

GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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

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RUNNING THE RACE

Part 5

Developing the Right Stuff

By Rayola Kelley

Last month I spoke of one of our greatest hindrances when it comes to spiritual growth, revival, and running the race. The greatest hindrance for most people is pride. Our pride sits on the throne of our self-life and ever succumbs to a tyrannical type of rule, always proving to be unmerciful in its judgments, cruel in its demands, unreasonable in its conclusions, and opposite of godly love.

When it comes to understanding how pride looks and operates all one has to do is consider the opposite definition of charity in *1 Corinthians 13*. My, how we Christians expound the characteristics of God's love as we hide or justify our own moral flaws, but how many of us practice the attitude of love in our lives? In fact how many of us show that our real motivation for the things we do is not the love of God, but pride? When we do things in our pride, our actions become sounding brass or an obnoxious tinkling cymbal, having no constructive impact, and will never profit anyone because it is self-serving. Keep in mind God's love will always choose the high road when it comes to doing the right thing, but pride in its self-serving mode will choose the low road where self must come out on top because of the clouded perversion that such pride is worthy of being exalted and worshipped.

Unlike godly love, pride is impatient, inconsiderate, and displays jealousy when not recognized, while exalting personal rights to have its way because it sees itself superior in what it thinks it knows. It is unbecoming in its behavior towards others, it seeks its own agendas regardless of who it sacrifices along the way, is easily provoked because of a fragile ego, and is suspicious of everything

because it is ever operating in the darkness of wickedness.

Pride rejoices when iniquity wins and rages against the truth that would expose it as being evil. Since the world around pride must serve the comforts, desires, and whims of self, it will not tolerate any inconvenience, nor believe in that which is just, will be skeptical towards any hope based on the unseen, and will be void of any character to endure the tests and trials of life.

Let's consider what the Bible tells us about pride in the three Scriptures that have challenged me the most in this subject. *Romans 12:3* gives this insight about pride, "*For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*" First, we do not walk according to what we think we know, who we think we are, or what we think is right, rather we are to walk according to the measure of faith God gives us. A measure of faith is the grace allotted to us to obey what we already know to be scripturally true. In order to properly obey we must be sober about what His Word says about a matter. Sadly, many Christians are flippant towards God's Word and fail to take a step of faith by obeying what has been established in His Word. Whether they think they have it covered, or that that particular responsibility is not necessary, or it does not warrant their consideration because it does not appear to apply to the matter before them would be speculation on my part. What I can reiterate for sure is that grace only reigns through righteousness (acts reckoned as being so), reminding us that everything we do must be traced back to obedience to God and His Word because by faith we have counted His command and/or instruction as being true, right, and just (*Romans 5:21*). At the point of

unfeigned faith all intellectual debate stops about the validity of the Word, doubts towards God's intentions are taken away with confidence that our Sovereign Creator means what He says, and that all that has been established is meant to bring a believer into a state of perfection before Him.

In *1 Corinthians 10:12* we have this warning, "*Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*" It is natural for pride to give us a type of euphoric feeling about matters that appear to be going our way.

Whether we are deceived to think we have it all together, or have everything under control, or that we will come out on top, in the end it will all prove to be shifting sand (*Matthew 7:24-27*). There is only one way we can stand and that is on who Christ is (*1 Corinthians 3:11*). There is only one way we can withstand, and that is with His Word, and there is only one way we can continue to stand, and that is according to His promises (*Ephesians 6:11-17; Hebrews 6:12*).

As you connect *1 Corinthians 10:13* to *1 Corinthians 10:12*, you will see that the sin of pride is what usually sets us up to fall into temptation because we are blinded to the trap that has been set for us; and, ultimately we will also fail to see the true way out of all temptation, which is to humble ourselves before God, repent of our self-sufficiency, flee the snare that is set before us, and cast ourselves on Him who is the Rock, seeking His mercy, knowing that in the end we will obtain grace (*James 4:6-10*).

As stated before, pride is a sense of self-sufficiency that often gives us the false feeling of infallibility in a matter. In fact, if you feel a sense of infallibility or euphoria in a situation, watch out, you are going to fall when your strength to maintain the feeling becomes putty as reality proves to be



different, flinging you into a pit of despair. Meanwhile at such times of infallibility you cannot perceive that there is any way that you can be wrong, fail, or not have your way, but that is when you will fall.

The theme concerning the pitfall of pride continues in *1 Corinthians 10:14*, which gives us this final instruction, “*Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.*” It is important to remember pride is the great idol and serves as a tyrannical judge in all matters. It will prove to be a merciless judge when it comes to those who operate in it, and failure on our part to please our own idol ends in it judging us as failures, finding us guilty of failing to honor it, and causing us to walk in condemnation because of it. This should remind everyone of us that only God is a just judge and He is quick to forgive us of confessed offenses committed against Him and restore us back into a relationship with Him.

The third Scripture can be found in *Galatians 6:3*, “*For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.*” Our pride often causes us to think of ourselves in glowing terms, causing us to be divorced from the reality of our fallen condition. Even though there is scripture after scripture warning, contending, and challenging us concerning our pride, it is hard for us when we are operating from the pinnacle of our pride to believe such an evaluation.

Pride clearly wants to be served and fails to see itself as a servant to sin, and is the great oppressive tyrant of our lives, homes, societies, and nation. It not only oppresses others to comply to unrealistic standards, but it will box the person in who is also operating in it. Such people struggle with their rights to have life on their terms by trying to control the outcome of situations according to their particular take on a matter. Such people can become almost insane as they try to orchestrate the events of life. It is for this reason that *Galatians 6:5* instructs believers to bear their own burdens. It is not unusual for those who are operating in pride to put their idea of happiness, what is right or wrong, and personal responsibilities on others. In pride people see themselves worthy of worship, deserving of

obedience, and complete adherence to their personal well-being the priority.

I have just touched the surface of the subject of pride, but the hard fact is we will not see any changes or revival in ourselves, our homes, our churches, and our nation until this idol is brought down, broken at its point of self-sufficiency, while its claims on our life are ignored, its right to reign in our soul denied, and it is properly dealt with as an enemy of God. We cannot serve two masters at the same time, God and the sins of self, making it clear that if we fail to deal with pride, it will take us on detours away from the race, the goal, and the victory. The question is how can we overcome this tyrant in our lives?

The first thing we must do is desire the real prize of heaven. If a person does not desire the prize, he or she will never make the necessary sacrifice to possess it. And, what is the great prize the Christian should pursue—great ministry, wondrous spiritual insights, experiences in the supernatural, spiritual gifts, miraculous power from above, etc, etc? In the right spirit, all of these things can be beneficial, but they all pale in comparison to the believer’s real prize.

As Christians we have two wonderful parables in *Matthew 13:44-46* to bring out the type of value we must put on our real prize of heaven. “*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field: the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.*”

It is interesting that Jesus used the term, “kingdom of heaven,” I once read that there is a difference between the terms “kingdom of heaven” and “kingdom of God.” These terms have to do with carrying out God’s will, “*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven*” (*Matthew 6:10*). When it comes to the “kingdom of heaven,” it entails carrying out His will on earth, but when it comes to the “kingdom of God,” it includes the broader scope of carrying out His will in every dimen-

sion from heaven, the unseen realm, and earth, for God indeed rules over all.

The question is what is God’s will concerning the world we live in? First we must understand what constitutes the kingdom of heaven. John the Baptist gives us this insight, “*And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (*Matthew 3:2*). What was John referring to?—Jesus, the King from heaven who would establish His kingdom on earth in the hearts of people. There can be no real kingdom established unless there is a King who can rule it.

Therefore, what is the believer’s real pearl that was hidden in a field, and was sought out by others even though it could not be seen?—the Lord Jesus Christ. We are told to seek this pearl, and when you compare this to God’s instructions in *Amos 5:4-8*, this set of Scriptures makes it very clear what we must not seek after, while the one main instruction in them is clear, we are to seek the Lord and we will live. *Jeremiah 29:13* tells us how to seek Him, “*And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*” Once we possess this pearl, we become clay jars that carry it wherever we are, offering the riches attached to it to others (*2 Corinthians 4:7*).

Jesus gave this instruction in *Matthew 6:33* about what to seek, “*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you.*” It is clear that the main emphasis of the kingdom of God is righteousness, but what is the main emphasis concerning the kingdom of heaven? Jesus clearly brought out God’s will in relationship to the earth. *John 6:40* tells us, “*And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.*” It is clear that the will of God for the kingdom of heaven is that we believe on Jesus to ensure our eternal citizenship in heaven.

God’s will is constantly confirmed through Jesus’ example. As the begotten Son of God, He always sought to do the will of the Father, and in *John 4:34*, He stated, “*My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work,*” and what is at the

crux of Jesus' works on earth: our redemption, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he has sent."

When it comes to the crux of the matter in relationship to the kingdom of God and righteousness, it has to do with reaching our potential in the kingdom of God by fulfilling our real calling. The bottom line in the kingdom of God has to do with bringing glory to God in all that we do. To effectively be a recipient of the Father's numerous gifts and promises through Christ, we must first seek the Lord in order to properly pursue the upright life before Him. Righteousness is about doing the right thing in relationship to God in order to ensure the integrity of what is being done to bring Him the due recognition or glory He deserves.

On earth we must believe on Christ and in His work of redemption to be identified to His heavenly kingdom that is now being established in His Church and will eventually be established in Jerusalem during His millennium rule on earth, but we do so in order to fulfill our high calling to reflect the glory of God to all of creation. This is the ultimate will of God for all of His creation because He designed and created it with the goal that it would bring Him glory, for He is worthy of all praise and worship. Therefore, whatever and whoever is reflecting His glory is doing the will of God.

The second step we must take has to do with disciplining ourselves. Jesus mentioned the first and foremost discipline in light of the call to discipleship—deny self (*Matthew 16:24-26*). This instruction is before the command to pick up the cross and follow Him. "Deny" in this text means "disown" self.

The idea of being Jesus' disciple can be romanticized when we think of the cross. We can see ourselves becoming martyrs as we nobly carry the cross to follow Jesus, but the truth is there is no nobility when it comes to the life of a disciple. The concept of disciple comes out of the idea of a disciplined life.

Discipline at any level can prove to be hard and trying. It is not meant to be a walk in the park, but a rigorous training to discipline one's soul. Jesus' call to discipleship points to a very important order when it comes to fol-

lowing Him. Before you can pick up your cross, you must first deny self of its right to have life on its terms. Clearly, the great idol of pride must be first denied any right to reign in our lives. It must be stripped of its scepter to judge, its authority must be silenced before it will cease to sit on the throne of our self-life, and it must be recognized as a great enemy of God before we can successfully address any of its attempts to once again claim the throne of the self-life in the future.

We must disown the old life with its idol before we can address the next enemy of God with the cross, our flesh. The idol of the self-life must be dealt with first in order to ensure the flesh with its lust is actually crucified. If pride is allowed to remain on the throne of the self-life, the flesh (also known as the "old man") will be made a martyr that simply needs to be reformed and not mortified. Pride will logically declare the judgment of death upon the "old man" as being extreme and unwarranted because the old soulish disposition is "not so bad," while justifying why the flesh has a right to be happy, and that without its influence in our life we will never know satisfaction.

However, Jesus' command is clear, once self is denied, the flesh must be crucified. The flesh serves as a platform in which the self-life can be aided because it is what connects us to the world around us. Without the mortification of the flesh, the world still holds the means in which to tempt, ensnare, and destroy a soul. Jesus is clear when he added to the call of discipleship this question, "What does a man profit if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul"? Paul made it clear that we must be crucified to the world and the world crucified to us, but the only way to do that is to shut down the avenue of the flesh in which the world can take our lusts captive to its false light and promises (*Galatians 6:14; Colossians 3:5-8*).

The Apostle Paul also made it clear that the real discipline when it comes to being Jesus' disciple is not a one-time exercise when he stated, "I die daily" (*1 Corinthians 15:31*). The apostle was only reiterating what Jesus had already stated, "If any man

will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (*Luke 9:23*). (Emphasis added.)

It is clear that in order to follow Jesus we must get rid of the besetting sin of the excess garbage of the old man to reach our final destination. The call of discipleship is not some great sacrifice on our part, but a necessity in order to do our reasonable service in God's kingdom to ensure He alone is glorified.

Next month I will explain the other characteristics that must be developed in our character to overcome the influence of pride on our lives, but meanwhile ask the Lord to show you how much pride still rules your life and is besetting you in your Christian walk. †

SPIRITUAL DROUGHT **By Vance Havner**

"The conditions today are just about much the same as they were in the times of Elijah. We're living in a spiritual drought. There's a famine of the hearing of the Word of the Lord. Ahab and Jezebel sit in high places. Idolatry abounds. And yet God has His faithful remnant. We need an Elijah who can face Ahab and call a convocation on Carmel, a confrontation with Baal, and a showdown with the forces of evil.

"We're a little short on prophets. We need to rebuild the broken altar and put the sacrifice of a dedicated life thereupon. But before we can expect any fire from heaven, we must drench the altar. I've heard plenty of preaching about rebuilding the altar. I've heard sermons about presenting our body as a living sacrifice. But the hardest lesson for anybody in Christian service to is that we cannot help God out in the slightest by warming up the altar in the energy of the flesh.

"We try to start a fire of our own and think that'll help out God's fire. It won't do it....You can't run a church as you would a business corporation. You can't work up mere human enthusiasm to put over the work of the Lord...we're so wired up to our own devices that if the fire doesn't fall from heaven, we can turn on a switch and produce some false fire of our own....But God answers by fire, not by feelings." †

A TIME TO WEEP, A TIME TO LAUGH

Part 2

By Jeannette Haley

“Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping” – Psalm 6:8

The words were spoken, and his heart broke. His little girl was dead, he had summoned Jesus too late, it was over, and she was gone. But, before the ruler of the synagogue had time to weep Jesus said to him, *“Be not afraid, only believe” Mark 5:36b*. Together with Peter, James and John they walked to the sorrowing father’s house where Jesus saw a *“tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly.” “And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth” 5:38b, 39.*

Then the most incredible thing occurred, weeping and mourning suddenly turned to laughter. *Mark 5:40a* records, *“And they laughed him to scorn.”* Their weeping was phony, their laughter mocking, and their hearts hard, prideful, overflowing with disdain, and crushing unbelief. Jesus, undeterred, and with the authority and power of heaven *“put them all out.”* Then He raised her from the dead.



The mockers in this story brings to mind the Scriptures in *James 4:8, 9* that says, *“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.”*

Weeping with those who weep and rejoicing with those who rejoice must come from a heart that is wholly the Lord’s, a heart filled with the Holy Spirit, a heart in agreement and full surrender to the heart of God. As His people, what grieves the heart of God

should naturally grieve us as well, what rejoices the heart of God should likewise cause our hearts to rejoice. Being born again means that we are born of His Spirit, born from above, a new heart has been given to us, and we are a new creation, reflecting the image of His Son to a lost world.

We should never forget, or be casual about the fact that sin is a great grief to God. *“And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart” Genesis 6:5, 6.* Was the sin and wickedness of the pre-flood world any greater than the wickedness of the days we are living in? Jesus warned, *“But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” Matthew 24:37-39.* In other words, people will be living in their own little worlds, doing whatever they please, caught up with their worldly lives, “doing business as usual,” blissfully ignorant of the rising tide of evil, casually drifting with the tide of current corruption, totally unprepared for the sudden destruction looming ever closer.

Concerning casualness, A. W. Tozer said, “I am concerned about the casual attitudes I see in much of Christianity today. I do not think we should be casual about anything that neither Satan nor God are casual about. I want to see seriousness and gravity here. I do not mind humor. However, when I am talking about my soul and its relationship to God, I want gravity and seriousness. Time is a relative thing, but it is passing swiftly away and never coming back. Tragedies and troubles are everywhere, and we cannot take things for granted.

“God does not need you, but oh, how you need Him! For when the holy eyes of God look upon your life, and those eyes see moral inequity, God pronounces iniquity. But when you

cover yourself with the atoning blood by faith; when you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ who is risen, those same righteous, just eyes of God see you justified because Somebody cared enough to interpose, and His precious blood covers you. Thanks be unto God for the blood of the atonement that is sufficient to cover our iniquity.” (*My Daily Pursuit*, pg. 288.)

Considering the state of the world and the nation of America in particular, who among us can deny the fact that the days we live in are a “time to weep?” Can we honestly pray “God bless America,” continue to party and play, blinding ourselves to the blood of the innocents, over 60 million of them, whose blood cries out before the throne of God night and day? This one collective, unspeakable evil alone is a heart wrenching indictment against us, and in the wake of this destruction how many distraught women, and also men, have broken hearts and shattered lives because of their involvement in this grievous sin? Broken lives, broken hearts—a time to weep. Jesus said, *“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” Luke 4:18.*

Concerning the sexually immoral, ungodly, shameful America we now live in would not the words penned by the Apostle Peter apply to her? Peter, as did Jesus, warned of *“false prophets, damnable heresies, the way of truth being evil spoken of,”* the judgment of God in the time of Noah, and the *“turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly.”* (See *2 Peter 2*.)

Jesus, in *Matthew 24:4-7* lists certain major events that describe the “beginning of sorrows” (vs. 8). The question is, just when does, or did, the “beginning of sorrows” begin? Are we still waiting for the events Jesus spoke of in *Matthew 24:5-7* to take place? Or, have these things already come to pass? I believe (and this is just my studied opinion) that the answer is both and that “the beginning of sorrows” started nearly 2000 years

ago with the persecution of the early church and the destruction of Jerusalem. We are now living right at the end of time.

Going back to what Jesus said, it is interesting to take special notice of what Jesus enumerated beginning with the warning in *verses 4 and 5*, *"Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many."* Deception is nothing new, and has always been Satan's major weapon against the truth. Since God's Word is truth (*John 17:17*) Satan knows that he must detour people away from reading, studying and meditating on the Word of God. He knows that when people believe the Truth (Jesus), they will discover the Way (Jesus) and enter into life (Jesus). (See *John 14:6*.) The Greek word for "deceive" in *Matthew 24:4* means to cause to "stray from safety, truth, virtue, go astray, deceive, err, seduce, wander, be out of the way." Jesus commanded, *"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits" Matthew 7:14-16a.* Such wolves have been in operation for thousands of years.

In light of these two verses, we need to also consider *verse 24* which says, *"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; inasmuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."* "Christ" comes from *christos*, a Greek word meaning "anointed." It is the equivalent of the word *mashiach*, or Messiah, in Hebrew. So, to be the Christ, or Messiah, is to be "the anointed one of God." Therefore, end time deceivers will either outright declare that they are "Christ" (and I knew such a person years ago) or they will dupe people into believing that they are a "little Christ" or "anointed one" of God, everything they say is to be believed without question, and to turn from them will result in dire consequences. (Like the Popes who claim to be the "Vicar

of Christ" on earth, and to disbelieve such will result in eternal damnation. In 1302 Pope Boniface said this in a letter to the Catholic Church: "Furthermore, we declare, we proclaim, we define that it is absolutely necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff.") Definition: "Vicar"—in the broadest sense means someone who is authorized to act as a substitute or agent for a superior - compare "vicarious"—serving in the place of someone else; assuming the position, place, or office of another person.

Quoting from *Christiansanswers.net*, concerning this Roman Catholic teaching, "The world again has a man in the position of "Vicar of Christ," so it is biblically imperative to examine the true office of the Vicar of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ entrusted the universal care of souls into the safekeeping of the Divine Person of the Holy Spirit. Concerning this Third Person of the Trinity who was to be His substitute, the Lord promised that, *"when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment"* (*John 16:8*). The Holy Spirit convicts of sin as He makes the sinner realize his lost condition and convicts him of his need of Christ's righteousness. He it is who brings a soul dead in sin to life. This miracle of grace is spoken of in Scripture as, *"the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead"* (*Ephesians 1:19*). The majesty, greatness and indescribable power of the true office of Vicar of Christ are such that a believer stands in awe of His divine Person. That any human being should lay claim to the office of Vicar of Christ seems totally absurd and blasphemous. Because there is a direct connection between the redemption of Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, it is extremely dangerous to confuse the work of the Holy Spirit as Vicar of Christ with the position or work of any man."

Deceivers are agents of Satan whose goal is to subtly move people (especially immature or young Christians who want "spiritual experiences") off the straight and narrow onto

the broad way that leads to destruction. He begins by casting doubt on the character of God and the truth of His Word, causes confusion through various watered-down, altered "versions" of the Bible, controversial books written by unqualified but popular, self-proclaimed "Bible teachers," popular television false prophets, wolves in sheep's clothing, speaking veiled blasphemies, proudly performing for vast audiences of undisciplined, gullible, unstable sheep. Such workers of iniquity deceive through conflicting religious theories, ideas, philosophies and confusing "ear-tickling" conclusions that abound in the world, and in apostate churches. Once people no longer love, value or desire the pure Word of God, tremble at the Word, seek to know God, His ways, and His will through His Word, they will step outside of biblical boundaries, abandon discernment, and become slowly indoctrinated into an altered perception of the God of the Bible, who He is, His works and His ways, ending up with "another Jesus, another spirit, and another gospel." (*2 Corinthians 11:4*.)

Satan entices those who desire and long for supernatural, extra-biblical "spiritual" experiences. He is able to bring about powerful experiences that are so convincingly real that they can become addictive if not properly discerned and immediately rejected. Gaining access to the supernatural, metaphysical realm is easy once a person opens him or herself up to the spiritual realm, passes through the initial barrier of fear, and remains open to whatever materializes. Satan may appear as an *"angel of light"* (*2 Corinthians 11:14*), seducing a person into an altered state of consciousness. As a person continues to explore tantalizing and alluring supernatural experiences, all of which lead to a labyrinth of open doors for further exploration, he or she has flung the door of his or her soul wide open to demonic oppression, or even possession. I have known and met many people through the years who operated in *"another spirit"* while claiming that they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Unless such people truly want the truth, which can set them free, humble themselves and repent, they will refuse to give up the wrong spirit

because they love the supernatural experiences, the so-called "spiritual insights" and the power it gives them. The more experiences they have, the more they are attracted towards the tantalizing aspects of the unknown that is beyond present "revelations," until all of their affections are focused on pursuing "forbidden knowledge." The real Jesus of the Bible holds no place in their mind, heart or affections at this point.

Familiar spirits are keenly aware of people who long for anything supernatural and know how to provide just the right avenues to lure unsuspecting, well-meaning, curious people into a maze of mysterious possibilities and false light illuminations that result in an irresistible urge to explore. Again, any unsuspecting, immature, babe in Christ who has ventured into this realm will find that he or she has no desire whatsoever to read the Bible, or study the Word of God. Such a person may sit in church every Sunday, but everything that is said either goes over them, around them, or is reinterpreted in their mind according to their perception due to an altered state of consciousness. In addition, extra-biblical supernatural "revelations" and experiences cause a person to feel "superior," "elite," "more experienced," and "in the know" than solid biblical believers who stand on the Bible and the Bible alone as the final authority to all matters. People's personal pride is Satan's preferred platform in which to gain access into a person's life.

The only way to be set free from demonic deception is to call out to the Lord for help and deliverance, command Satan and his demons to go in the Name of Jesus, ask God to forgive you for opening yourself up to other spirits, recommit your life to the Lord, ask Him to fill you with the Holy Spirit and close the door to any other spirit, and follow Him. Jesus warned, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other" *Matthew 6:24a*.

Moving on to *Matthew 24:6*, we read the second sign of the "beginning of sorrows," "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet." Jesus knew that all of these "wars"

and "rumors of wars" would strike fear into the hearts of His people, yet He calmly inserted into the middle of his discourse on this subject words of comfort, telling us to see that we be not troubled. Even though it appears that the whole world is upside down, inside out and spinning out of control, God is the One in control. The world has never been without conflict, battles and wars. The key is, these things will become broader in scope. The past hundred years have seen great death and destruction due to two world wars, the horrors of Viet Nam, the Korean war, millions dead from the horrific world-wide flu epidemic, over six million Jews, and Christians exterminated by Hitler, from 70 to 90 million Chinese, many of them Christians, slaughtered by Mao not to mention lives lost because of Lenin, Stalin, Castro, Kim Jong Il, and scores of other evil dictators too numerous to mention. The truth is only about 14 percent of the world today is "free" while most of the world is struggling under dictatorships. Yet, the Bible says "...but the end is not yet." While it may be a time to weep, those who belong to Christ, trust Him, and hope in Him are not to let their heart be troubled.

Then we read in *Matthew 24:7*, "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places." This verse is not only descriptive of the history of mankind, but obviously a fitting, accurate, pertinent description of today. It is blatantly clear that earthly nations are indeed rising against each other in a race for global domination. To me "*kingdom against kingdom*" alludes to the kingdom of Satan rising against the kingdom of God. Darkness versus light, evil versus righteousness, immorality versus morality, death versus life.

Finally, when it comes to "*famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places*" the overwhelming, daunting accumulation of recorded, statistical and actual documentation of such disasters, world-wide, and their rapid increase, regularity and intensity is so vast that it is beyond my ability to do it justice in this short article. But, for anyone who doubts that we are indeed living in a

time of sorrows, please go on line and investigate it for yourself.

Yes, it is a time to weep, and identify with the sins of our nation, which hopefully will cause us to bow before the Majesty in the Heavens and pray as Daniel prayed when he identified with the sins of Israel, "O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments...To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets...we have sinned, we have done wickedly." *Daniel 9:4b; 5, 9, 10, 15b*

It is a time to weep, but for those of us who are Christ's, a time to laugh is coming. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" *Psalms 3:5b*. ☩

COMMENTS FROM READERS

"I felt a huge 'heart hug' as I read your article! [*A Time to Weep*] It so drastically needs to be said ...we don't have to be the STAUNCH hypocrites; let's just be ourselves, and enjoy all of the nuances that God has created within us!! I remember when I was part of the WOF [Word of Faith] group, we were actually chastised if we said we didn't feel well, or didn't feel good that day...but when they wound up into the 'worship' [what a joke], then we were supposed to put on our happy clappy face and jump around like idiots looking like it was a party. Sick, sick, sick. ...I could hear/feel your emotions are you sat and wrote that article! Job well done. Can hardly wait for part two! Also, the Jews KNOW how to express their emotions, whether it's at one of their Feast Celebrations, a wedding, sitting Shiva with someone...they never hide their emotions. Probably why I've always gotten along so well with them." - FL

"We KNOW that Jesus talked to women...a great deal! Martha and Mary were part of his company!" - FL

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

Q: *My husband and I are tired of trying to find a truly biblical church where Jesus is exalted and the Holy Spirit is free to move. Every time we try a church it's either dead, man-centered, or scripturally "off." Should we keep going and try to fit in without being dulled-down by nominal "one-size-fits-all" preaching, or what would you suggest?*

A: This is not the first time I have been asked this question. American Christians seem to be struggling all over the United States as to which church they should attend. They want to be obedient to *Hebrews 10:25*, "*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*" It is clear that at this time in history Christians need each other as the day of Jesus' coming approaches and the battle between good and evil is intensifying in the world.

First I want to remind you that believers make up the church, and whenever they are gathered together in Spirit and truth, they constitute an assembly. The Lord has established the Body for the edification of each member, to build up, challenge, exhort, and encourage each member in their walk. When this Scripture was written, the church was not organized like it is nowadays with its various edifices. It met in such places as homes, caves, forests and fields. Preaching could last for hours as in the case of Eutychus in *Acts 20:9*. He is the one who fell asleep in a loft because Paul was long at preaching. He fell out of the three-story loft, was killed and had to be raised from the dead. In countries where there is great persecution, believers must meet in secret behind closed doors or in unlikely locations. Some are in prison and isolation and are unable to meet with other Christians to keep them centered and focused. In such cases, Christians must depend on the presence and teaching of the Holy Spirit for inspiration and spiritual growth. As you can imagine this type of environment produces a whole different walk for believers.

The church in America is still afforded the opportunity to meet without much fear of persecution, but we are faced with another type of challenge. Many churches are dead and have no life, while others are heretical, feeding poisonous doctrines of devils to unsuspecting people, and there are those who have a form of religion, but lack true power. As a result, Christians walk away frustrated because they are left in a worse state than they were before they entered the doors of the church, leaving them with leanness in their spirit because they know the "water cisterns" are broken and contain stagnant, contaminated water that will eventually pollute them if they stick around, or the life they have in Christ is being sucked out of them because the spirit is lifeless or wrong in a church. It is for this very reason that in the past when I was asked as to what church a person could attend, I was reluctant to send them anywhere because in some cases the church proved to be a very dangerous place to send a new Christian or those who were vulnerable.

Regardless of the status of some churches in America, there are good churches out there where the pastor still preaches the Word of God and you can sense the presence of His Spirit. My suggestion is that you do not put any expectation in finding a good church because you will be disappointed; rather, direct your expectation towards God to lead you to a trustworthy Body, where you will be edified because the leadership has a love for God and His Word, is evangelistic, and the Body has a true love for one another. As you wait upon the Lord for His direction in this matter, do not forget to encourage your spouse as well as yourself in your Christian walk, as if you are isolated from everything but the Lord. Read and study your Bible, read Christian authors who are sound in doctrine and will encourage you personally in your spiritual growth, as you firmly develop your own life of worship. Ask the Lord to bring in your path like-minded believers who could exhort you in your life and maybe be instrumental in you finding a church. If you find that you are in a lean time in your Christian life because you cannot find a place of worship, make sure you first establish

a personal sanctuary for yourself and then you can set up a place of worship for you and your family, knowing if the Spirit is present, that like Mary in *Luke 10:41*, you have chosen that good part of true religion. †

EVERY DAY

(Author Unknown—1872)

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes--and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever!" Revelation 21:4. This is but a glimpse of the glorious state upon which all the people of God will hereafter enter! There will not only be the absence of all evil—there will be the eternal enjoyment of all good. There will be perpetual vigor, perfect purity, happy service, joyous praise, eternal friendship, holy communion, and unmingled and everlasting bliss! Suffering Christian, a few more pangs—and your last moment of anguish will be past! Bereaved one, in Heaven you will never wear the garments of sadness—you will never lose a friend! Sorrowing one, you will soon heave your last sigh, and have all tears wiped from your eyes! Weary one, your journey is almost ended. Soon you will cross the threshold of your Father's house, find yourself at home, and enter upon the enjoyment of your everlasting rest!"

"A few more storms shall beat
On this wild rocky shore,
Then we shall be where tempests
cease,
And surges swell no more.

"A few more struggles here,
A few more partings o'er,
A few more toils, a few more tears,
And we shall weep no more!"

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

"We are fast approaching the stage of the ultimate inversion: the stage where the government is free to do anything it pleases, while the citizens may act only by permission; which is the stage of the darkest periods of human history, the stage of rule by brute force." - Ayn Rand

"Government's first duty is to protect the people, not run their lives."
- Ronald Reagan

MYSTICISM AND THE COMING WORLD RELIGION

Excerpts from T. A. McMahon article

Undermining sound doctrine is Satan's primary goal in his attempt to shipwreck the faith and fruitfulness of believers. The strategy involves corrupting the Word of God by adding to it or subtracting from it. Thus the Scriptures are distorted through the input of fallen, finite man and the contributions of seducing spirits and doctrines of demons (1Tm 4:1). Such modifications demolish the objective truth of Scripture. The Bible no longer stands as God's Word when "adjustments" are made by other sources. This is taking place today in unprecedented fashion, especially through the introduction (or re-introduction) of mysticism.

The antithesis of the objective Word of God, mysticism is defined by The Merriam-Webster Dictionary as "the belief that direct knowledge of God, spiritual truth, or ultimate reality can be attained through subjective experience such as intuition or insight," and adds that it is "vague speculation, a belief without sound basis." Google gives this definition: "belief characterized by self-delusion or dreamy confusion of thought, especially when based on the assumption of occult qualities or mysterious agencies." A mystical worldview, which is intensifying in both the world and its religions, will be foundational to the coming one-world religion.

Among many reasons, the primary one is that mysticism has a universal appeal that will attract and unify all the religions of the world. Why? Because it avoids doctrine (rules, regulations, commandments, obligations, requirements, etc.). The doctrines of the Bible are given by God and are to be obeyed; not obeying them is rebellion, which is the state of the world as well as the state of many within the church. The religions of the world also have doctrines, albeit false ones, against which their followers often rebel. Doctrines divide because people don't particularly like rules that demand obedience. The stricter the rules, the less attractive the religion. That's a potential problem for the religion of the Antichrist because its goal is to attract other belief systems and

draw all people into its spiritual web.

Mysticism avoids objective rules and requirements, whether biblical or not. It's a belief system without a sound (objective) basis that majors on subjective experience, insights, intuition, dreamy confusion of thought (e.g., altered states of consciousness), speculation, and mysterious agencies. So the arbiter of what is right and true is how one feels: "If it feels right, then it must be right, and therefore ultimately true."

In order for mysticism to become the foundational belief system of the one-world religion, it must include all the world religions. With rare exceptions, the religions of the Far East are fundamentally mystical, so little change is necessary for them. But what of the law-oriented religions of Roman Catholicism and Islam? Their combined numbers exceed two billion followers, so they must be included in the religion of the Antichrist. Yet they are both legalistic—Catholicism with its canons and decrees, inquisitions, and obligations, and Islam with its Sharia laws. Obviously this must change in order for them to fit in with the necessary ecumenism of the one-world religion. . . .

In the sixteenth century, a Spaniard named Ignatius Loyola, who was the founder of the Jesuits, fostered mysticism through his Spiritual Exercises. They are enormously popular among Catholics and contemplative evangelicals today. One Jesuit source tells us: "Ignatius was convinced that God can speak to us as surely through our imagination as through our thoughts and memories. In the Ignatian tradition, praying with the imagination is called contemplation" (Kevin O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure: Experiencing the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, p.141). "Praying with the imagination," by the way, is another term for creative visualization, a powerful occult technique that ushers the visualizer into the spirit realm.

Contemplative techniques have divorced the practitioner from the objective Word of God, leading one into the subjective arena of the imagination and feelings. This is what people like Richard Foster (*Celebration of Discipline*) and Sarah Young (*Jesus Calling*) are promoting. The practical

consequences of disregarding critical judgment are often disastrous. Yet that is and will be the outcome of a religious system that people will flock to in the Last Days.

Following the mystical practices of Ignatius Loyola in our day were Catholics Thomas Merton and Henri Nouwen. Both are deceased. Merton was a Trappist monk and priest; Nouwen was also a priest, and both were well-known mystics. They were paragons of the modern contemplative movement and greatly influenced leading evangelicals such as Richard Foster, Dallas Willard, Eugene Peterson, Beth Moore, Kay Warren, and others. Merton studied the Desert Fathers and the Christian mystics and recognized their connection with the meditative practices of Eastern mysticism in Zen Buddhism, Taoism, and Sufism, which he taught and practiced. Asked if he felt that "turning away from traditional Christianity toward the East" would cause "an eventual turning back to a different form of Christianity, one that might even be more genuine," Merton replied, "Yes, I think so" (Merton, *Thomas Merton: Preview of the Asian Journey*, 53-54).

Henri Nouwen has become the favored mystic among evangelicals. One of his most popular books is *Behold the Beauty of the Lord: Praying with Icons*. It's an instruction manual on how to use imagery as the window of heaven in order to enter into the deeper things of the soul. Nouwen espouses mysticism because he sees it "as my call to help every person claim his or her own way to God." That doesn't seem to faze Rick Warren, who quotes him favorably in his best-selling *Purpose Driven Life*, or Kay Warren, who recommends Nouwen's books, or Philip Yancy, who sings his praises in *Christianity Today*, or Chuck Swindoll, who is enamored with his contemplative teachings, or Tony Campolo, who calls the deceased Catholic priest "one of the great Christians of our time."

Doctrines, whether true or false, take a back seat—or no seat at all—in mysticism. Remember, as noted, doctrines divide. Therefore they need to be pushed aside . . . Never mind the theology of the pope. It's how he makes everyone feel. More and more, it seems, this is what's important to people. †