shows



deal with so-called “reality,” their presentations are controlled in the editing room as to how much of it is real. The closest you are going to get to reality on TV are documentaries, but even they can be slanted. The dichotomy is that people want reality because there is no substance in fantasy, and yet they fear and rage against reality because they cannot control it. They are discovering that every ascent up the pinnacle of make-believe with its orchestrated tension and its false hope of elusive happiness ultimately leaves a person hanging in unfulfilled suspension.

The sad truth is that each “reality” outside of what is truly real leads to an insane world that proves to be untrustworthy. Sadly, these insane presentations often cause vulnerable people to become divorced from any real hope of realistically confronting the challenges they face, whether it has to do with relationships, or the state of family, country, or church.

The problem with ignoring real challenges is that they will produce a tsunami effect which eventually leaves those in its wake utterly devastated. The tragedy of this scenario is that there are certain individuals in high places who desire to see the “tsunami” hit this nation so that they can come in and “save” it. However, they have no intention of saving anything, but instead their plan is to enslave the masses and conform them to their ideology.

This elite group of world planners has various entangling, hideous branches that come from the same source. The so-called “secrets” of this group have been passed down from generation to generation, and find its roots going back to the Tower of Babel. To conceal its evil plan, it hides behind various fronts, promoting the social gospel of “good deeds,” but when you follow its trunk down to the root system, you realize it has been

part of the “mystery of iniquity” (*Genesis 11:1-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-9*).

The delusion driving this secretive group is that it sees itself as being enlightened by the true light, but the Bible is clear that anything that does not line up to the Word of God is a gross darkness. Granted, these people have seen a light, but it is a false, seductive light. The Bible reveals the essence of this light when it warns that Satan comes as an angel of light and his ministers as ministers of righteousness (*2 Corinthians 11:3-15*). The goal of this secret group has been, and continues to be the same: to bring all the systems of the world, including the religious system, under the leadership of one leader. This world leader will serve as nothing more than a front for the god of this age, Satan (*2 Corinthians 2:2-4*).

As blood-bought saints, we know who wins in the end: The One who the Apostle Paul refers to in *1 Timothy 6:15* as the “blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords,” In *Titus 2:13*, he made this statement, “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” (Emphasis added.) When Jesus comes, it will be as the Judge of all. Those who oppose Him will cry for the rocks to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb of God (*Revelation 6:14-17*). Jesus will take an axe to the root of this wicked tree and bring it down to utter destruction, and He will bind Satan for a thousand years (*Revelation 20:1-4*).

We know that Jesus Christ served as the visible revelation of God in physical form. He is the only way to truth and life (*John 14:6; Colossians 2:9*). Outside of Who He is—His works, examples, and teachings, there is no truth. Without the truth the way becomes obscure to the lost and the promise of eternal life eludes the spiritually blind and deaf.

As the father of lies, it is clear that in Satan's world there will only be false narratives that will seduce many into an insane reality that has no absolute truth, moral values, or righteous standards (*John 8:44*). Even though we like to believe that what we hear in this age is true, we dare not trust it because most of it is propaganda. Although we like to know that what we see is a sure thing, we must recognize that at best it is an image that hides a vacuum of emptiness, and at worst it is a false light that is hiding the presence of pending destruction. We like to know that what we touch and smell is clean and pure, but most of what we encounter has been tainted in some way.

Due to the various shaky realities of this present world, people have been able to swing from the branches of wicked, insane ideologies that not only have proven to fail in the past, but offer a false hope to others who are attempting to grab hold of their unrealistic promises of a Godless utopia, without righteousness, and accountability. These people believe the lie because it feeds their preferred reality.

The question is where is the Church in America in all of this? Has the body of Christ remained distinct from the world's attitude, methods, and ways (*2 Corinthians 2:14-18; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17*)? Has it maintained a separation from the influence of the spirit of the world or has it become like the church of Laodicea that believed it was rich when in fact it was considered poor? The only way to gage the condition of the visible Church is by its fruits (*John 7:16, 20; Revelations 3:14-19*).

I have said this before, but I fear that as Jonah was sleeping in the hull of the ship, many in the church have been lulled to sleep by the influence of the world. Christians who are happily asleep in their pews are unaware of those around them that are perishing while the winds of judgment are about to leave the land around them in a state of devastation. Even though there are grave spiritual storms challenging our nation, societies and homes, with "gale winds" bombarding the churches, there are those who seem oblivious to what is happening. As a result, such people will be unpre-

pared for the challenges that threaten to follow on the heels of life's present storms.

If we are to properly confront the reality that we now face in order to be prepared to walk through dark days ahead, we need to ensure that our reality of God is correct, and that it is nurtured, sustained, and kept in check by His Word. This means we must always begin with who God is, continue on according to His Word, and choose to remember that His unchanging promises yet await to be inherited by His saints. However, it is natural for people to start out with what they know about God, continue on with what they assume about Him, and end with their own theology about God that will prove to be void of the right spirit and life.

Let me ask the reader a question, has your understanding of God been influenced by others, or by what you have read in books? Or, has your reality of God been unveiled to your spirit as the Holy Spirit illuminated truths about Him in His Word? It is clear that only the Holy Spirit can lead us into all truth about God. Only the Spirit can make the truths about Him real, and it is only by the Holy Spirit that we can know the true God in a personal way (*John 14:26; 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 1 John 2:27*).

This brings me to another very important question, from where did you get most of your information when it comes to who God is? There is only one reliable source when it comes to the reality of God, and that is His Word, but it is the Holy Spirit who brings life to His Word, making it a heart reality and not a logical notion or concept. It is for this reason that I am going to now let His Word speak about what we should meditate upon and know about God. In *Exodus 33*, when Moses beseeched the Lord to show him His glory, the Lord said this, "*I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live*" (*Exodus 33:19*).

The question is what did the Lord want Moses to know about Him? The first thing He wanted Moses to know was His goodness. Today some Chris-

tians emphasize God's love so as to present Him in a tolerant light. Some only talk about His grace as a means to overshadow the various warnings and judgments found in His Word directed at those who walk in unbelief and disobedience towards Him. Some try to bring a realistic picture of His holiness in light of judgment, while others emphasize the end-day events. However, the Lord did not emphasize these aspects of His nature or works in Moses' case. He spoke of His goodness passing before the patriarch.

According to *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, the word "goodness" has to do with the best in relationship to beauty. When we see beauty, what is our natural reaction to it? Most would agree that any type of beauty is associated with that which is pleasant to look at, which brings gladness and enjoyment to our senses. Beauty is also connected with the welfare of something. In essence, it serves as a mirror into the inner character and health. Such beauty is not surface deep like the beauty that is often promoted by the world; rather, it is pure, allowing the inward character to be clearly seen.

Clearly, the Lord wanted to show Moses His best when it came to His very attributes. His best translated into His goodness. When you study God's goodness in the Scripture, a clear picture emerges about what this particular virtue looks like and how it conducts itself. The picture mirrors the beauty of God's goodness, the character and fruits behind all that He does.

The first mention of God's goodness had to do with deliverance. We are told in *Exodus 18:8* that Moses shared with his father-in-law all that the LORD had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake in order to deliver them. *Exodus 18:9* tells us how Jethro responded, "*And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the LORD had done to Israel whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians.*"

In the case of the people of Israel, God showed His goodness towards them by first judging Egypt in order to deliver them out of oppressive bondage. This first example reveals that God's foremost desire be-

cause of His goodness is to always deliver His people from oppressive tyrants, but there is also a reason for such deliverance: so that His people have the freedom to worship and serve Him in order to develop godly qualities in their own inner being.

This should be an encouragement to Christians. The whole purpose of Jesus' death on the cross was to provide a way of salvation. This shows the goodness of God, the actual beauty of His character and the clarity of His honorable intentions towards us. However, we must not forget our responsibility: to have the faith that ends in worshipping God in spirit and truth.

In *Exodus 34:6*, we are told about His abundant goodness. It is identified with such characteristics as mercy, grace, and longsuffering, as well as linked with truth. God shows His goodness in mercy and the beauty of it through His grace, and the character of it through His longsuffering. The transparency that is found in His goodness is because of the light of truth being present in all matters.

Psalms 25:8 tells us that the Lord is good and upright; therefore He will teach sinners in the way. Everything that is extended towards us from heaven can find its source in the goodness of the Lord. Goodness clearly serves as God's natural bent when it comes to man. Such goodness will always be expressed in upright or honorable ways.

This brings me to another question. We often sing about how good God is, but how many of us believe that God is constantly extending that goodness towards us? Every time He forgives us we are being a recipient of His goodness. Each time He extends grace towards us, we are experiencing His goodness. In those times when He is being patient with us in our struggles and failures, it is because He is completely, utterly GOOD.

Psalms 33:5 tells us that the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD. Can we not see the beauty of His goodness in creation? Can we not see the care of His goodness in the creatures around us? Can we not see the commitment of His goodness in His pity towards us and the salvation He so freely offers each of us? Can we

not see these things and with all confidence declare GOD IS GOOD?

In *Psalms 34:8*, we read one of the most quoted Scriptures when it comes to God's goodness, "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." How do we taste the goodness of the Lord: through His many blessings. How do we see the goodness of the Lord: through His constant intervention on our behalf. And, what is the purpose for allowing us to taste and see His goodness? It is because He wants us to choose to trust Him. He is worthy of it, deserves it, and will ensure in the end that we will never regret putting our complete faith in Him.

Nahum 1:7 gives us this promise in relationship to God's goodness, "The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him." It is because the Lord is good, that He becomes that trustworthy stronghold, a hiding place to us. He does not withhold His protection or His abiding faithfulness towards us.

Romans 2:4 gives this insight about God's goodness, "Or despiseth thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" God's goodness towards us is rich. Those who walk in unbelief and rebellion show utter contempt towards this attribute of God. The Bible refers to such individuals as fools. Since they refuse to believe and acknowledge God's goodness, they will see no need to repent and receive His salvation, and *Romans 2:5-6* tells us the end of these individuals, "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds."

Clearly, a person's true response towards God's goodness would be that of repentance, an about face from any unbelief and disobedience. It should also be a natural response of a Christian to walk in the reality of God's goodness in faith and obedience.

Romans 11 speaks of Gentiles being grafted into the olive tree. It goes on to warn them of not becoming cocky because some of the original branches of the olive tree (Jews) were

cut off because of unbelief. This exhortation is given in *Romans 11:22*, "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

As believers we must never take God's goodness for granted. We must not try to exploit it by walking in unbelief towards His Word or provoke it with disobedience towards that which we know is right. We must not repay His goodness with disdain and mock it in arrogance because we do not believe God is God or trust His character and intentions. We must allow the goodness of God to humble us, its beauty to create worship in us, and its workings to bring us to a place of unfeigned faith towards Him and obedience to His Word. We must keep our reality of God in a proper perspective, ever remembering that it is His goodness that allows us to be partakers of all of heaven's riches. †

FROM THOMAS MANTON

(1620-1677)

There is a strangeness between us and God, and we cannot come mutually to converse together. Now actual sins make the breach wider and greater: *Isa. 59:2*, 'Your iniquities have separated between you and your God;' they make us careless of communion with God, and they make God resolved against any fellowship, or having any communion with us. Fallen man, at length is not only come to be like the beasts, but like the devils; he puts on not only the brutish disposition of the irrational creatures, but the disposition of Satan himself; for the devils cannot endure the thoughts of God—'The devils believe and tremble,' *James 2:19*. They hate their own thoughts of God; therefore they cannot endure the presence of Christ, but cry out, *Matt. 8:29*, 'Jesus, thou Son of God, art thou come to torment us before the time?' This was the language of the devils; the presence of God was a bondage and a torment to them. So it is with guilty sinners; they cannot endure the presence of God, they speak just like the devil, *Job 21:14*.... — From *Sermons on Hebrews 11*, pg.218

DARE TO DISCERN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Part Two

By Jeannette Haley

"Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This [is] the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."

— Zechariah 4:6

The true church has survived for the past two-thousand years, not by power nor by might, but by the Holy Spirit. In Scripture we see the reflection of the Holy Spirit most clearly in the life of Jesus. Since Pentecost, our Lord's promise of the Holy Spirit, His might and His power is evidenced by the fulfillment of *John 16:8-11, 13, 14*, "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged...Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

While mankind may strive through his own might and power to do great things, construct impressive edifices, explore outer space, and make great scientific discoveries, climb to the top of the social or political ladder, or even rule the world for a season, none of it has any significance or lasting value in light of eternity. That which is of the earth is earthy, and temporal. Only that which is of the Spirit has any eternal significance. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" *Mark 8:36*? "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. 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 8:6-9*. [Emphasis added.]

Jesus Christ was begotten of the Holy Spirit (*Luke 1:35*). *Hebrews 9:14* tells us that Jesus Christ led a holy, spotless life, and offered Himself to God, through the working of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit anointed Jesus for His ministry (*Acts 10:38; Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:14, 18, 19; 3:21, 22; 4:1, 14*). Consider how necessary it was for the Holy Spirit to descend from heaven upon Him. "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" *Matthew 3:16, 17*. "And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him" *John 1:32*. It was the Spirit that led Jesus into the wilderness where He was tempted by Satan (*Luke 4:1*). Jesus Christ was taught by the Spirit who rested upon Him. The Spirit of God was the source of His wisdom in the days of His flesh. (*Isaiah 11:2; Matthew 12:17, 18, John 1:33*.) The words the Holy Spirit spoke to Jesus were the words of God (*John 3:34*). *Acts 1:1-2* tells us that Jesus Christ gave instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles Jesus had chosen. *Matthew 12:28* shows us that Jesus Christ performed His miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit. The power of the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead (*Romans 8:11*). Therefore, if Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, lived, performed miracles, cast out demons, healed the sick, and rose from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit, then how much more are we dependent upon Him at every turn of life, service and conflict with Satan and sin! Without the Holy Spirit in our lives we cannot accomplish anything of spiritual consequence, influence, or eternal benefit.

In his excellent book, *The Power of the Spirit*, William Law (1761) explains, "All Religion that proceeds not from the Immediate Working of the Divine Nature within us is Selfish and Vain. A religious faith that is uninspired, a hope, or love that proceeds not from the immediate working of the divine nature within us, can no more do any divine good to our souls, or unite them with the goodness of God,

than an hunger after earthly food can feed us with the immortal bread of heaven. All that the natural or uninspired man does, or can do in the Church, has no more of the truth or power of divine worship in it than that which he does in the field, or shop through a desire of riches. And the reason is, because all the acts of the natural man, whether relating to matters of religion or the world, must be equally selfish, and there is no possibility of their being otherwise. For self-love, self-esteem, self-seeking, and living wholly to self, are as strictly the whole of all that is or possibly can be in the natural man, as in the natural beast; the one can no more be better, or act above this nature, than the other. Neither can any creature be in a better, or higher state than this till something supernatural is found in it; and this supernatural something, in Scripture the *Word*, or *Spirit*, or *Inspiration* of God, is that alone from which man can have the first good thought about God, or the least power of having more heavenly desires in his spirit, than he has in his flesh.

"A religion that is not wholly built upon this supernatural ground, but solely stands upon the powers, reasonings, and conclusions of the natural uninspired man, has not so much as the shadow of true religion in it, but is a mere nothing, in the same sense, as an idol is said to be nothing, because the idol has nothing of that in it which is pretended by it. For the work of religion has no divine good in it, but as it brings forth, and keeps up essential union of the spirit of man with the Spirit of God; which essential union cannot be made, but through love on both sides, nor by love, but where the love that works on both sides is of the same nature."

Jesus declared, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord" *Luke 4:18, 19*. Jesus said to His disciples, "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even

the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" John 14:14-20. Concerning the Spirit of truth, Jesus also said, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" John 15:26.

The Bible tells us to "watch and pray," "earnestly contend for the faith, which was once delivered unto the saints," build ourselves on our "most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost," and to worship God "in spirit and in truth." Jesus said, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you" John 15:12. The commandments of our Lord are, of course, too extensive to list here, but the question is for us living in these perilous times, how well do we know the Person and work of the Holy Spirit who will enable us to walk in obedience and victory? Are you listening for the voice of the Spirit? We are told repeatedly by the Lord Jesus, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." How is your spiritual "hearing" and discernment? Can you discern when the Holy Spirit is speaking in the church today in the music, in the message, in the prayers, and through the gifts of the Spirit? Do you know when He is present and moving in the church, exalting Jesus, touching hearts, bringing people to repentance? Can you also discern when He is quenched, vexed or grieved and departs? The Holy Spirit is a gentleman, and when He is not received and allowed to have His way in the church, or when He is in competition with, or replaced by man's unholy programs, clever methods, unscriptural traditions, and fleshly practices He withdraws His manifest presence. This leaves a spiritual vacuum that the undiscerning and zealous "cheerleaders for Jesus" seek to fill with fleshly, emotional hype. It is so vital that we learn how to discern the Spirit and hear His voice! The only worship that is acceptable to God is expressed in Jesus' words, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" John 4:24. Therefore, how can we expect God to be pleased if our manner of

living and religious practices is man-centered rather than Christ centered? Are many of the modern churches so far removed from spirit and truth that they truly believe that a Holy God is being worshipped in "spirit and in truth" when the pagan sounds and music of hell reverberate through the assembly, or when our gatherings are man-exalting and man-centered rather than Christ-exalting? There is a very real and grave danger that lurks in the post-modern churches today, a danger that exists because so many have left their first love and replaced it with a man-centered, feel-good, cheap grace, easy-believism, counterfeit "Christianity." Thus the door has been flung wide open for a variety of antichrist spirits disguising themselves as "ministers of righteousness" whose goal is to undermine true faith in the Word of God and replace it with a powerless counterfeit "Christianity."

In *Ephesians 4:30* we read, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." *2 Thessalonians 5:19* says "Quench not the Spirit." In *Isaiah* we read, "But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them." In *Acts 7:51*, Stephen said, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." To quote a small portion of a sermon by the great evangelist, Charles Finney (on how and when the Holy Spirit is grieved): "1. The great object of the Holy Spirit, as revealed in the Bible, is to sanctify the souls of men. Men are to be saved by 'the sanctification of the Spirit through the belief of the truth.' 2. He can sanctify men only with the truth. Sanctification is holiness. Holiness is voluntary obedience to God. Voluntary obedience certainly cannot be produced but by the influence of the truth. Hence Christ prays, 'Sanctify them through thy truth.' The Holy Spirit himself has no other means of sanctifying the soul but with truth. 3. A moral agent can resist any and every truth. Moral agency implies power to resist any degree of motive that may be brought to bear upon the mind. Wherever force begins, moral agency ends. Were it possible for motive to force the mind the forced action would have no moral character any

more than the operations of the physical universe. Action must be free to be moral action. Necessary action is therefore neither virtuous nor vicious. I repeat it then, that moral agency implies the power to resist any and every truth. Whether any man ever did or ever will as a matter of fact, resist all truth, is entirely another question. But certain it is, that men are able to resist the utmost influence that the truth can exert upon them; and therefore have ability to defeat the wisest, most benevolent, and most powerful exertions which the Holy Spirit can make to effect their sanctification. 4. Every moral evil must be counteracted by truth, and can be counteracted in no other way. 5. Whatever, therefore, hinders the truth from producing its sanctifying effect, grieves the Holy Spirit just in proportion to his desire to have it produce that effect."

Are you asking Jesus for the baptism of fire? "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" *Matthew 3:11*. The fire of the Holy Spirit is a refining fire. The Holy Spirit is a holy fire—He is the fire in the burning bush from which Moses was called. He's the pillar of fire that led the Israelites through the wilderness. He is the tongues of fire that rested on the heads of the believers on the day of Pentecost. He is the fire that burns in our own souls when we're convicted of sin and wrong. He is the fire that empowers us to witness to others about the greatness of our God. (*Acts 1:8*).

Leonard Ravenhill said, "Proofs of being filled with the Holy Spirit are offered by many. How they Vary! The first and foremost evidence of a baptism with the Holy Spirit is that one lives a holy life." And, "I can give you one simple reason why we don't have revival in America. Because we're content to live without it. We're not seeking God—we're seeking miracles, we're seeking big crusades, we're seeking blessings." On the day of Pentecost the Apostle Peter "said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy

Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” Acts 2:38, 39. Has the Lord called you? †

HOW IS THE HOLY SPIRIT LIKE FIRE?

Answer: The Bible describes God as “a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29), so it is not surprising that fire often appears as a symbol of God’s presence. Examples include the burning bush (Exodus 3:2), the Shekinah glory (Exodus 14:19; Numbers 9:14-15), and Ezekiel’s vision (Ezekiel 1:4). Fire has many times been an instrument of God’s judgment (Numbers 11:1, 3; 2 Kings 1:10, 12) and a sign of His power (Judges 13:20; 1 Kings 18:38).



For obvious reasons, fire was important for the Old Testament sacrifices. The fire on the altar of burnt offering was a divine gift, having been lit originally by God Himself (Leviticus 9:24). God charged the priests with keeping His fire lit (Leviticus 6:13) and made it clear that fire from any other source was unacceptable (Leviticus 10:1-2).

In the New Testament, the altar can serve as a picture of our commitment to the Lord. As believers in Jesus Christ, we are called upon to offer our bodies as “living sacrifices” (Romans 12:1), engulfed by the divine gift: the inextinguishable fire of the Holy Spirit. At the very beginning of the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is associated with fire. John the Baptist predicts that Jesus will be the One to “baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Matthew 3:11). When the Holy Spirit began His ministry of indwelling the early church, He chose to appear as “tongues of fire” resting on each of the believers. At that moment, “all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:3-4).

Fire is a wonderful picture of the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is like a fire in at least three ways: He brings God’s presence, God’s passion, and God’s purity. The Holy Spirit is the presence of God as He indwells the

heart of the believer (Romans 8:9). In the Old Testament, God showed His presence to the Israelites by over-spreading the tabernacle with fire (Numbers 9:14-15). This fiery presence provided light and guidance (Numbers 9:17-23). In the New Testament, God guides and comforts His children with the Holy Spirit dwelling in our bodies—the “tabernacle” and the “temple of the living God” (2 Corinthians 5:1; 6:16).

The Holy Spirit creates the passion of God in our hearts. After the two traveling disciples talk with the resurrected Jesus, they describe their hearts as “burning within us” (Luke 24:32). After the apostles receive the Spirit at Pentecost, they have a passion that lasts a lifetime and impels them to speak the word of God boldly (Acts 4:31). (From gotquestions.org)

QUENCHING THE SPIRIT

One of the things God’s people need to remember is that Satan works in extremes. Therefore, knowing this requires that we bear the greater responsibility to be watchful and discerning whenever we hear reports or see any of the many purported “manifestations” of the Spirit, including “new” revelations, dreams, visions, prophecies, physical or behavioral abnormalities, and so forth that do not line up with Scripture. Tragically, Satan has managed to close down whole churches to any belief (or expectation) of the power, gifts and workings of the Holy Spirit because of extremes and abuses within much of the professing body of Christ. All too often the “turned off” people (along with those of little faith) lean heavily on sensationalism, emotionalism, entertainment, man-centered causes, psychology, worldly music, and other ear-tickling substitutes for the real thing. Thus, the Holy Spirit is quenched, Christ is redefined, and man, although for a season may feel exalted, eventually walks away empty and unfulfilled. The soul that does not feed on the Word of God, is not freed by the Truth of God, and therefore is not filled with the Spirit of God, and thus is dead while it lives in the flesh.

— Jeannette Haley

GOD’S REAL WORKING

By Smith Wigglesworth

“I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.—Acts 24:16

One thing that can hinder our faith is a conscience that is seared. In contrast, there is a conscience that is so open to the presence of God that the smallest thing in the world will drive it to God. When we can come into the presence of God with clear consciences and genuine faith, our hearts not condemning us, then we have confidence toward God (1 John 3:21), “*and whatever we ask we receive from Him*” (v. 22).

Sugarcoating won’t do. We must have reality, the real working of our God. We must know God. We must be able to go in and converse with God. We must also know the mind of God toward us, so that all our petitions are always in line with His will.

As this “*like precious faith*” (2 Pet. 1:1) becomes a part of you, it will make you so that you will dare to do anything. And remember, God wants daring followers: people who will risk all, who will be strong in Him and willing to do exploits. How will we reach this place of faith? Give up your own mind. Let go of your own thoughts, and take the thoughts of God, the **Word of God**. If you build yourself on imaginations, you will go wrong. You have the Word of God, and it is enough.

A man gave this remarkable testimony concerning the Word: “Never compare this Book with other books. Comparisons are dangerous. Never think or say that this Book contains the Word of God. It *is* the Word of God. It is supernatural in origin, eternal in duration, inexpressible in value, infinite in scope, regenerative in power, infallible in authority, universal in interest, personal in application, inspired in totality. Read it through. Write it down. Pray it in. Work it out. Then pass it on.”

I understand God by His Word. I cannot understand God by impressions or feelings. I cannot get to know God by sentiments. If I am going to know God, I am going to know Him by His Word. “*So then faith, cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” Ro. 10:17.

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

AFFLICTION

Q: I wanted to ask if you have any notes on affliction please let me know. Been doing a study and a friend told me that affliction was because of sin and she referred me to read Genesis 1-3 and I wanted to check the word first. I like Paul's letters, they tell a lot as well as Job.

A: The definition of the word "affliction" will give you a lot of insight as to how it affects our lives and how it is to be used by us and serves as a tool of God. According to the *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, in relationship to its generic meaning, affliction means to depress, to browbeat or defile a force. When it comes to a Christian, it means to humble and chasten self. When it comes to God dealing with believers this word is associated with bringing gentleness and humility. However, when it comes to the rebellious, words such as hurt and ravish are linked to the word "affliction."

It is clear that sin can cause affliction because it creates a depressing atmosphere of defeat, despair, and ultimately separation from God in this life, and if not repented of, the next as well. However, if you look at the curse that came because of sin in *Genesis 3:17-19*, it is associated with suffering and torment due to the constant toil and struggles that will lead to ruin, destruction, and death. We have the promise of *Galatians 3:13* that Christ became a curse for us to bring hope, promise, and life to us in this present age.

With this in mind, let us consider how affliction works in practical ways. *Exodus 22:22-24* commands his people to not afflict the widows or fatherless. If a person does and the afflicted cry out, the Lord will kill the offender. It is clear that as believers we must not cause distress or oppress those who need compassion and burdens lifted.

God's people have a responsibility to afflict their own souls as a means of preparing to provide the Lord with what is acceptable. For example, it was commanded in *Leviticus 16:30-31* that on the Day of Atonement the people needed to afflict their soul to ensure a disposition of humili-

ty. It tells us in *Leviticus 23:29* that if a person failed to afflict his or her soul on the Day of Atonement that the person would be cut off from among the people.

In *Ezra 8:21*, the priest commanded the people to afflict their soul before seeking God for provision and protection on behalf of their children. In *James 4:9-10*, believers are given this instruction about affliction in reference to repentance, "*Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*" *James 5:10* also instructs believers to consider the examples of suffering affliction and patience of the prophets and to consider yourself happy if you endure like Job.

Psalms 22:23-24 tells us that the Lord does not despise those who fear Him and are afflicted. It tells us if they cry out to Him He will hear them.

The Psalmist in *Psalms 25* cries out for mercy in his desolation and affliction. He asks the Lord to bring him out of his affliction and pain, and if there is any sin, to forgive him. He ends with this plea, "*O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee. Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles*" (*Psalms 25:20-22*).

Psalms 34:19 gives us this insight, "*Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.*" *Hebrews 11:25* tells us that Moses would rather suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. The Apostle Paul instructed Timothy to partake of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God (*2 Timothy 1:8*)

Finally, we are reminded how God afflicts those who are contrary to Him. In *Psalms 55:19* we are told God will not hear their prayers and will afflict them even when they are old because they have not changed their ways nor do they fear Him.

It is clear that afflictions are not always related to sin. For Christians it is a type of personal discipline of the soul, and God uses it as a type of en-



largement of our character and preparation of the spirit. Afflictions for those who are contrary are usually consequences of a life void of God's presence and life. †

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

"So much New Age over here!!!! Most people don't read or know the Bible. Too many depend on what others say instead of doing their own research. Well, we are in the last days and walking through. Thank God, as of today we still have our heads, for how long, I am not sure!!!!" - WA

"When the millennium was looming I stocked up on bottled water and some tins of stuff, but the Lord quickly showed me I was wasting my time. We may have to suffer problems, persecution etc. but we need to remember the Bridegroom is going to protect His Bride and provide for her and not let her be damaged. We have more to be concerned with reaching lost souls than our own preservation!" - UK

"This ["prophet"] is baptizing people and then as he brings them out of the water, he starts casting demons out of them. Also having *unsaved* people speaking in tongues. People say they are getting healed. But if the devil makes them sick, he can take the sickness away. *In the last days signs and wonders kept coming to me.*" - OH

"I just read over the newsletter again and it was outstanding! Your article [Jeannette] was exceptional and instructional on the Holy Spirit! So were Rayola's Q & A and her article on being prepared and discerning the right attitude when approaching the Word by faith and obedience. Your articles beautifully intertwined again. Thanks for your faith building work!" - ID

"Kids' minds are being poisoned by Common Core, their bodies by the food supply and their spirits by false doctrine." - WA

"Thanks for sharing this coloring stuff as it is all the rage here—It turned me off big time and now I know why. One lady says it calms her etc. How truly sad." - ID [GSM: The Mandala and Zen coloring books are a form of Eastern Meditation designed to produce a "spiritual awakening" that opens up the mind to spirits (demons).]

ONLY ONE WAY?

In the “prayer video” on the Pope’s worldwide prayer network, he says, “In this crowd, in this range of religions, there is only one certainty we have for all, we are all children of God.” The current publication of *BattleCry* states, “This of course, plays on the false idea that all religions worship the same God. A major scripture, John 14:6, stands squarely in the way of accepting this lie. Jesus made it clear that ‘no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.’ This excludes Buddha, Muhammad, and worship of the Torah. Someone suggested that, since the pope claims to be Jesus Christ’s representative on earth, that he will eventually present himself in the John 14:6 role of Jesus, claiming that he is the ‘way’ to the universal ‘god’ that he is promoting.”

In this video different people look straight into the camera and declare, “I believe in love; I believe in love; I believe in love; I believe in love!” *BattleCry* explains, “It is typical of Satan to pick up a half truth and promote it as truth. Today, ‘love’ is the universal theme. Again, those ignorant of biblical truth are sucked into the ‘can’t we all just get along?’ dream. The biblical command to love one another is only half the coin. If we don’t love God first, we have nothing left but mushy affection for others. And biblical love for God involves obedience. Jesus said, ‘If ye love me, keep my commandments.’ Only when we understand the unconditional nature of biblical love, can we effectively get beyond mushy affection. And obeying Jesus’ commandments does not include praying five times a day to Allah or honoring Buddha.

“The Bible is clear that chaos and confusion will increase in these last days. People will keep looking for answers in all the wrong places. At some point, a charming leader will appear seeming to have all the answers proposing a one-world government and one-world religion. By then the Bible will be so watered down that it will support any desired doctrine.

“As soul winners, we are commissioned to make disciples for Jesus, freeing them from idolatry and false religions, not joining them.” †

BEWARE “CONTEMPLATIVE MEDITATION” TECHNIQUES

(A Report from Lighthouse Trails Research Project)



A “manifesto,” written by former Marine Kyle Odom, the 30-year-old man who shot **Idaho pastor Tim Remington**, reveals that his life started to change drastically when he began doing meditation while in university to relieve stress. The meditation experiences led him to come into contact with familiar spirits (which he thought were aliens) and eventually led to two suicide attempts and then the shooting of Pastor Remington.

While Lighthouse Trails is not saying that every person who practices meditation is going to go crazy and start shooting people, **we stand by our warning of 14 years that meditation does introduce meditators to demonic realms**. For most, this realm seduces people into a complacent deception, and they may even appear more peaceful. For other meditators, like the student at Le Tourneau Christian University who graduated and told his parents he was now an atheist, they turn away from their Christian faith. **Satan has many different methods of stealing a soul!** And for some, these demons torture and torment a person, until they can eventually become like Kyle Odom.

The occult (Satan’s domain) is not to be tampered with. When you consider that over 90% of the Christian colleges and seminaries are introducing contemplative spirituality (a belief system that incorporates meditation) to the lives of their students, it should make every Christian shudder and every Christian leader repent for allowing this into the church (not to mention how it has entered secularism even more so). Remember when Richard Foster told his contemplative followers that they needed to say a prayer of protection before practicing contemplative prayer. Why would one need to do that . . . unless he is entering demonic realms? **Meditation leads one to believe that God is in everything and all is connected together (this**

belief is an anti-Christ religion, and that is why when people practice meditation, they are going to be influenced by familiar spirits).

Today, we received a phone call from a reader who told us that her pastor, whom she said has often preached the Gospel and taught the Word, recently recommended to his congregation Richard Rohr (mystic meditator and panentheist). How can these things be so? Next time you hear your pastor or Bible study leader recommend a meditator, remember Kyle Odom and remember that Satan is a liar, and he is seeking whom he may devour. Do not allow these things in your church any longer. Speak up and share the truth. At Lighthouse Trails, our hearts are breaking because of what is happening in the church. Kyle Odom is one more painful reminder of how blind so many people are.

As we read the following news story about Kyle Odom today, we were reminded about **contemplative mystic, Thomas Merton, who likened a contemplative meditation experience to an LSD trip. Odom’s manifesto expressed many experiences that sounded just like a bad LSD trip; but it wasn’t LSD—it was meditation**, the very thing that most of your Christian leaders are either promoting or remaining silent about. Kyle Odom’s Martian manifesto is a window into an unravelling mind. †

Top 25 Christian Leaders Who Embrace, Emulate, and/or Promote Contemplative Mystics

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Ann Voskamp | 21. Philip Yancey |
| 2. Anne Lamott | 22. Rob Bell |
| 3. Beth Moore | 23. Robert Webber |
| 4. Bill Hull | 24. Shane Claiborne |
| 5. Bill Hybels | 25. Walter Brueggemann |
| 6. Calvin Miller | |
| 7. Dallas Willard | |
| 8. Dan Kimball | |
| 9. David Benner | |
| 10. Donald Miller | |
| 11. Doug Pagitt | |
| 12. Eugene Peterson | |
| 13. J.P. Moreland | |
| 14. Jim Wallis | |
| 15. John Eldredge | |
| 16. Ken Boa | |
| 17. Keri Wyatt Kent | |
| 18. Leonard Sweet | |
| 19. Mark Driscoll | |
| 20. Mike Bickle | |