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Discernment 12 ARE YOU POSSESSING YOUR SOUL?

By Rayola Kelley

We have been considering discernment. It would behoove every Christian to know how to discern between good and evil, the natural spirit as well as the spirit of the world from the Holy Spirit, and the motives and intentions of the heart in order to recognize the true fruits of that which may look alright but lacks life, godly qualities, and produces spiritual growth in the ways of righteousness.



Sadly many assume they know what is true, but their truth is based on their perverted conclusions and will lack the verification of the Word and Spirit of God. Some presume they are on their way to heaven, but they lack that inward witness of the Spirit that verifies they are indeed adopted children of God (1 John 5:9-13). There are those who hide behind their pet doctrines, but identifications with certain doctrines do not save a person; rather, a person is only saved by their identification to the Lord Jesus, the Son of the Living God. Some are trusting in religious affiliation, but according to Scripture only faith towards the true God of heaven is going to ensure salvation because it is such faith alone towards Him that pleases Him (Hebrews 11:6). We have those who are depending on "good works" to get them to heaven, but we know such works are unprofitable without the presence of faith towards God and believing and obeying the truth. Unfeigned faith also allows one to receive the blessings and grace of God in the right Spirit to experience salvation.

The truth is that man's religion

and the world present many different paths to heaven that become one broad path to destruction (*Matthew 7:13-14*). This broad path is often lumped into the "ecumenical movement" to bring all religions under one umbrella or "Universalism," where everyone will somehow be saved, but God has only provided one path to eternal glory and that is through His Son, and anyone who refuses to receive this gift will perish in their sins. This concept of one way to heaven is unacceptable to the world. The world refuses to accept that true salvation is based on believing and receiving the person and work of Jesus. Such a notion is rigid and not in line with "political correctness." As a result, many talk about the love of God, but there is only one place where a person can experience such love, and that is at the cross of Christ as he or she embraces the message of the Gospel.

How many times have we heard *John 3:16*? How many of us thought "Wasn't that nice of God to send His Son," but fail to go any further to realize the only place we can know such incredible love is by receiving the Son as our Lord and Savior. It is in and through Jesus that the Father is able to bestow His great love on each believer who has truly been adopted and sealed by the Holy Spirit, and it is at the point of humble faith that we can truly receive it as being so (*Romans 8:13-17; Galatians 4:4-7; John 3:1-2*).

Jesus warned that many would, in essence, come and say "Lord, Lord, have we not done these works in Your name?" Jesus will tell such people I know you not because you have not really done the will of the Father (*Matthew 7:21*). We can do a lot of decent things and what many would consider to be "good works" for the common good of others or mankind, but if they are not according to the commission and will of God, they will turn out to be detours, reprobate works, and worthless causes (*Titus*

1:16). Jesus made it clear as to why we as believers are here in *Matthew 28:18-20* and *Mark 16:15-16*: to preach the Gospel which is clearly laid out in *1 Corinthians 15:1-4*, and make disciples (followers) of Him, and Paul revealed the same sentiment when he declared, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified...yea woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" (*1 Corinthians 2:2; 9:16*).

There is an incident that I have shared in the past but it clearly stands out in my mind in relationship to this article, confirming the warning found in *Matthew 7:21*. There was a pastor at a church who was a heretic. He clearly did not love the truth and had his own form of theology that was clearly unscriptural, and an agenda that was more in line with self-importance, self-exaltation, and controlling the sheep and the "show". We tried to challenge him, but he would not repent of his unscriptural, unloving, cultic ways.

Years later this pastor found out he had cancer. At one time they thought God had healed him, but the cancer was still there and escalating. He eventually conceded to the fact that cancer would win out and went about putting his house in order and planning his funeral. On his death bed he had an experience his wife recounted to a mutual friend. As his earthly life was fading, he cried out, "Open the door, open the door!"

His wife thought he was asking her to open the door, but *Revelation 3:7* is clear about the real door keeper, "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.'"

I can only surmise that the door to eternal glory was closed to this man and the Lord did not open it because He did not know this man due to his heretical teachings and unloving ways. The Bible is clear that until He comes

for His church, we all have an appointment with death, and then we must face the great judge of our souls (*Hebrews 9:27*). Like the five foolish virgins who will ask the bridegroom to open the door so they can avoid the coming judgment, I had to wonder as this heretical pastor called out at the closed door if he possibly heard a similar response, *"But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not"* (*Matthew 25:13*).

There are doors mentioned in the Bible. They are entrances, but when it comes to God each door stands distinct because it is the only door in which man can enter in, and through, to find life and do service that will have God's approval. There was one door in Noah's ark in *Genesis 7:16*, *"And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in."* Even though it doesn't say, I have wondered if the Lord was the one who also opened the door so the occupants in the ark could go forth.

There was one gate, one door, and one veil in the wilderness. These three entrances were found in one place, the tabernacle. The gate was the way into the outer court, the door was the entrance into true service in the Holy Place, and the veil was the entry into the Most Holy Place. Moses was called into the Most Holy Place to commune with the Lord at the mercy seat (*Exodus 25:17-22*).

Today we have similar entrances but they are found solely in the work Jesus did on the cross. The gate is the way of the work of the Cross which is narrow and straight, the door to truth and service is the person of Jesus, and the veil points to His body that was offered up for our redemption so we can know and possess true life and come into a place of true communion and worship with the Lord (*Hebrews 13:10-11; John 10:1-2, 7; 14:6*).

The challenge is that few want to discern the only true door to life because it does not fit their narrative to do so. Many try to find openings around the reality of Christ's cross for it speaks of sin, death, the need for repentance, sacrificial love that costs, obedience, and everlasting life.

This brings us to what we must first deal with to enter into the life we

are called to. In each compartment of the tabernacle were three distinct altars. The gate of the outer court served as a type of frame for its altar, the altar of Burnt Offerings. This is where all the sacrifices were made for the sins of the people. Before we can enter into the life God has for us, our sins must be addressed through confession, repentance, and conversion at the altar of the cross of Christ. These sins must be washed by the blood of Christ and completely taken away by redemption.

There are those who may come up to the door of service, but are often distracted by the world and will take a detour from serving God to living out their life in the world for a season. I can't tell you how many people I have met who had great visions of ministry but would not line up to the narrow door of Jesus in humility to learn what it means to be a faithful servant with the small matters of His kingdom before being entrusted with greater matters (*Luke 16:10*). This particular door in the tabernacle outlined the Altar of Incense that stood before the veil. This altar has to do with the highest type of ministry—that of prayer and intercession (*Psalms 141:2; Ephesians 6:18*).

Finally, the veil opened the way to the Ark of the Covenant. There are those who get caught up with the idea of serving the Lord, but stop at the entrance of the veil, and never enter into sweet communion and worship. Like the veil in the temple in *Matthew 27:51*, Jesus' body was torn so that we could come into the fullness of our life (*Hebrews 10:10, 19-20*). This ark represented the presence of God. It is in His presence that you can commune with and worship Him.

The veil represented total consecration, and many people are not willing to submit all to come into deep places with the Lord. The Lord wants to recognize His people as faithful servants, but His deepest heart desire is to be able to call us "Friend" who He is able to share deep matters with (*John 15:14-15*).

It is clear that we need to enter into the right entrance in order to come into our lives in God. There are some who give the impression they will run in just before they die, but if a person does not first learn to walk by

faith towards the life God has for him and her, than the question is how do such individuals expect to run in at the last moment? *Hebrews 12:1* talks about running the race, but one must lay aside every weight, and the sin which besets him or her to run the race with patience, and I fear such people will run right into the abyss.

There are those who think they are going to slide into heaven at the last moment by riding on the shirttails of others or by hiding behind God's love or "cheap grace." However hell is down and heaven is up and the only slides I know are those that head into the abyss. There is no sliding into heaven at the last moment. *Luke 13:24* puts it this way, *"Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."*

Finally there are those who operate in wishful thinking. They are decent enough according to the world, but they have no real spiritual inclination towards believing or obeying the Word. They go into a type of delusion about their spiritual wellbeing when they are, in reality, spiritual beggars who believe they are wearing a robe of righteousness when the truth is they are spiritually undone and naked (*Matthew 5:3; Revelation 3:17*).

This brings us down to the matter of our soul. What is the spiritual condition of our soul? Jeannette wrote about the "skinny" soul in a past article. Our soul has either been redeemed by the Lamb of God or it has been sold, or is being sold, to the world in order to partake of its tasty poisonous fruit (*Matthew 16:23-25*). It is hard to convince people who have some semblance of religion that it doesn't matter how much they identify themselves to religious matters, it will always come down to the condition of their soul.

Luke 21:19 gives us this insight into the soul in relationship to the end days, *"In your patience possess ye your souls."* Most people consider their spiritual condition in light of their works or their "good" intentions, but how many are discerning the condition of their soul? I wonder if the heretical pastor I mentioned in the prior paragraphs ever considered the condition of his soul. It was clear that he thought himself to be scripturally right, spiritu-

ally in tune with God, and on his way to heaven. The question is how could one be so deluded? It is easy. People choose to believe the darkness of the lie because their deeds are evil and they do not want the light to reveal just how spiritually bankrupt they are (*John 3:18-21*). They clothe themselves in heavy religious garbs, convincing themselves that it's the heaviness of the garb that proves they are on the right track. However, the priests in the Old Testament wore the white linen garments underneath their robe, garments that spoke of righteousness that comes from above as they realized that they never sweat in them when they were standing and serving at the altars. Man's sweat points to personal works, and the man in the parable found in *Matthew 22* brings out a very important point. This man was invited to the wedding supper of the King's son, but he came wearing his own garment (works) that spoke of self-righteousness according to his terms, and this is what the king said to him, "*And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*" (*Matthew 22:11-13*).

What do we need to understand about the soul? It needs to be saved by once again being made alive by the Spirit of God, and transformed. The soul houses our will (inclination), intellect (mind), and our emotions (heart attitudes). When God created man out of the dust, He formed within man the capacity to house His Spirit, making Adam a living soul who could interact with God. When sin came into the picture, the Holy Spirit lifted leaving man a soulish, fleshly individual who could only interact with a physical (cursed) world that his very dust had been taken from in the beginning to create him (*Genesis 2:7-8; 3:17-19*).

Since the Spirit of God was missing from the soul of man, it meant his soul was no longer living. It was in a base, unresponsive state towards God, operating in a physical world according to the lust that found its way through his eyes (imagination) and affections (emotions). Man would find

himself pushed by worldly attractions and driven by insatiable appetites that left him empty and miserable. He would be like a wave in the great ocean of life, ever driven by the winds of the age he lived in as he found himself heading towards rocks that would break his strength, reefs that would hinder his abilities, and shores that pointed to utter destruction of his futile attempts to secure life for himself by leaving lasting marks and footprints in the sands of the world.

It is the "born again" experience that will quicken the spirit of man, bringing life back into his soul, making him a spiritual man who can once again interact with the Lord (*John 3:3,5; 1 Corinthians 15:44-49*). It is the act of consecration (offering the body as a perpetual living sacrifice and surrendering the soul to the inner work of sanctification) that lines up the spirit to the will of God that ensures the transformation of the soul (*Romans 12:1-2*).

If you want to understand the soul, the best book to study is the book of Psalms. Psalms speaks of the soul being oppressed by enemies and that it needs to be saved, redeemed, and delivered. It is in the soul that great sorrow and afflictions are experienced, but it is also where heavenly joy captures it, setting it free to soar above the troubles of the world. Psalms also talks about the soul that not only delights in the Lord but is lifted up to Him in praise and adoration and becomes hungry and thirsty for Him, ever seeking for its satisfaction from the One who alone is able to fill the soul with the love, joy and peace of the Holy Spirit. It is also in Psalms where the psalmist asked the Lord to preserve his soul.

How important is the discerning and maintaining of our soul? The Apostle Paul talked about bringing his body into subjection so he would not be a castaway. The apostle understood that in order to possess his soul, he had to bring his thoughts into captivity to Christ, crucify the attractions and lusts of the flesh, keep his focus right, and his priorities true to the heart of God (*1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Galatians 6:14; Philippians 3:7-14*).

I remember reading a story and recording it in my book, *Heavenly*

Gems. I want to share this story with you now because it makes a very important point.

During the great reformation of the 18th century, there was a great preacher by the name of Roland Hill. One day he was preaching in the streets, which were attracting a large crowd. An aristocrat by the name of Lady Ann Erskine was passing by in her carriage when she heard that Hill was preaching. Since she had heard much about the preacher, she decided that she wanted to join the assembly. However, when the preacher saw her and realized she belonged to the elite aristocracy, he suddenly stopped in the midst of his preaching, and said, "My friend I have something for sale."

The hearers were amazed at Hill's statement. "Yes, I have something for sale; it is the soul of Lady Ann Erskine. Is there any one here that will bid for her soul? Ah, do I hear a bid? Who bids? Satan bids. Satan, what will you give for her soul?"

"I will give riches, honour, and pleasure.

"But stop! Do I hear another bid? Yes, Jesus Christ bids. Jesus what will you give for her soul?"

"I will give eternal life.

"Lady Ann Erskine, you have heard the two bids—which will you have?"

Lady Erskine fell to her knees and cried out, "I will have Jesus."

God put a cost on your soul and mine. It cost His only begotten Son. However, if we do not accept His bid and receive the gift of His life, we might gain the temporary world, but we will forever lose our soul in the end. It is clear that people are either embracing the glorious redemption of Jesus, knowing that their soul has been bought with a price or they are bartering their soul away for temporary worldly riches that will burn up when the fires of judgment are put to their works, realizing that their souls are about to experience utter ruin in the throes of hell.

Have you turned in brokenness and repentance towards the holy God and received His payment for your soul or are you bartering your soul away to gain the foolish, temporary glory, false promises, and empty riches of this present world? †

EL SHAMAH
“THE GOD WHO HEARS”
By Jeannette Haley

“I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech.” – Psalm 17:6

In my last article I wrote about El Roi, the God who sees, who is also “the God who hears” – El Shamah. Not only is it true that *“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight, but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do”* Hebrews 4:13, but *“neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear”* Isaiah 59:1b. Therefore, His children have this assurance that *“The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry”* Psalm 34:15. What a wonderful Heavenly Father we have!

When it comes to earthly fathers, however, even the most dedicated and attentive of men can't always keep his eyes and ears open to the actions and cries of his own children. When I was a little kid, I was sure my dad could hear me a mile off because whenever I expressed my frustration at something my mother would tell me to do, which was either by sassing her or stamping my feet (or both), he would stop whatever he was doing, emerge from wherever he was, and put a swift end to my “expressions” by applying “correction” to my tail-end. So much for “free speech!”

When it comes to our physical hearing we may take it for granted (as we tend to do with our eyesight) until we start having problems. Then the race is on to try and find a remedy for the situation. These are not fun battles, and it can be very frightening. But such trials serve to cause us to learn new things (so we can hopefully help others), work compassion in us, and bring us to the place where all we can do is look up to the only One who can heal us. Let's face it; it's only “human” and natural for people to initially look to themselves or to the “experts” to solve their problems; that is, until we learn that *“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble”* Psalm 46:1. The Lord says, *“And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver*

thee, and thou shalt glorify me” Psalm 50:15. The key is, do we really believe He hears us?

Oswald Chambers said, “We tend to use prayer as a last resort, but God wants it to be our first line of defense. We pray when there's nothing else we can do, but God wants us to pray before we do anything at all. Most of us would prefer, however, to spend our time doing something that will get immediate results. We don't want to wait for God to resolve matters in His good time because His idea of 'good time' is seldom in sync with ours.” How true that is.

We have no problem believing He hears us when words we wish we had never uttered fly out of our mouths; then, too, there those times when we pray and make intercession and wonder if God hears us at all. It helps to remember that no matter how we may feel, *Psalm 94:9* assures us that *“He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?”* In 1 John 5:14,15 Jesus said, *“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”* [Emphasis added.]

In *Psalm 66:19* we read, *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”* This doesn't mean that God can't literally hear, for Jesus said, *“But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment”* Matthew 12:36. What it means is that He will not answer or respond to prayer if iniquity is in the heart. The Adam Clarke Commentary explains: “If I have seen (ראיתי) iniquity in my heart,” if I have known it was there, and encouraged it; if I pretended to be what I was not; if I loved iniquity, while I professed to pray and be sorry for my sin; the Lord, אדני Adonai, my Prop, Stay, and Supporter, would not have heard, and I should have been left without help or support.” From Barnes notes on the Bible we read: “The Lord will not hear me - That is, He will not regard and answer my prayer. The idea is, that in order that prayer may be heard, there must be a purpose to forsake all forms of sin. This is a great and most

important principle in regard to prayer. The same principle is affirmed or implied in Psalm 18:41; Psalm 34:15; Proverbs 1:28; Proverbs 15:29; Proverbs 28:9; Isaiah 15:1-9; Jeremiah 11:11; Jeremiah 14:12; Zechariah 7:13; John 9:31. It is also especially stated in Isaiah 58:3-7.” In 1 Peter 3:12 we read, *For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.”*

It comforts those of us who love the LORD to know that El Shamah hears the cries of our hearts as He did Hanna when *“she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard”* 1 Samuel 1:13; How comforting that is to know, especially if you have ever lost your voice, even for a day. If so you have no doubt experienced the frustration of trying to communicate, to not only those around you, but to God in audible prayer! El Shamah hears us before we even speak, for *“there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD thou knowest it altogether”* Psalm 139:4. In Matthew 9:4 and 12:25 we read that *“Jesus knew their thoughts.”* Whether our inward thoughts are good or evil, El Shamah knows them. *Psalm 94:11* tells us, *“The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.”*

We receive encouragement from such Scriptures as *“In the day when I cried thou answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul”* Psalm 138:3, and *“But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him”* Psalm 4:3.

The truth is God hears us: the question is, do we hear God, or are our ears tuned to “another channel?” Six times Jesus said, *“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”* Adam and Eve were the first humans to literally hear the voice of the LORD God prior to the fall when Adam received specific instructions from Him. After the fall, the guilty pair *“heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden”* Genesis 3:8. Ever since that time the LORD God has been calling to the

fallen human race through His Word, by His Spirit, and through creation itself. He has never stopped calling out to us, but while we may have physical ears, through unbelief, rebellion, and sin we will be “dull of hearing” until we find ourselves broken at the foot of the cross. Sometimes people have to come to a place of total desperation, utter despair, complete brokenness, and thorough helplessness before they will cry out to God from their innermost being. And Jesus promised, *“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out”* John 6:37.

Are we listening for His voice as He speaks to us deep within our hearts? Do we hear His voice when we read, hear, study and meditate on His Word? Can we discern when He speaks to us through the wisdom, and/or the words of knowledge of others? Are we established in the Lord enough to be able to understand if He chooses to speak to us in night visions (dreams) or in visions in the daytime? Do we know His voice when we pray? Jesus told us in *John 10* that His sheep know His voice, and they follow Him, and that they will not follow another. In these end times there are false voices and lying spirits everywhere, thus it is vital that we learn to know the voice of the Good Shepherd!

Oswald Chambers, commenting on *Isaiah 6:8*, *“I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ ‘Then I said, Here am I! Send me,’”* wrote: “God did not direct His call to Isaiah— Isaiah overheard God saying, ‘...who will go for Us?’ The call of God is not just for a select few but for everyone. Whether I hear God’s call or not depends on the condition of my ears, and exactly what I hear depends upon my spiritual attitude. ‘Many are called, but few are chosen’ (Matthew 22:14). That is, few prove that they are the chosen ones. The chosen ones are those who have come into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ and have had their spiritual condition changed and their ears opened. Then they hear ‘the voice of the Lord’ continually asking, ‘...who will go for Us?’ However, God doesn’t single out someone and say, ‘Now, you go.’ He did not force His will on Isaiah. Isaiah was in the presence

of God, and he overheard the call. His response, performed in complete freedom, could only be to say, ‘Here am I! Send me.’

“Remove the thought from your mind of expecting God to come to force you or to plead with you. When our Lord called His disciples, He did it without irresistible pressure from the outside. The quiet, yet passionate, insistence of His ‘Follow Me’ was spoken to men whose every sense was receptive (Matthew 4:19). If we will allow the Holy Spirit to bring us face to face with God, we too will hear what Isaiah heard— ‘the voice of the Lord.’ In perfect freedom we too will say, ‘Here am I! Send me.’”

As Oswald Chambers said, Jesus spoke “to men whose every sense was receptive.” To be receptive we must guard our hearts, be of a ready mind, and prepared to listen. In our day and age our hearing is constantly being bombarded with the noisy clamor of the world, the incessant demands of life, and the many voices of others, including the enemy who works tirelessly trying to undermine our faith with lies and half-truths. Even our own wandering thoughts can cause us to put our hearing on “auto pilot” as our minds take “time out” to make plans, formulate ideas, or entertain imaginations. Jesus said, *“And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, [deal out] it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be give”* Mark 4:24.

Dullness of hearing is a miserable affliction to endure; but, how much worse is it for our eternal souls when our spiritual ears are dull of hearing? Jesus said in *Matthew 13:15*, *“For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.”* A woman I knew many years ago had a vision of a congregation sitting in their pews of a certain large church. She said she saw thick wax covering their heads so that they could not hear or perceive anything. So there they sat, Sunday after Sunday, dull of hearing, lacking understanding and unconverted.

Another condition that occurs both physically and spiritually are “itching ears.” *2 Timothy 4:1-4* warns, *“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”* There is no doubt that discerning Christians know we are living in such a time as Paul described on a scale never before seen. While “itching ears” were among the people in Paul’s day, and have been for two-thousand years, nevertheless, we know that on a worldwide scale it has never been as prevalent as it is today. Pockets of apostasy, rebellion, and unbelief have always been; but, today we live in a world that is technologically connected in ways that the world has never seen before. It is the return of Babylon, a one-world “interfaith” religious system whose leader is Satan. These are dark and evil times of great deception, blasphemy, and apostasy that the early church could never have conceived of. Just one heretic or false prophet (and there are many) can preach a so-called “sermon” or write a “Christian” book and thanks to satellite television, Internet, Youtube, and social media it can, in an instant, reach billions of unwary souls, who in turn propagate and spread those lies to others with itching ears.

The organized church needs to wake up. On second thought, maybe it’s time for God’s people to “come out and be separate.” *“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,”* *2 Corinthians 6:17*. How can light have fellowship with darkness? How can those who “hear” the voice of the Shepherd commune with those who turn away their ears, or those who are dull of hearing, or those who have itching ears? After all, if a person, who isn’t hungering and thirsting after righteousness, or who lusts after

the latest so-called "Christian" fad be it "contemplative prayer," or the "prosperity doctrine," or Universalism, or the "feel good" blather of "cheap grace" and so forth, how can Jesus' sheep keep company with a person? Are they not of "another Jesus, another gospel and another spirit?" (See 2 *Corinthians 11:1-4*.)

A. W. Tozer said, "In the church many are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. If you do not like what I am saying, I want to ask you something. Think about the company you run with. What do they talk about most, God and the love of God, or other things? You decide that. Many Christians today will not endure sound doctrine. Paul described these people as having "itching ears" (2 Timothy 4:3). They did not like sound doctrine, but they were Christians. They called themselves Christians, but their ears were itchy. A commentator I read some years back explained this. In Paul's day the pigs had a disease called "itching ears." The symptom was that their ears got inflamed and itched terribly. The only way they could get relief from these inflamed ears was to go to a pile of rocks and rub their ears earnestly and vigorously. The stones scratched their ears for the time being. Paul saw that, smiled a sad smile and said, "I am running into Christians here and there who are just like that. They love pleasure more than God and will not endure sound doctrine. They have itching ears so they will be eager for something else beside the sound doctrine and holy ways. They will pile up teachers everywhere and rub their ears for dear life." That is a most dramatic and colorful illustration. A lot of so-called Christians have to have piles of rocks to rub their ears. They will not endure sound doctrine. I think that is a description of the churches, Protestant and evangelical. In the light of New Testament predictions, teachings and standards, is what I just said about the prevailing religious mood untrue? Is what I have said about the prevailing religious mood uncharitable? Is it extreme? I do not think it is, but I only ask you to do one thing: Look around you and look in your own heart. See which of these pictures describes the churches you know." Keep in mind that Tozer, in 1919, without formal

education was called to pastor a small storefront church in Nutter Fort, West Virginia. His ministry spanned forty-four years, and was prophetic as to the state of the Church in these end times. We sometimes wonder what he would say now if he could see the state of the compromising, worldly church!

We know that El Shamah hears us, but the question is our ears open to Him? Do we approach the Bible to hear His Voice, believe what He is saying to us, hide it in our hearts, walk in the light of it, and obey Him from the heart? May God help us all to be diligent "*doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving [our] own selves*" *James 1:22*. †

LISTEN TO HIS VOICE!

(Lyrics to a song by Teri Rex)

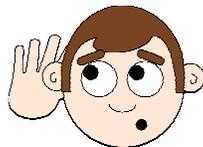
Whatever happened to the wife of Lot,
When she disobeyed His Word?
She turned and looked on the sin and
the shame -
And was turned into a pillar of salt.

There once was a king whose name
was Saul -
Who would not heed His Word -
One day in a battle that the Lord had
not called -
He fell upon his sword.

(Chorus) How many times have you
heard the Word -
Jesus is coming soon?
Did you open your heart and listen to
His voice -
Or did you turn into hardened stone?

One of the men who walked with the
Lord -
Thought He knew God's plan
He sold out the Lord for a small re-
ward -
And then died at his own hand.

What will you do when the Lord sends
His wrath -
Will you turn your head in fear?
Or will you open your heart and listen
to His voice -
And hear His Word so clear?



LIVING AS GOOD

SAMARITANS

By A. W. Tozer

The testimony of the true follower of Christ might well be something like this: The world's pleasures and the world's treasures henceforth have no appeal for me. I reckon myself crucified to the world and the world crucified to me. But the multitudes that were so dear to Christ shall not be less dear to me. If I cannot prevent their moral suicide, I shall at least baptize them with my human tears. I want no blessing that I cannot share. I seek no spirituality that I must win at the cost of forgetting that men and women are lost and without hope. If in spite of all I can do they will sin against light and bring upon themselves the displeasure of a holy God, then I must not let them go their sad way unwept. I scorn a happiness that I must purchase with ignorance. I reject a heaven that I must enter by shutting my eyes to the sufferings of my fellow men. I choose a broken heart rather than any happiness that ignores the tragedy of human life and human death. Though I, through the grace of God in Christ, no longer lie under Adam's sin, I would still feel a bond of compassion for all of Adam's tragic race, and I am determined that I shall go down to the grave or up into God's heaven mourning for the lost and the perishing. And thus and thus will I do as God enables me. Amen

*Peace be to thee—and a song
Pure and melodious
Amid the jarring sound of life's
discords.
Grace be thine own cooling stream
Where fires burn on arid desert
wastes,
Joy shine on thee—lucently,
When the night grows darkly perilous.
Love shelter thee—constantly.
When the tempest of false creed
rages,
Secure in the citadel of God's truth
Peace be to thee—and a song.
—Catherine Baird, (1895-1984)*

*Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed,
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.
—Anonymous*

"Is Islam luring the American church into denying Jesus?"

A former imam is warning of the grave dangers of Islam and cautioning church leaders to avoid being lassoed into an anti-Christ movement. (From One News Now)

A convert to Christianity from Islam, Dr. Mark Christian addressed pastors and other church leaders at an online event hosted by the American Pastors Network. Dr. Christian, executive director of Global Faith Institute, set out to answer the question:

Dr. Christian argued that an alleged interfaith dialogue "has been going on for ages" and has always been between Christians and Jews. Islam, he added, wasn't a part of that equation for the most part until hours after 9/11.

The Islamic Society of North America, started by the Muslim Brotherhood, has been advocating the Shoulder-to-Shoulder Campaign. The movement since 2007 has been urging Christian leaders to sign a deceptive document titled "A Common Word Between Us and You." He explains that according to Islam, a "common word" refers to the Quran – and the Quran alone.

Christian "So they say in obedience to the Holy Quran, we as the Muslims are asking you Christians to come with us and come to be with us by doing – what? By leaving Jesus Christ out and to believe in the Quran and agree on the Quran."

Dr. Christian finds it unfortunate that 281 Christian leaders and many different denominations in America have signed this document.

"The Book of Galatians, the letter of Paul, was very clear: whoever adopts any, any, any book other than the gospel that has been presented to us by Jesus Christ, curse on him [Galatians 1:8]," he stated. "This is not my own words; this is the words of the Bible that they [Islam] want to deny."

He says Christians need to educate themselves about the Common Word document and the Shoulder-to-Shoulder Campaign. Protestant groups among the steering committee of the latter include American Baptist

Churches USA, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), The Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church (USA), Progressive National Baptist Convention, Sojourners, and United Church of Christ.



WARNINGS FROM PASTOR SHAHRAM HADIAN

We must wake up to the rise of Islamo-Marxism in our nation. America is rapidly becoming a progressive utopia where tolerance is a one way street, and free speech is only allowed for those deemed acceptable.

Get ready, church. Get ready, pastors. Get ready, Christians. Greater Christian persecution is coming right here in America for those who stand for the Truth. And some of our greatest opposition will be coming from other professing "Christians."

By the power of God we WILL stand firm in the faith, and not be silenced!

Those who are in denial, who don't think there is Christian persecution, or who even think there is more Muslim persecution, those pastors better wake up, better be aware, that you now have Christian conferences being closed down by these Islamofascists, Antifa, the SPLC, they're all working together."

All it takes to incur their wrath is to disagree with their utopian vision of a nation loosed from what they see as the shackles of Christianity. Islam is the tool of choice that cultural Marxists will use in their final assault on what remains of Western biblical Christianity.

They will stand up for anyone's rights to free speech as long as they are slamming Israel [the other favorite target of Islam] or blaming Christianity for all the world's evils, including Muslim terror. It is we Christians, with our "Islamophobia," who drive the Muslims to kill, according to Islamic scholars who cite the Quranic principle of "fitnah." Such bizarre Islamic thoughts have now been taken up by socialists the world over, including United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres. †

QUOTABLES

"God did not direct His call to Isaiah— Isaiah overheard God saying, ". . . who will go for Us?" The call of God is not just for a select few but for everyone. Whether I hear God's call or not depends on the condition of my ears, and exactly what I hear depends upon my spiritual attitude." - Oswald Chambers

"True intercession involves bringing the person, or the circumstance that seems to be crashing in on you, before God, until you are changed by His attitude toward that person or circumstance. People describe intercession by saying, 'It is putting yourself in someone else's place.' That is not true! Intercession is putting yourself in God's place; it is having His mind and His perspective." - Oswald Chambers

"Christian believers make a great mistake when they refer only to the Bible as the Word of God. True, the inspired Bible is the Word of God speaking to our hearts and to our souls. But in referring to the Word of God, we do not mean just the book— printed pages sewed together with nylon thread. Rather, we mean the eternal expression of the mind of God. We mean the world-filling breath of God!" - A. W. Tozer

"If I had my way, I would declare a moratorium on public preaching of 'the plan of salvation' in America for one to two years. Then I would call on everyone who has use of the airways and the pulpits to preach the holiness of God, the righteousness of God and the law of God, until sinners would cry out, 'What must we do to be saved?' Then I would take them off in a corner and whisper the gospel to them. Such drastic action is needed because we have gospel-hardened a generation of sinners by telling them how to be saved before they have any understanding why they need to be saved." - Paris Reidhead, *Getting Evangelicals Saved*

"God is on the lookout today for a man who will be quiet enough to get a message from Him, brave enough to preach it, and honest enough to live it." – Vance Havner

"Every convert is the result of the Holy Spirit's pleading in answer to the prayers of some believer." - Anonymous

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

Backslider, carnal or apostate?

Q: "I have been studying Hebrews 6:4-6 where it talks about falling away after experiencing the glory of the next world. This concerns me because I once walked away from my Christian life 18 years ago. I feel in my heart that I'm forgiven, but I have to admit I don't feel His presence and hand upon my life as I did years ago. I was wondering if you could help me with this dilemma."

A: People have different takes on this verse. Some render it to a mere theological debate about such matters as "once saved, always saved." However, I don't look at it in the same way. In my life I have encountered three types of people who might find themselves at odds with their beliefs and the Lord.

The first one is the *backslider*. I realize there are those who believe that believers cannot slide back into the pigpen of the world and resort to former practices, but the truth is I have met what I call "backsliders." They have had some religious experience or encounter with Christ, but in their present state they live in guilt and shame and they struggle with depressing realities. They are encased by the lie that they have gone too far away from God to ever find their way back. These people have not only slid backwards into their ways because of Satan's lies, but they are falling through cracks of despair while being swallowed by hopelessness.

There are various reasons why some people backslide: sins they can't seem to overcome, immaturity in their Christian life, unanswered questions, or overwhelming circumstances, but the lies of Satan is what keeps pushing them further and further into their hopelessness; however, there is hope for them but they have to quit looking at where they are and turn around and look up. *Jeremiah 3:14* states, "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family and I will bring you to Zion."

The next Christian who will occasionally find self at odds with the Lord is the *carnal Christian*. The carnal Christian understands the milk of the Word (doctrine) but is incapable of

eating the meat of the Word (*1 Corinthians 3:1-3*; *Hebrews 6:12-14*). They may have right doctrine, but have not become a true disciple of Jesus and can still be prone to submitting to worldly ways and attitudes because they have a tendency to rely on their worldly knowledge to come to terms with spiritual matters. Such carnality shows that the person is not yet mature enough to discern between good motives and wrong attitudes and intentions.

When tested, carnal Christians can end up making wrong choices out of misdirected zeal, disillusionment because things are not going their way, unresolved issues that appear God has turned a deaf ear to, and anger because rebellion raises its head in the form of pride and rights since it appears that Christianity is not really working out for them.

Carnal Christians end up taking detours that will thrust them into a spiritual wilderness, where in due time much of the old is discarded as they find themselves going around the same "old mountain," while visiting the same old terrain until they get it right. Most Christians take detours because we all start out in our Christian life with selfish agendas and worldly ideas intact. When we give way to the foolishness of such things we become a prodigal child going our own way, ultimately ending up tasting the bitterness of both worlds: a lean spirit and an empty soul (*Luke 15:11-24*).

For the prodigal, he or she has to remember that the Father is waiting to restore him and her, to once again sit at His table; but, to be restored requires repentance (turn around), humility (come back home), and confession (of sin). It is important to note the prodigal was willing to be a servant in His father's house. When we take a spiritual detour in our life, we must not expect everything to be restored to us right away. We must be patient in proving our faithfulness with small things until we can be entrusted with greater things. God does not take away our gifts, but He will bring a type of discipline to us during our wilderness experience that will ensure we never take them for granted, squander them again, and assume they will be awaiting us when we come back home.

The final group is the *apostate*. Apostasy is a "falling away" from the truth. If you notice this is what *Hebrews 6* is making reference to—those who fall away. These individuals who fall away from the truth do so because they are rejecting who God is in their heart, denying His truths as being so, and leveling false judgment and accusations against God in their mind. Such judgments and accusations are a form of blasphemy and will cause a person to become reprobate in their mind (*Romans 1:28-32*). Such people may have an intellectual understanding of salvation, and may even have said the sinner's prayer and attended church, but are void of a heart revelation of salvation (*Romans 10:9-10*).

In a sense, the writer of Hebrews is posing the thought that how can one who has truly tasted the glory of the next world fall away from what he or she knows in the heart is truth. I believe if one is truly saved, there might be times of human failures and times of rebellion, but their convicted heart will always pull them back toward the Lord with cords of love. †

GATHERING UNTO JESUS

(Excerpts from *The Church, What On Earth Is It?* by Ken Butcher)

At times the public church profession has been so far from God that any expression of the true church appeared to have been lost forever. Yet a closer scrutiny of the pages of history reveals gems, shining their little spots of corporate light here and there, in the surrounding darkness. Often like glow worms, the greater the darkness the more visible was their shining. The Western church may be in public disarray but God still has a faithful people whom He can call: "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people."

We can learn from the godly remnant of Old Testament overcomers who did not have the advantages we have, who had not received the revelation of "the mystery" since made known to us, who had not experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but who met together in simplicity in dark days. (See *Malachi 3:16, 17*.)