

GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH ~ MAKING DISCIPLES ~ EQUIPPING THE SAINTS FOR MINISTRY

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RUNNING THE RACE

Part 4

Preparation Begins

By Rayola Kelley

Last month I talked about the type of vision the church needs to carry out its commission to preach and share the life-changing message of the Gospel. We are indeed running a marathon through this world, carrying a torch that not only lights our way through the present age, but also is capable of attracting those who are looking for some type of light of hope in a dark world.

Our vision on earth is only as substantial as our heavenly vision is of God, our place, purpose, and responsibility in His kingdom. So much of the church's vision in America is earthbound by the ideas of beautiful buildings, numbers of people, the appearance of worldly success, and quasi spirituality that is void of any real touch from heaven.

The problem with a Christian's vision being earthbound is that he or she will have no real vision about heavenly matters. Christians who are bound by this present age will not see the significance in inheriting all the promises of God in the world to come. J. Gregory Mantle, in speaking of the vision of the children of Israel when it came to securing the Promised Land, made this statement, "There are always *'buts'* and *'howbeits'* when the eye is focused to see only the things that are seen. These men saw great cities, high walls, tall giants, but Him who is invisible they saw not. Faith always reasons from God to difficulties; it begins with God. Unbelief reasons from the difficulties to God; it begins with them. Faith brings in the Living God, and looking to Him, says, 'We are *well* able.' Unbelief departs from the Living God, and looking at the difficulties says: 'We are *not* able.'"

Since the vision of the American

church has become more earthbound, it has lost its power to make an eternal impact when it comes to lost, seeking souls. It has failed to be a light that burns brightly in these dark, uncertain times. In fact, the darker the world becomes the greater the light of Christ should be shining in and through His people. As Andrew Murray pointed out, "A world lies dying in its need of the very message which the church of Christ alone can bring."

As we consider the heavenly vision and the high calling of the church, as members of this universal church we need to come to terms with how we can obtain and maintain a right vision in this world to ensure our high calling. As Jesus reminds us, "Many are called, but few are chosen" (*Matthew 20:16*). Sadly, it seems that there are those who are content to live on the plateaus of quasi religion, settling for the idea that they have been called, and that fact seems to soothe their religious conscience. Granted, everyone has a different calling as to their mission field and how they are to serve in that particular field. Some serve at home, while others serve in foreign mission fields. Some serve on the streets, others in trenches, some in prayer closets, and others in their work places. However, being called and actually being chosen to run the race comes down to having the right heart attitude about one's calling.

When I first became a Christian, I had such zeal to do great things for the Lord but I was totally unprepared. My intentions were right, but my character was not established in the Word or tempered by the Holy Spirit. My zeal to serve Him was at a fever pitch. After all, He had pulled me out of a cesspool of sin and depression after I was almost consumed by the muddy waters of hopelessness. At the time I could not see any way out of the whirlpool that was dragging me to the bottom of destruction: it was only

when God threw me the only lifesaver (His Son) that I was brought to the top to breathe the clean air of His Spirit and His life, and be pulled to safety.

I had such enthusiasm in my newfound Christian life, but I lacked experience (wisdom), seasoning (discipline/discipleship), and maturity (refinement) (*Romans 10:2-4; 1 Timothy 3:6; 2 Timothy 4:2-5*). In the initial years of my religious zeal, the Lord let me float off into dangerous currents. I realized in those dangerous currents that I did not possess the inner strength (character) to stand against the raging tides of the age I lived in. These tides were quickly taking my soul out into waters of judgment. I



learned that it had to be God's strength if I was going to do His bidding and stay the course

that He had carved out for me. It is only as I chose to walk in God's strength, that my inner character was finally tempered, shaped, and refined by the Master Potter.

I cannot begin to count the many detours I took because of inexperience and the many disasters I created because I was not seasoned. I always put the cart before the horse, and when everything I attempted to do spilled out and dissipated, I realized that my activities amounted to vanity because they had no heavenly inspiration or power behind them.

I am so thankful that God was and continues to be longsuffering with me. He was not only longsuffering with me in my immaturity, but He continues to be as He works the very life of Christ in me so that I can truly reflect my loving Savior and Lord to the world

(*Romans 8:29; Philipians 1:6; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18*).

This brings me to the attitude Christians need to acquire to effectively run the race and carry the torch of the Gospel. In my early Christian years, I thought my real challenge were my practices. It was my sinful practices and my emotional state over my plight that first revealed that I was a sinner in need of a Savior. It was for that reason as a new Christian I tried to reform the old man in me, force my pride to comply outwardly to some form of godliness, and adjust my intellectual presentation to look Scriptural. In essence, I attempted to clean up my act, but in time I discovered it was actually my heart attitude towards God, life in general, and who I thought I was in the scheme of things that needed to be transformed (*Romans 12:1-2*).

In my Christian infancy I did not realize that pride clearly sat on the throne of my self-life. It was pride that convinced me that I could reform myself enough to be godly and make my actions acceptable to God. The more I tried to reform myself, the more the "old unregenerate nature" would raise its head, proving to be selfish, conceited, and godless.

I had to face that even the best of the "old unregenerate disposition" was filthy rags before God, and the more I tried to clean myself up, the more my disposition revealed perversion reigning in my mind that was still very carnal, my emotions that were untempered and driven by selfishness, and my inner character that was still naturally bent towards the flesh and the world (*Isaiah 64:6; Romans 8:5-14; Ephesians 4:11-15*).

It is important to point out that I first came to Christ because I was broken over my sinful ways, but it took seven years into my Christian walk before God could break me at the point of my self-sufficiency and another five years to break me at the place of my conceit, and, needless to say, the breaking continues because pride is interwoven into every area of the self-life (*Psalms 34:18; 51:17; 2 Corinthians 3:5*).

Self-sufficiency (self-confidence, reliance) is a form of pride along with arrogance (heart attitude), haughtiness (feelings of superiority), judg-

mentalism (self-righteousness), conceits (intellectual, worldly wisdom and cleverness), and all forms of selfishness (self-absorbed, self-importance, self-centered, and self-serving to name a few). Pride can be found at every stage in which the old disposition operates. As already indicated, it is an attitude, a feeling, a look, a high opinion of self, a religious notion and practice, and on and on for it knows no boundaries and is always being driven to come out on top of all situations (*Proverbs 3:7; 6:16-17; 11:2; 16:18; 21:4; 29:23; Isaiah 14:11-15; Romans 12:16*).

The essence of pride is nothing more than the exaltation of self in some way. It does not matter if you clothe pride with syrupy sweetness, fake humility, quasi spirituality, victim mentality, or self-pity; self is still being exalted in some superior fashion to make it appear honorable when in fact it is dishonorable in every way. It is watching out for self and insists on being right, while being arrogant in its opinions, harsh in its judgments, unreasonable in its demands, superior in its conclusions, and condescending in its presentations. Such exaltation is nothing more than idolatry, the humanistic practice of worshipping man.

It is clear in such matters that the creation (man) is being exalted above our Creator the true God of heaven (*Romans 1:20-26*). Whether it is man's carnal, depraved intellect that consists of worldly knowledge, or humanistic perverted New Age, occult enlightenment, along with his abilities to invent, his charismatic ways to deceive, his social deeds to attempt to make society better, or his compromising ways of making every sinner or wicked person feel good in his or her sin, man is being clearly exalted in the position of savior and God. However, the Bible is clear that there is only one Savior, Jesus Christ and that the one Savior is God, Lord and Redeemer (*Isaiah 43:10-12; 44:24; 45:21-22; Luke 2:22; 1 Corinthians 8:6*).

As Scriptures point out God resists pride but so do others (*Matthew 23:12; Luke 18:9-14; James 4:6-10; 1 Peter 5:5-6*). There is nothing more irritating and frustrating to one's spirit than when he or she is dealing with someone who is riding high on his or her conceits while standing on the

pinnacle of high, dogmatic opinions. Unabated pride can intimidate and cause people to walk on eggshells to keep the fire-breathing monster of pride at bay. People who are ruled by their pride prove to have fragile egos that can't afford to be challenged, possess vanity that must be constantly stroked due to innumerable insecurities, and are temperamental and unpredictable in their actions. Pride is unstable in its ways because it fears failure and rejection, often becomes aggressive towards being wrong, refuses to be found incompetent, and will not let go of the reins of trying to control matters according to what it perceives to be acceptable.

The Bible clearly addresses pride at every level and stage, but the problem is we rarely recognize it in ourselves. Granted, we can usually see it clearly operating in others, but pride is the beam in our eye that keeps us from seeing its deceitful, profane operations in our own lives (*Matthew 7:1-5*). Christians are often shocked by the greatness of the pride in them when first confronted with its workings. The reason we Christians are often broadsided by our own pride is because we never start out to take a pride trip, but *Proverbs 16:2* explains the dynamics of this dilemma, "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits."

Pride puts us in a wrong frame of reference, opening the door for a wrong spirit to operate in and through us. The presence of this wrong spirit becomes obvious by the fruits that are produced in the end. These fruits vary with the situation, but they always leave a bad taste in people's mouths as they struggle against frustration, resentment, anger, bitterness, jealousies, despair, abuses, and oppression.

In *Hebrews 12:1* we are instructed to set aside any weight that might beset us as far as running the race. There are many weights that can hinder us from running the course set before us, but the biggest weight can be our pride. The attitudes and ways of pride put all the burdens on us to ensure the outcome of a matter, proving to be the opposite of godly love, while the rule of pride is contrary to real faith, and the fragile reality of

pride insists on life according to its terms and is void of any real hope.

The question is how do we overcome something that is such a part of how we think, act, and live? The first thing we have to realize is that we cannot give any audience to pride. In other words, we deny it of its right to call the shots in our life, determine our present reality, and become the final judge in our conclusions (*Matthew 16:24-25*). In order to not give audience to pride, we must ask God to reveal the workings of our pride in our own lives.

I remember when the Lord began dealing with my pride. Each incident still serves as a definite milepost in my spiritual growth. I have often described His dealings with it in this way. "First he took a small teaspoon to it, making me aware of it. Next He took a shovel to it making me uncomfortable. Finally He took a backhoe to it, which became a grave offense to my actual pride." At the time I reminded Him that if He went any deeper, there would be nothing left of me. I will never forget His response, "That is the idea."

Pride makes life about ME, while genuine faith always makes all matters about the LORD. This idolatrous sin often becomes our point of identity in and to this present world, but as Christians, to know who we are in Christ, that particular point must be uncovered and rooted out. However, we must be aware that it is a most uncomfortable and humbling process, a process that involves a lot of breaking at the different points where pride reigns. And, the tool God initially uses to break and humble His people at their pride are those things that would offend their pride the most, causing them to end up on the wrong side and vulnerable. Such offenses are for the purpose of exposing the sinister ways of pride to each of us. Admittedly, as I became more aware of my pride I became embarrassed about the arrogance of its past workings along with the various cloaks I put on it to make it look wise, honorable, and wonderful. The embarrassment escalated as I realized that others saw through my cloaks and games and that it was I that was operating in a type of denial and delusion.

I even remember there was a

point where I became desperate because my pride seemed to abound in every direction I looked. As I became overwhelmed at my pride, I cried out to the Lord. He simply showed me that I was focused on my pride and not on Him. By changing my focus to look upward instead of within and around me, I would allow His grace to flow through my life and eventually it would end up reigning through righteousness, clearly subduing the influence and power of my pride (*Romans 5:20-21*).

Pride is a big subject; therefore, next month I will scripturally show how we are to recognize and confront pride in our life, but meanwhile, if we as believers are going to be effective in running the race, we must be ready to do as *Isaiah 1:18* instructs, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The Lord wants to reason with us about those things that beset us in our walk and growth, hinder us in our race, rob us of an effective testimony, and cause our passion to carry out our commission to wane. He wants to restore us to the excitement of that first love, ignite our flame, and place our feet on the right path.

If you find yourself struggling over your pride or any other besetting sin in your life, know that the Lord is either knocking on the door of your heart or waiting for you to turn around. All you need to do is by faith open the door or turn around and face Him in true repentance, while asking for mercy. It is from this point that He will prepare a table for you where He will not only reason with you about your besetting sin, but He will reason with you about it in light of His love, mercy, and grace. †

WORDS OF WISDOM

"According to the Bible, sin in its final analysis is not a defect but a defiance, a defiance that means death to the life of God in us." - Oswald Chambers

"If you die without the Spirit, you will fall into hell. There can be no doubt of this. Without the Spirit you will never be prepared for heaven." - Charles Finney

COMMENTS

"This is what I learned from some ex-Muslims I worked with...I had to read the Koran for my job and then these now-Christian fellows explained what it meant.

"But our government is hiding all this—the propaganda is something fierce to say most Muslims are peaceful. It is only a ruse that the leaders are perpetrating on America and other countries. Once they have multiplied to become larger than us, they can vote their own President in and overcome us and those in other countries. Then, when the Imams tell them to take over by fighting the idolaters and infidels—which we are—they would do it or lose their salvation and perhaps their lives at the hands of other Muslims! Until then, they lie in wait for their population numbers to overtake ours. As long as we have abortion and they are impregnating American and foreign women as well as having large families, it threatens us terribly but we all have our heads in the sand, thinking our government will protect us. God is the only One Who can!...so many believe the 'party line' that the Muslims are mostly peaceful. No, the Koran is NOT a peaceful book unless cutting off the heads of your enemies and making your wife obey you with punishment and even torture (rape, etc.) is peaceful. Of course, some Muslim husbands don't think rape is torture—they think that they have a right to...the Koran is just sickening to read in some places! The Muslims believe the Bible was a good book and it was written by God....but it was superseded by the Koran...so anything in the Bible that does not agree with the Koran is now superseded—the sheeple have been brainwashed and deceived." - FL

"I was astonished to listen to a message from Tony Palmer, he said if you believe you are a Christian and I believe you are a Christian, then we are ONE! The Pope is not in control, the Black Pope is behind him, a Jesuit, and the current pope is a Jesuit too!! I am not in agreement with Catholicism whatever, their doctrine is a blasphemy against the Lord and they want to impose their religion on the whole world, one-world religion? No thanks." - UK

**A TIME TO WEEP,
A TIME TO LAUGH
Part 1**

By Jeannette Haley

*"To every thing there is a season,
and a time to every purpose under the
heaven....a time to weep, and a time
to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time
to dance." - Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4*

If music is the "universal language" then weeping and laughing are the universal expressions of sorrow or joy. In spite of what many Christians try to avoid, emotions are God-given and not something to avoid like the plague. It's all part of the human experience in this life. In fact, nowhere in the Bible are we taught to "keep a stiff upper lip" and become as passive as possible. Neither can we find in the Bible the popular myth that all men are "factual" and all women are "emotional." Therefore the long-held notion that little boys are not to cry when they crash their new bicycle and it is okay to give little girls a pass for crying over everything is not reality. This belief is simply not true! The truth is there are men who are emotional by nature (and who wish they weren't because of the cultural myth), and there are women who are factual by nature who are not quickly given to tears (and who wonder why they don't fit into society's mold.)

When will we wake up to the fact that culture and tradition should never be the final authority as to what is acceptable behavior on every occasion, or the final authority as to who or what we are to be as individuals, Christians, or a nation, and realize that only Scriptural truths are what should be defining us. Rather than being conformed to the expectations of this world through atheistic "education," and psychology, or culture, or even church protocol, God has set forth our course thusly: *"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren"* Romans 8:29. Are you being conformed to the image of His Son according to the will of God through faith and obedience, regardless of what others think? If so, the closer you draw unto the Lord, the closer the Lord will draw unto you. The more time you spend in His presence in true worship in Spirit and

in truth, the more you cast aside your emotional inhibitions based on vanity and pride. No one can enter in the spirit into the Holy of Holies and stand in the presence of God without being emotionally affected. His glorious presence brings us to our knees in humble repentance, brokenness, and awe. The wonder of it all can be so overwhelming that unbidden tears flow. After such an encounter with the Holy Spirit our lives should shine with the light of His glory just as Moses' face shone from beholding the glory of the Lord, and Jesus must become our all in all.

That is revival.

Concerning true worship, A. W. Tozer wrote, "Worship embodies a number of spiritual and emotional factors. Worship is to feel in the heart. I do not apologize for using the word 'feel.' As Christians, we are not to be people without feelings. I certainly do not think we should follow our feelings alone, but I believe that if there is no feeling in our hearts, then we are dead."

He added, "Certainly, there is danger in relying only upon feelings" to which we totally agree. He then went on to say, "If you woke up one morning with no feeling in your arm at all, you would call a doctor, because anything without feeling you can be quite sure is dead.

"Real worship is, among other things, a feeling in the heart that is appropriately expressed. You can worship God in any manner appropriate to you by feeling in the heart and expressing that humbling but delightful sense of admiring love. Let your heart dictate your worship to the God you love, and who loves you." (*My Daily Pursuit*, pg. 14.)

Whether you are emotional or not, the Bible says there is "a time to weep." Abraham, the great patriarch of Israel, gives us an example of "a time to weep" in *Genesis 23:2*, *"And Sarah died in Kirjatharba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her."* What a gripping testimony to the love this righteous man possessed for the woman whom God chose to be the mother of the Jewish nation. Abraham was not displaying some sort of inappropriate emotional weakness, but true depths

of sorrow over the loss of his beloved Sarah, who, when it was "a time to laugh" said, *"God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me"* *Genesis 21:6*. She even named their promised son "Laughter" which is the meaning of the name Isaac.

In the Old Testament we read that the Israelites observed "a time to weep" called the days of mourning. *Deuteronomy 34:8* says, *"And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended."* God's Word records that there was a great deal of mourning for Jacob both in Egypt where he died, and also when his sons carried his body in a great procession out of Egypt back to the land of the Canaanites, (the Promised Land) where Sarah, and Abraham were buried, and they also mourned for him there. If the examples of the commanding Jeremiah, who is known as the weeping prophet, and King David with his emotionally-charged prayers and songs (the Psalms), and the emotional, impulsive Apostle Peter, along with the examples of our Lord Himself who wept at the tomb of Lazarus mean anything to us at all, then who is to say that emotions are to be avoided at any cost? Who created our emotions in the first place? In whose image are we? Who inspired Paul to write to the Romans, *"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep"*? Just who has instilled into the psyche of the Church that in order to please God (and not embarrass Him, or more accurately embarrass ourselves) we must always keep our emotions in check, put forth our best religious face, and pretend that because we are called Christians we "have it all together" no matter what life hands us? How can we be used to bridge the gap between people and God—people who are lost, confused, depressed, discouraged, wounded, heartbroken, bound and oppressed, and those who are slaves to sin and captives of Satan if we refuse to allow God to move us with compassion? If we ask the Lord to give us His heart for a person, the Holy Spirit will do so, but don't be surprised if you find yourself moved to tears.

In addition, it is not healthy to stuff powerful emotions, which often leads to depression. I knew a pastor's wife back in the 80's who not only was a wise, wonderful Christian woman, but a great Bible teacher as well. She wrote a Bible study on depression, and shared how when her brother committed suicide many years earlier, she never mourned his death. Twelve years later she found herself in a pit of depression and realized that all of her stuffed emotions were surfacing in the form of depression. There is a time to weep, and it is a time given to us by our loving Heavenly Father who numbers our days and years, knows our every thought, and knows what is best for us.

Interestingly science is discovering what the Bible has told us for thousands of years concerning a "merry heart." Creation Moments reports, "*Proverbs 15:13 'A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.'*" There are countless scientific studies designed to find out how diet, environment and our habits influence our health. These studies urged us to eat this, not eat that and generally give up bad habits.

"Now a study of almost 3,000 people between ages 53 and 85 shows that depressed people in this age group are far more likely to die from heart disease than those who show no sign of depression. The study not only measured severe depression, which often requires its own medical care, but also people who reported feeling helpless, hopeless, or apathetic. Study participants were also checked for any signs of coronary heart disease at the start of the study. Then they were tracked for four years. Those with even mild signs of depression died of coronary disease at a much higher rate than those who reported no signs of depression. This was even true for those who had no coronary disease at the beginning of the study. They also noted that the subject's weight, blood pressure, smoking and alcohol use had no bearing on the results.

"Scripture reminds us to rejoice in the Lord and His salvation, but only a minority ever do. While severe depression may need medical care, that minority can attest to rarely feeling

depressed when they remember what God has given us in His Son, Jesus Christ."

In *John 11:35* we read two poignant words, "*Jesus wept.*" The next verse tells us the response of the Jews, "*Behold how he loved him!*" It was a time to weep. Jesus and the disciples lost a friend. Mary and Martha lost a brother. Lazarus was no doubt mourned by other relatives, friends, and acquaintances. Weeping was a natural response. But, somehow I believe that the tears Jesus shed went far beyond the immediate situation, for Jesus knew that He would raise him from the dead and restore him to his sisters and friends that the people "*shouldest see the glory of God*" vs. *40:b*.

Standing before the tomb of Lazarus was the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the Anointed One, God Incarnate, the Alpha and the Omega, the Way, the Truth and the Life, and the One who sees (El Roi). In my opinion, He wept not only for Lazarus and His sisters, but in His Spirit, He was looking down through the corridors of time to the awful tragedy that took place in the Garden of Eden when sin and death entered into the world separating mankind from God. I believe He not only wept for Lazarus, but He wept for every unspeakable horror that sin, suffering, death, separation and sorrow brought upon every person born into this world, as well as all of creation. Entombed before Him lay the body of Lazarus in mute witness of the reality of death. I believe at that moment Jesus wept for the whole world. He wept for the unbelief of the people. Think about this: "*Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, 'Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me'*" vs. *41, 42* [Emphasis added.]

We can only try to imagine the great hush that fell over the crowd, followed by the indescribable excitement and amazement as Lazarus was raised to life by Jesus! This indeed was "a time to laugh" and rejoice. It was definitely a time to worship God in Spirit and in truth, and a time to

believe that Jesus was who He said He was, "*the resurrection and the life.*" It was undoubtedly a highly emotional time, and a time of genuine conversion for many, complete with soul searching and repentance. However, there are always those in the midst with hard and unbelieving hearts who, in spite of this great miracle went straight to the Pharisees who hated Jesus and told them what Jesus had done. It is amazing to me how even though they recognized that he did "*many miracles,*" they sought for ways to get rid of Him. The truth is miracles do not necessarily result in faith, but faith results in miracles—the greatest of which is being born again.

Tozer, remarking on the evangelical church's fear of emotions, quoting *Acts 3:8*, "*So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God*" said: "One cause of the decline in the quality of religious experience among Christians these days is the neglect of the doctrine of the inward witness. Stamping our feet to start the circulation and blowing on our hands to limber them up, we have emerged shivering from the long period of the theological deep-freeze, but the influence of the frosty years is still felt among us to such an extent that the words witness, experience and feeling are cautiously avoided by the rank and file of evangelical teachers. In spite of the undeniable lukewarmness of most of us we still fear that unless we keep a careful check on ourselves we shall surely lose our dignity and become howling fanatics by this time next week. We set a watch upon our emotions day and night lest we become over-spiritual and bring reproach upon the cause of Christ. Which all, if I may say so, is for most of us about as sensible as throwing a cordon of police around a cemetery to prevent a wild political demonstration by the inhabitants."

In the past few years there has been a great move to abduct the Church and steer her away from the "straight and narrow" by seducing her onto the "broad path." This visible, yet subtle shift was made possible because instead of "watching and praying" the sleepy Church began to nibble on the poisoned cake of "the social gospel." Soon the toxic effects

were evidenced everywhere when the doors were opened wide to embrace every foul and unclean bird posing as an expert on all things “Christian.” Gullible sheep tuned in to their favorite “Christian guru” with their “new revelations” promising health and wealth on TV and radio. These wolves in sheep’s clothing were (and are) adept at redefining what true Christianity is, especially through modern, perverted “versions” of the Bible. Gone was the “time to weep” because of sin, and because of lost souls. Now was the time, according to the “new breed” of popular “purpose-driven pimps, “to laugh” and be “positive” as the New Thing promised worldwide revival. Their psychobabble, unscriptural, “Christianity light” book sales rank in the millions. Mainstream churches had to either jump on board and join the “seeker friendly,” “fun” bandwagon or risk dwindling numbers of people and profits. Tragically, multitudes of young people have been, and are being swept away by the destructive tsunami of this unholy, profane, ungodly “pseudo Christianity” with its own revised and updated version of Jesus that neither the Apostles, nor the pilgrim church, nor the martyred saints through the ages would recognize.

Now we are in the age of “easy-believism” and “cheap grace,” where the so-called “gloom and doom” Christianity is repudiated by the entertaining, contemporary, fun churches. A whole new “Jesus” is being portrayed through the media, in books, and by predators in our pulpits. No longer is the definition of Jesus according to *Isaiah 53:3* taken into serious consideration: “*He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*” Instead, the new Jesus is being portrayed, among other things, as a fun-loving comedian—a laughing “surfer dude” who hangs out with punk rockers, and rides a Harley. This updated version of the “happy” Jesus is portrayed as a carefree regular guy who just wants to “hang out” with us, and who is as worldly (or worse) than we are since this “new Jesus” is ultramodern, has multiple jewel-filled body piercings, is tattooed, smokes and is as far removed as you can get from

the sinless, suffering Savior of the Bible. Is this just an updated “reformation” or is it total rebellion and apostasy bordering on blasphemy? My Bible says “*For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;* Hebrews 7:26. [Emphasis added.] Paul warned, “*But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived*” 2 Timothy 3:13. Jesus said, “*And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold*” and, “*...when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* Matthew 24:12, Luke 18:8b.

When Satan laughs, it is a time to weep. But, be encouraged for the time of laughter is coming for God’s children. “*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God*”.... “*be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*”.... “*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away*” Revelation 2:7, 10b;21:4.

Come quickly, Lord Jesus! †

QUOTES TO CONSIDER

“But I do protest against the careless spirit of slumber which seems to seal the eyes of many in the church, and to blind them to the enormous perils in which we are placed by the rise and progress of false doctrine these days.

“I ask you to pay special attention to this point. Such is the simplicity and innocence of many in the church today, that they actually expect false doctrine to look false, and will not understand that, as a rule, the very essence of its ability to do harm is its resemblance to God’s truth.” - J.C. Ryle, *Apostolic Fears*

“When a church compromises the holy with the profane, the result is dulled down people.” - Rayola Kelley

“We should not doubt God or His Word and lose faith because of the things that we don’t know or understand.” - Jeannette Haley

IS AMERICA RIGHTEOUS?

By Marvin J. Rosenthal, Zion’s Hope

“The word ‘righteousness’ (including words from the same root such as ‘righteous,’ ‘justice,’ and ‘upright’) is one of the most important and frequently used terms in the Word of God. Today, ‘righteousness’ is a word almost erased from the educational, commercial, and political vocabulary of America. Such an omission speaks with thunderous condemnation of the character of our day. It is rare indeed to hear an educator, business professional, or political candidate speak of righteousness.

“By definition, ‘righteousness’ is the product of ‘rightness,’ and ‘rightness’ is conformity to a standard or norm. The Bible, the standard or norm of ‘rightness’ is the will of God, which is simply an expression of God’s nature and character.

“By way of contrast, humanism substitutes humanity’s opinion of what is right or wrong in place of God’s revelation of what is right or wrong. Our hour of history is not unlike the days of the judges in ancient Israel when every individual did that which was right in his or her own eyes. When human beings become the final arbiters, everything becomes subjective. There is no platinum yardstick or measuring rod. When there is no acknowledged norm or standard, there is no absolute by which to measure the issues of life.

“However, the divine standard exists whether acknowledged or not, and men and women seek either to adhere to God’s standards or live in sin and disobedience to their Creator and Sovereign. Many of the problems that now divide our country are not, in an ultimate sense, political or even moral. They are spiritual. The issue really comes down to the belief in a holy God who has revealed His will and to whom men are accountable, or the belief in humanism which ultimately says of humanity, ‘I am captain of my ship; I am the master of my fate.’”

* * * * *

“Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become more corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters.”

—Ben Franklin

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

Q: *If the unpardonable sin is the one that grieves the Holy Spirit, my question is why does it not also grieve the FATHER and the SON? Why just the Holy Spirit?*

A: This is a question that has been alluded to in the past. It seems confusing to most people. To answer your question up front, the Father and the Son are just as grieved over the sin of the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit as the Holy Spirit is. The person of the Holy Spirit serves as the presence of God in our midst.

It is important to understand that the real issue does not rest with the Holy Spirit simply being grieved that ends in the unpardonable sin, but it actually goes deeper. *Ephesians 4:30* states, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

There are also other scriptures to consider, *Isaiah 63:10*, "But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit; therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and fought against them," as well as *1 Thessalonians 5:19*, "Quench not the Spirit," *Acts 5:9*, "... ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord," *1 Samuel 16:14*, "But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him."

It is clear that when rebellion is present, the Holy Spirit is vexed, when a wrong spirit is present the Holy Spirit will be quenched in His work, and wherever there is perversion He will be grieved, while if someone tempts Him it could easily result in judgment, and any disobedience while rejecting righteousness will result in Him withdrawing His presence and departing. This brings us to what causes the final offense against the Holy Spirit, that of blasphemy, the unpardonable sin.

Matthew 12:25-32 gives us this insight into the sin of blasphemy. Blasphemy means to vilify, rail and speak evil against. When you read the Scripture references in Matthew, blasphemy comes down to accrediting the works of the Holy Spirit as being Satan's wicked deeds which is a

type of vilification of the Holy Spirit, or accrediting Satan with the work of the Holy Spirit which is to speak evil against that which is holy. The reason this becomes the unpardonable sin is because the person and work of the Holy Spirit must be properly discerned to receive the gifts and promises of God. The Father will draw people to the Son, and the Son will invite people to partake of the Living Water (Holy Spirit) to receive eternal life, but the Spirit alone is the one who convicts people of sin to point them to the salvation of Christ, as well as becoming the motivating power behind repentance that leads to one being born again. He seals a saved person to redemption, leads one into all truth, and ultimately sanctifies the believer by setting him or her apart for the work of God (*John 3:3, 5; 4:14; 5:37-39; 6:44; 16:7-13; 1 Corinthians 2:9-14; Ephesians 1:11-14; 1 Peter 1:2, 22-23*).

When it comes to salvation, the Father sent the Son and the Son gave His life, but it is the Spirit who is working in this present world to bring revelation of salvation to a person's spirit. If a person rejects the work of the Holy Spirit, there is nothing left that can bring conviction of sin, righteousness, or judgment. If a person accredits the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan, then the Spirit is stripped of the power to do His work in a person due to unbelief. If a person fails to discern Satan and accredits and receives his presence and works as belonging to the Holy Spirit, then there is no means to properly discern, and the Spirit is robbed of His authority to bring forth unadulterated truths, corrections, and revelation.

As you can see when the Spirit is grieved so are the Father and Son, but when the Holy Spirit's work is rejected or is accredited to Satan, all that remains is judgment. It is for this reason people need to know the Person of the Holy Spirit, be able to properly discern His Work, and by faith walk according to His leading.

I hope this answers your question. ✚



QUOTES TO PONDER

"My definition of a rut is a grave with both ends kicked out. If we don't get out of our religious traditions and be real before God, our 'rut' will be our burial place. We serve a God of the living. Let's come alive to His dictates and directives in the Holy Spirit."
- Evangelist Richard Michalski

"Unbelief always produces the sin of omission; that is, unbelief always ends in omitting doing what is right but faith ends in doing what is right."
- Rayola Kelley

"My Lord wasn't after joiners. They're a dime a dozen. Americans are professional joiners. They'd die if they couldn't join something. Give them a red button and a certificate, and they'll join anything on the face of the earth. The Lord wasn't after joiners. He was after disciples."
- Revivalist Vance Havner

"Christianity is nothing if it is not supernatural. It is only where that is fully realized and acted upon that the true church can flourish....Christianity is a religion that came down from heaven and must still unceasingly be received from there. It is always dependent on the extent to which its believers yield themselves to the immediate operation of the divine power."
- Andrew Murray, *The State of the Church*, pg. 45

"Truth, not doctrine is the Christian's foundation. You can't stand on doctrine—you have to stand on truth. Doctrine is a manifestation of what you know is Truth. Doctrine can't save you—a Person saves you."
- Rayola Kelley

"Any faith that does not command the one who holds it is not a real belief; it is a pseudo belief only. And it might shock some of us profoundly if we were brought suddenly face to face with our beliefs and forced to test them in the fires of practical living."
- A. W. Tozer

"If we think of the Holy Spirit, as so many do, as merely a power or influence, our constant thought will be, 'How can I get more of the Holy Spirit?' But if we think of Him in the biblical way as a divine person, our thought will instead be, 'How can the Holy Spirit have more of me?'"
- Evangelist R. A. Torrey

BIBLE ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS HOW IS THE HOLY SPIRIT LIKE A FIRE?

Answer: (From gotquestions.org)

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).

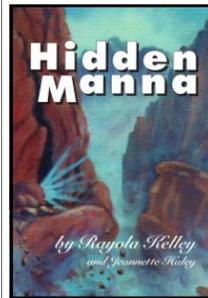
In the New Testament, the altar can serve as a picture of our commitment to the Lord. As believers in Jesus Christ, we are called upon to offer our bodies as “living sacrifices” (Romans 12:1), engulfed by the divine gift: the inextinguishable fire of the Holy Spirit. At the very beginning of the New 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 overspreading 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).

The Holy Spirit produces the purity of God in our lives. God’s purpose is to purify us (Titus 2:14), and the Spirit is the agent of our sanctification (1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2). As the silversmith uses fire to purge the dross from the precious metal, so God uses the Spirit to remove our sin from us (Psalms 66:10; Proverbs 17:3). His fire cleanses and refines. †



Hidden Manna is a book that exposes and explains human behavior according to God’s order in creation, and His desire to reveal the life of His Son in His people. *Hidden Manna*

will help you to understand yourself, and others, in ways you never considered before. Learn why people have different needs, fears, perceptions, ways of approaching God and why they find themselves in destructive cycles. Learn what the four natures throughout all mankind represent according to Scripture, and what each Christian’s real potential is in the kingdom of God. This book will challenge you to the core, bring you to the foot of the Cross, and set you free from misconceptions and conclusions about yourself and others. It will help unravel the complexities in your relationships, and give clarity as to why people respond the way they do in different situations. This book is full of surprises, and is indeed a priceless “hidden” gem waiting to be discovered.— Price: \$12.00

EXTREMES

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 is not filled with the Spirit of God, is dead while it lives in the flesh. - GSM

SUPPLICATION FOR PARDON

(From *Hymns for Schools*—1852)

Father of mercies—God of love!
Oh! Hear a humble suppliant’s cry;
Bend from thy lofty seat above,
Thy throne of glorious majesty:
Oh! Deign to hear my mournful voice,
And bid my drooping heart rejoice.

I urge no merits of my own,
No worth, to claim thy gracious smile:
No—when I bow before thy throne,
And dare converse with God a while—
Thy name, blest Jesus, is my plea—
Dearest and sweetest name to me!

Father of mercies—God of love!
Then hear thy humble suppliant’s cry;
Bend from thy lofty seat above,
Thy throne of glorious majesty:
One pardoning word can make me whole,
And soothe the anguish of my soul.