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GOD'S GLORIOUS ATTRIBUTES HIS HOLINESS – Part 3 By Rayola Kelley



Last month I wrote on God's glory. One of my prayers was and continues to be that the Lord would keep me from touching His glory by foolishly taking credit for His work (*1 Corinthians 1:29, 31*). He has honored my prayer by often humbling me before I could swing from a branch of exaltation to only land on a narrow pinnacle of foolishness to experience an abrupt landing on the runway of embarrassment. The reason I am aware of this experience is because I have had to "wear the T-shirt" a few times to gain some sobriety. As a result, I have reminded myself that, "I have no part in sharing His glory, but I can share His life so others can experience His glory."

This month I am going to talk about the one major attribute that sets God apart and brings glory to all that He does and that is His holiness. When you consider what *Isaiah 6:3* states, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts," and *Revelation 4:8*, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come," the matter of God's holiness is clearly stated, highlighted with a type of amen, and confirmed as being so. If heaven shows such emphasis, what must we as believers on earth show?

The truth is most people do not know what to do with God's holiness. There are some who read my daily posts on our ministry Facebook page. One of the subjects I dealt with was sanctification, which is a work of holiness. However, it is important to talk about what holiness is in light of God

becoming the only example of it. After all, all holiness will be measured solely by God's holiness (*1 Peter 1:15-16*). I say this because there are people who believe they can make themselves holy by wearing certain clothes, practicing particular ordinances, and acting a certain way. Granted, such things may make them stand out, but it is not because such things speak of God's holiness. It may speak of personal piousness or self-righteousness, but it does not speak of God's holiness. There are others who, when they consider God's holiness, throw their hands up in the air and say, "No way can I be holy! Just forget it. He is asking too much and is being unrealistic."

It's true; God's holiness will give a person a true reality check. For the prophet Isaiah it revolutionized him, his calling, and his ministry in *Isaiah 6*. Granted, God's holiness is like a light that penetrates, purifies, and consumes, but as we will see in Isaiah's case it stripped him of any preconceived notions about himself, his calling and revealed the sorry condition of those he was called to challenge and minister to. He admitted he was a man of unclean lips and lived among those who also had unclean lips (*Isaiah 6:5*).

The word "uncleanness" points to perversion, which in the case of Isaiah it points to the fact he could not speak in purity without his lips first being purged by coals from the altar. This purging also points to "anointing." He not only saw his own inadequacy in his spiritual state but the people were also perverted in all that they spoke and heard. "Uncleanness" also points to the profane, that which has been marked in some way to be strange or sacrilegious to God such as in the case of Aaron's sons offering strange fire to God in *Leviticus 10:1-3*. It also points to that which is filthy to God, totally contrary to all that He is, and for this reason even man's best is considered filthy rags before God

(*Isaiah 64:6*).

When I first was saved, I recognized that I had sin, but I did not understand the depth of my sin. I thought there had to be something good in me, after all I considered myself pretty decent. The Lord gave me seven years of falling on my face to recognize how far from the mark of righteousness I was in my thinking, feelings, conclusions, and actions. Granted, when I came face to face with a sinful action, I would confess it and then try to reform myself. I did not realize that my attitude towards what I thought was alright needed to be transformed by truth, enabling me to see my conduct the way God sees it. When I encountered a prevailing mood I assumed that it would change in due time, but until I recognized that it came from my fallen state, I never took it seriously enough to step over it in utter disgust. It took me awhile to realize that committing sin and omitting righteousness in a matter are equally wrong. Being in such a state, I didn't realize how far man has fallen from God. I didn't understand that it was not just a matter of my sin that cost Jesus His life on that cross, but that I was a sinner through and through from my state of selfishness to my arrogant attitude, self-serving actions, and self-centered conduct. I could do nothing else but sin, whether it was a wrong action or failing to do what was honorable and right when the opportunity afforded itself. God could not count any action that originated from the flesh as right and He could not accept my best because it originated from my selfishness.

Because of kind or generous acts, many people believe that there is some good in them, something redeemable. For me it took a real dose of encountering God's holiness before I could see the real spiritual nakedness and shame of my state. I began to understand why I was somewhat deluded about my total depravity. Unregenerate man is not only lost but he

has been deceived about sin and the seriousness, influences, and consequences of it (*Hebrews 3:13*). Hence this warning in *Proverbs 14:12*, “*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*”

No human being can know the depth of his or her dark disposition because it is a normal state (*Jeremiah 17:9-10*). Such normalcy is used by the people of the world to logic away the destructive ways of sin, feel justified in the flesh when feeding their unabated lusts, and establish a false foundation of personal goodness in order to feel okay in their present, lost, rebellious state. There is only one who knows the depths to which man fell and that is the Man, Christ Jesus. He had such a contrast as to the depth of man’s fall because He came from the glories of heaven. He was pure—the light of the world, that exposed darkness everywhere He walked. But, I believe it was on the cross that Jesus experienced the real depth of man’s fall.

Man’s spiritual state put Jesus on that cross. The spittle, hatred, and mocking directed towards Jesus showed just how opposed man was and still is to being ruled by the God of the universe. The darkness that covered the earth, while Jesus was on that cross, represented the darkness of man’s soul, which hides its rebellious ways that continually try to extinguish the true light of the world. But it was the cry on the cross that gives a glimpse of the depth to which man had fallen, “*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*” Lost man may not realize the seriousness of being separated from God in this world, but in the next he will know the depth of that separation. He will moan and gnash his teeth, but there will be no recourse to escape the ultimate consequences for his unbelief.

Jesus experienced a similar depth of darkness in His own soul, and it made His whole being cry in utter despair. We can’t understand it, but we can catch valuable glimpses of it as we walk in the light of Jesus. At times we are humbled when we sense the great length to which His mercy went to quench judgment and how deep His grace reached to offer each of us eternal life.

Because of this dark environment of man’s soul, he is forever trying to get around God’s holy character. He tries religion instead of the cross of Jesus because grace does not allow for self-glorification. He replaces the salvation of Jesus with intellectual pursuits because the cross seems too foolish and insignificant. He hides behind religious creeds so that he can maintain some kind of control of his spiritual life. Ultimately, man refuses to concede, submit, repent, and humble self before God Almighty and accept His terms of salvation. Because of this rebellion, darkness grows, and where darkness resides, spiritual bondage exists.

Many times people either fall into sin or become indifferent to righteousness because they are failing to do right when they know they should (*James 4:17*). After seven years I realized I was probably guiltier of failing to do right than doing wrong. It was at that time I realized that sin was not a matter of what I did as much as it was a matter of my spiritual state of being a sinner.

There is nothing that will give people, which includes believers, a reality check about just how far they are from hitting the mark of their spiritual potential than God’s holiness. Fallen man is selfish at the core. Everything he does is to make himself look, feel and appear a certain way. He wants the recognition, adoration, and worship from those in his world. He wants to create and rule his own world to his liking, call his own shots and determine his destiny. He is self-serving in what he does, self-centered in what he thinks, and self-absorbed with his own self-importance. Selfishness is the essence of sin, the throne of pride, and the flint that ignites fleshly lust. The Apostle Paul clearly pointed out that there was no good thing in the flesh (*Romans 7:18*). In other words, nothing good, acceptable, or right can come from the selfish disposition because it is perverted and strange to God.

What is holiness? Holiness is purity. It is hard for mankind to understand what it would mean to be completely pure in motive, attitude, intentions, ways, and works. Granted, it is natural for most to be impressed with their actions of good deeds while ig-

norning selfish motives, self-serving priorities, and self-centered agendas. Since people cannot see the real premise behind what they are doing, they cannot imagine how they could be perverted or wrong in their thinking, conclusions, and actions. In fact, Solomon points this out in *Proverbs 16:2*, “*All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits.*” It is for this reason that this instruction follows this unnerving revelation, “*Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established*” (*Proverbs 16:3*)

There is no deviation of iniquity in the Lord, nor underlying motive, foul attitude, or hypocrisy. He is who He is, continues to be who He is, and will remain who He is without ever changing and becoming something He is not. *James 1:17* points this out, “*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*”

The Bible is also clear as to the Lord’s thoughts and intentions towards us, “*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end*” (*Jeremiah 29:10*). We are told His ways are higher than our ways and that He is good, meaning morally clean in character and completely righteous in His judgments (*Isaiah 55:8,9*).

Let us consider what Scripture says about the subject of holiness. *Ephesians 1:4* states, “*According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.*” We must first recognize that the Lord has not chosen us to be religious or happy, but holy. Because of who He is, this decision that He would have a holy people occurred before the foundation of the world. It is only in a state of holiness that we can be considered as one without blame. The last word gives us a clue as to how we can ensure we come to such a blameless place: by loving the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind, and might. We must want to please Him above all others.

We have been chosen by the

Lord to a place of holiness and 1 Thessalonians 4:7 tells us we have been called to holiness. It is clear that we have been called into a place of holiness in order to be established in holiness. Our part is simply believing the Lord and walking in obedience, but His part is to cleanse us.

In *Ephesians 5:26* and *27*, we are reminded that the Lord will sanctify and cleanse His Body the church with the washing of water by the Word so that He will be able to present it as not having any spot, wrinkle, or blemish. Notice the Word of God is a washing machine and is able to cleanse us if we believe and obey it.

Hebrews 12:14 instructs, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." The greatest point of peace comes from being at peace with God, but we cannot be at peace with God without possessing holiness. This Scripture clearly points out holiness is not an option, and the Lord does not command something unless He provides the means and ways for man to walk in it. Therefore, man cannot be casual about understanding what it means to be holy or trust his own ideas and attempts to be holy because he will end up missing the mark.

Isaiah 35:8 points out that there will be a highway called, "The way of holiness." This Scripture warns that no one who is unclean or who is a fool will be able to pass over this highway. This highway separates the profane from the holy. It is clear that holiness is a matter that a person can't afford to overlook. If a person is going to pass over into all that God has for them, it will be on His terms.

It is important to point out that God's holiness speaks of His righteous ways and acts. The Lord can't be anything but righteous because He is holy. The last part of *Romans 6:19* gives us this insight, "...even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness." It is clear that to come to a state of holiness we must be walking in the ways of righteousness.

The writer of *Hebrews* gives us a clue that in most cases such holiness doesn't fall on someone, but it often takes a heavenly discipline to bring about the right attitude. Consider what *Hebrews 12:10* states, "For they verily

for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." We must partake of holiness, but before we can we must possess a state in which we can properly appropriate it. *Hebrews 12:11* explains how it will manifest itself, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

Holiness begins with a pure state which points to pure motives, but it must graduate into a right attitude about a matter to properly receive the means or ways to appropriate the matters of righteousness. The Apostle Paul pointed this out in *2 Corinthians 7:1*, "Having therefore these promises dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." Ultimately such holiness will produce godliness.

To ensure cleansing, we as believers must separate from the profane, which is an act of consecration, and submit ourselves to the sanctifying work of the Spirit. It is clear that holiness must be perfected in our lives but such perfection will occur only when we possess the attitude of the "fear of the Lord."

This brings us to the final reason we are called to be holy. It is found in *1 Peter 2:9*, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." We have been chosen and called to be **set** apart from this world and the present generation to be a royal priesthood, representative of God in this present world. To **stand** apart we must be a holy nation, and to be **separated** unto God we must be a peculiar, special people who do not belong to, blend in, or bend to the world.

Holiness is our highest calling because in consecration we dedicate all to the Lord, and when our status as saints is obvious to the world when it comes to our conversation of godliness (daily living) we will ultimately bring glory to Him, fulfilling our potential to reflect His glory in purity, righteousness, and beauty. †

THE DANGERS OF SYNCRETISM

(Excerpts from *Psychology and Psychotherapy* (part 1) by Dr. Martin & Deidre Bobgan and T. A. McMahon
The Berean Call—January 2018

"Syncretism" is "the combination of different forms of belief or practice." It's one of Satan's most deceptive and appealing techniques, devised to destroy true faith and undermine the Christian's confidence in God's Word and dependence on Christ. Psychotherapy and its underlying psychologies are actually religious in nature and practice. They're like oil and water! The euphemism for this kind of syncretism is "integration," which occurs when two or more ideas or systems are combined. However, psychotherapeutic beliefs cannot truly be integrated with Scripture. One works with the old man of the flesh (carnal); the other works with the new man in Christ (spiritual). They're at enmity with each other, just as the flesh and the Spirit are contrary to each other (Gal. 5:17); and just as the carnal man is at enmity with God (Rom. 8:7). They can't mix, because they're enemies just as the idols of the nations around Israel were at enmity with God.

Christians who mix psychology and the Bible aren't practicing and promoting ordinary integration but rather religious syncretism, overlaying their psychology with the Bible. This ultimately disguises the psychological religious systems they're using, and then this psycho-syncretism subverts and subtracts from the faith. The "integrating" of psychology and Christianity appeals to those Christians who believe that what is being discovered about the mind, the will, and the emotions is *science*—that it's part of God's creation yet to be discovered in the same way that discoveries have been made in physics, chemistry, and biology. Since psychology misrepresents itself as a science, and psychotherapeutic ideas are organized into theories, many pastors don't even realize that these scientific-sounding theories are simply another competing belief system....The Word is true; the theories and practices of psychotherapy that speak in place of God's written Word and its promises are counterfeits. †

APPROVED UNTO GOD

Part 4

By Jeannette Haley

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

– 2 Timothy 3:16

In Parts 1-3 we have been considering 2 Timothy 2:15 which states, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Whenever I read the Bible I approach it to believe, with all my heart, what it says, and that it is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Otherwise it's like trying to eat by chewing food without ever swallowing it. (That was my experience once with Grape Nut Flakes. I just kept chewing and adding more to it when the sugar was gone, but for the life of me I couldn't swallow that big wad of dry, tasteless fiber.) Even though I may not understand some things in the Bible, or even feel happy about other things, (like killing all those poor, innocent animals for sacrifices), nevertheless, I need to remember that there is a lot more to it than I can fathom, and that which God has required, commanded, ordained, established and promised is perfect, it is truth, and it is eternal. God is holy, and He never changes, nor does His inspired Word. Scriptures that are corrupted by people who are operating according to their own agenda, causes, beliefs, and prejudices and who add to, or take from God's Word in order to change the intent, or spirit of the Word do so to the peril of their own souls.

As Christians, it's important to learn how to let the Holy Spirit bring revelation to us when we read and study the Word instead of coming to our own conclusions based on what we would like it to say, (which is both dishonest and a lack of integrity) or concluding that it doesn't pertain to modern man because we are so "far advanced" and so "all-knowing" and "scientific". Oh posh! God and His Word never change, but if we are going to lead a life that is pleasing to God, and stand before Him as "workmen that need not to be ashamed," then we are the ones who

must change regardless of the times and culture in which we live. Man along with his works, his inventions, his faulty so-called "wisdom," and all his magnificent accomplishments and feats amount to nothing next to the God of the universe. We are only deceiving ourselves. God is not impressed.

We may cling to our "guns and Bibles" in these latter days, but if we don't know how to properly use our weapons, or how to "rightly divide" and discern God's Word, then we are not prepared for trouble, either physically or spiritually. It's not a good thing to end up "shooting yourself in the foot" and it's not a good thing to be ignorant concerning what the Bible really says about things we ignorantly assume are true. Concerning spiritual warfare, 2 Corinthians 10:4 says, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." Ephesians 6:13-17 tells us what our armor is, and Zechariah 4:6 says "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."

I've learned through the years of pulling down strongholds that the first stronghold to be overcome is ourselves and the way we think, wrong influences in our lives since childhood, our perceptions, decisions, and wrong "interpretations" of the meaning of life, God, and His Word. If we do indeed belong to Christ and are following Him, we find ourselves traveling on a very narrow road. Sadly, some are shuffling along with a stiff, starchy, strict, stringent, seriously sour and sometimes scary and cumbersome super religious walk. Others are flapping along in a flit, flutter, fly, fluffy, and oftentimes, foolish religious walk. Both extremes have yet to come into balance in that place in Christ where by faith they can receive His peace. Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" John 14:27.

The peace that Jesus gives is perfect. It has no elements of the world in it; that is, the world's "peace" is a false peace of compromising promises based on vocalized positive reinforcements that don't exist in reality. Simply put, it might tickle ears but

it's just a bunch of hot air. Such imaginings never have and they never will become reality because they are based on the original lie in the Garden, "Yea, hath God said?" Lies are designed in the spiritual realm of darkness to appeal to our unfulfilled senses, aborted dreams, discouraging disappointments, and unexplainable longings for something beyond our ability to grasp in our fallen state. But on the world stage the force that overwhelms the human soul to achieve the "impossible dream" by means of subtle seduction to equate belief in the power of the imagination (positive thinking and visualization for example) to be greater than faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word is a counterfeit to the real peace that Jesus gives us. It is, in fact, witchcraft, and the power that operates through it is of Satan. The human race is never going to be able to restore the Garden of Eden, the lost Paradise on this earth, yet the longing for such an idyllic place is more often than not the undetected motivating factor in so much of what man pursues and strives for, either by working hard to acquire enough money and power to try and forge out a prototype of "Paradise" on earth; or, by becoming a "revolutionary" against the rich, and/or by trying to establish a "dream world" through the delusion of socialism (which never works, by the way.)

In other words, whether it is the "far right" or the "far left" the final goal of both groups is an earthly utopia. Each side has their own definition of what that involves; therefore, their means of achieving this illusive dream are in stark opposition from start to finish. The result? Civil war. And, in the center of all this stands the organized, institutional, and traditional religion of compromising churches that are neither hot nor cold, but rather lukewarm with no power, no authority, and no solution to the woes of mankind beyond their platitudes and psychobabble. Such churches are "Christian" in name only and will be judged by the God of heaven. Obviously I am not talking about real Christianity, because true Christianity is not a religion, nor is it a denomination, nor is it a "Christian" subculture, but rather it is made up of

individuals who have a personal relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

As born-again Christians we are citizens of the Kingdom of God, the unseen kingdom that Jesus reigns over, the church that Jesus is building, and as such His people make up the kingdom that He and He alone will establish upon this earth at His glorious coming. As Christians, we have no business jumping into the fray and battling on one side or the other to establish our idea of earthly Paradise; rather, we are still commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ to *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”* Matthew 28:19, 20. In addition, in all things of this world (be they the “left” or the “right”) we are to stand above it all, firmly grounded on the Rock of ages, shining forth the Truth and the light of Christ, and faithfully proclaiming the life and liberty He offers to those held captive by sin and Satan.

Christ’s commission should be our first priority; followed by our need to discern how, when and where He will have each of us carry out His will in this regard. Once we have our priorities in line with God’s will for us, according to His Word, then we can begin to discern in what order the Lord would have us, as Christian soldiers, proceed into “battle.” While we all long for the peace of Paradise, the truth is until Jesus comes, we are all in a war of some sort. Even though we may be saved, nevertheless, the flesh daily wars against the spirit; unsaved family members can, and do, reject and even persecute the believer; friends and acquaintances turn away from us; we may be shunned and persecuted in our schools, businesses, communities, as well as by local and Federal governments. Jesus warned, *“A man’s foes shall be they of his own household”* Matthew 10:36. *“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom”* Matthew 14:7a. From our personal lives all the way up the scale to the nations of the world we are, in truth, living in a war zone. Keep in mind *Nehemiah 4:18* where

we read, *“For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded.”* First we fight the enemies within, and then we fight the enemies without, with the Word of God in our hearts and on our lips, for it is our powerful sword of truth, and our only offensive weapon.

Concerning peace, the world, the flesh and the devil can offer a superficial “peace” to those who throw themselves into humanitarian works outside of the will of God, and without the Gospel message, and who do good works motivated by emotional zeal, human sympathy, and determination to right wrongs for their own glory and not for the glory of God. Today there are loose and liberal “bleeding heart dogooders” on nearly every front that may even strip themselves of all their worldly goods, giving their all to save lives, but not souls. Therefore, those who are “flitting, fluttering and flying” in their fantasy, “freedom-loving” brand of “Christianity” will, unless they somehow land and develop a love for the truth, miserably fall, flop and fail to reach their potential in Christ because they will never see Him and recognize Him for Who He is, and be able to embrace the life He has for them in Himself. When good works, and the good feeling that results from them, become the motivating factor instead of obedience to Christ, and good works become more important than “spirit and truth, and genuine love for the Lord our God, and when good works become the end instead of the means through which the Gospel is preached, then we have left Jesus behind and it has become all about us, or the work itself. This is dangerous because it can subtly lead to judging God for allowing all of the suffering, misery and ills in the world. When we become work-centered rather than Christ-centered (even though He may be occasionally tacked on) the end result is idolatry itself.

I recently finished reading a book about a very much loved and admired woman in Egypt who gave up a privileged life to go and work among the poorest of the poor in the “garbage villages” outside of Cairo. Her amazing story is moving and inspiring. However, towards the very end of the book the author wrote, “When life in the Egyptian countryside became too diffi-

cult because of economic troubles or religious persecution—sometimes both—the poorest rural Egyptians would flee to Cairo. Many were illiterate. Almost all were Christian, though many had never actually heard of Jesus. [Underlining added.] Think about that for a moment! My Bible says, *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* Romans 10:13-17. It’s interesting to note how “Christianity” is being redefined by the world.

Moving on to the other side of the narrow road are the stiff, starchy, tightlipped, letter-of-the-law legalists who take every word of the Bible literally. As discussed in previous articles, some of the Bible is to be taken literally, but not all of it. This is where the Bible student must be able to discern that which is literal from that which is an allegory, and by comparing Scripture with Scripture discern the will of God in controversial matters as to whether God is being glorified in it or not. Unlike the fantasy types who have stretched and broadened even the most basic biblical precepts to fit into their humanistic, socialist and sometimes New Age leanings, the legalists have stuffed their literal interpretations of Scripture into neat little boxes, hammered them tightly closed and then sealed them with Pharisaical super glue.

This extreme usually results in an uptight, rigid, fearful Christian who can easily become judgmental of other believers who are walking in the joy, peace and love of Christ in the liberty of the Spirit. Such people are often dubbed to be “legalistic” because, in order to avoid the lack of sobriety and fear of God the “flit, fly and flutter” group exhibits, they go to the other extreme and batten down

the hatches, throw out the anchor, and huddle in the hold instead of simply staying on deck to enjoy the freedom and liberty of the Spirit in life's journey.

Here's an illustration for you: just try, for a moment to picture a three-mast schooner in your mind. This ship is way out in the ocean, but it's not going anywhere, and it represents three different groups of Christians.



On deck are the Captain and crew and those who know the Way, the Truth and the Life. They know the Word, and they know the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. But, then there is the “flighty, flippant, flutter” group that is represented by the sails, flying and flapping every which way trying to catch the wind of the Holy Spirit, but generally falling short into an artificial emotional experience. Their emphasis is not on “rightly dividing” the Word of God. Nope. It's on feeling the wind, and it's all about that which has to do with the Holy Spirit, and trying to get the ship moving no matter what. Now picture the anchor that's way down there bumping along on the ocean floor. It's not really anchored on the Rock, so it's “dragging anchor, burdened and heavy and hoping to get everything just right. The anchor represents the sober-sided, staunch, stiff, stifled, stuffy and dead letter Christians who are trying to counterbalance the frantic flying flappers up in the sails. So, here's the conclusion: The dragging-anchor Christians, and the flying-in-the-breeze Christians both end up missing the boat altogether.

God wants His children to get on board, and let Him be the Captain! And, He wants us to “rightly divide the Word” so we can be “approved by God.” Yes, we are to be sober, but not sad sacks. We are to fear God, but not be fearful. We are to be obedient, and holy, but not fanatical legalists. We are to be filled with the Spirit so that we have the power to be witness-

es; but, not so we can fly off with every “wind of doctrine” into “Noo Noo” land. We need God's love, God's joy and God's peace that is predicated by worshipping Him in “spirit and in truth.” (*John 4:24.*) And, we all most definitely need the simple faith of a little child!

Lord, teach us to truly be thankful and enjoy the life You have given to us; that is, our life in You, not the so-called “life” the world offers. Grant us wisdom to know the difference.

To summarize, watch out for extremism! The narrow road is not made up of “happy-clappy” careless Christians—those who need to “land,” gain sobriety, and become rooted and grounded in Him; nor is it made up of stressed out, legalistic, letter-of-the-law Christians who need to allow the Holy Spirit to fill them with the love, joy and peace of the Lord. The secret of the narrow road is that Jesus Christ *is* the narrow road. Jesus *is* the door; He *is* the “way, the truth and the life.” We cannot walk on the narrow road by our own efforts of trying to be perfect, or by making ourselves holy. It is only as we surrender our lives to Jesus, and make Him the Lord of *all* that we will find our lives. Jesus is calling His wounded, scattered sheep to Himself. His arms are open wide for them to come to Him and be healed and revived and prepared for His coming.

Is He calling you to Himself today? †

THE PROOF OF GOD IN THE PALM OF YOUR HAND

The following is excerpted from Craig Beidler, “Proof of God in the Palm of Your Hand,” *The Real Truth*, Dec. 20, 2009: “Sir Isaac Newton once said, ‘In the absence of any other proof, the thumb alone would convince me of God's existence.’ ... In his book *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*, Dr. Paul Brand, who was one of the foremost hand surgeons in the world, testifies to the wonder—the miracle of the human body. Dr. Brand explained that although many people think that fat serves no significant purpose, it does on the hand. ‘Underneath the skin in the palm of the hand lie globules of fat with the look and consistency of tapioca pudding. Fat globules, so soft as to be almost fluid, cannot

hold their own shape, and so they are surrounded by interwoven fibrils of collagen, like balloons caught in a supporting rope net where stress occurs, such as on the palm of the hand, fat is tightly gathered and enveloped by fibrous tissue in a design resembling fine Belgian lace.’ When you grasp a hammer in the palm of your hand, each ‘cluster of fat cells changes its shape in response to the pressure. It yields but cannot be pushed aside because of the firm collagen fibers around it. The resulting tissue, constantly shifting and quivering, becomes compliant, fitting its shape and its stress points to the precise shape of the handle of the hammer. Engineers nearly shout when they analyze this amazing property, for they cannot design a material that so perfectly balances elasticity with viscosity.’ The skin of the hand is also well suited to the task of gripping and handling different kinds of objects. Dr. Brand wrote, ‘If my skin tissue had been made harder, I might insensitively crush a goblet of fine crystal as I hold it in my hand; if softer, it would not allow a firm grip.’ ... Another remarkable feature of a normal hand is its sensitivity. Dr. Brand states, ‘A normal hand can distinguish between a smooth plane of glass and one etched with lines only 1/2500 of an inch deep.’ The fingertips have the ability to detect a difference of just three milligrams. How extraordinary it is that the hand should be so well-suited for its purpose through all of these amazing features and abilities. Was this the product of chance or the creation of God?”

(Friday Church News Notes, August 31, 2018, www.wayoflife.org)

QUOTES

“Many Christians grow up in church, but they never know Christ. They know hymns, but they don't know Him.”

“We must allow the Word of God to correct us the same way we allow it to encourage us.”

“Nervous and emotional disorders arise from Materialism, not from walking with God by faith.” - (William MacDonald)

QUOTES TO CONSIDER

The Lord's Supper was ordained for a continual remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ's death, until He comes again. The benefits it confers are spiritual, not physical. Its effects must be looked for in our inward man. It was intended to remind us, by the visible, tangible emblems of bread and wine, that the offering of Christ's body and blood for us on the cross, is the only atonement for sin, and the life of a believer's soul. It was meant to help our poor weak faith to closer fellowship with our crucified Savior, and to assist us in spiritually feeding on Christ's body and blood.

It is an ordinance for redeemed sinners, and not for unfallen angels. By receiving it we publicly declare our sense of guilt, and need of a Savior – our trust in Jesus, and our love to Him – our desire to live upon Him, and our hope to live with Him. Using it in this spirit, we shall find our repentance deepened, our faith increased, our hope brightened, our love enlarged, our besetting sins weakened and our graces strengthened. It will draw us nearer to Christ. - **J.C. Ryle** †

"A man can receive nothing." That is the burden of the Bible. Whatever men may think of human reason God takes a low view of it. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" Man's reason is a fine instrument and useful within its field. It is a gift of God and God does not hesitate to appeal to it, as when He cries to Israel, "Come now, and let us reason together." The inability of human reason as an organ of divine knowledge arises not from its own weakness but from its unfittedness for the task by its own nature. It was not given as an organ by which to know God.

The doctrine of the inability of the human mind and the need for divine illumination is so fully developed in the New Testament that it is nothing short of astonishing that we should have gone so far astray about the whole thing. Fundamentalism has stood aloof from the liberal in self-conscious superiority and has on its own part fallen into error, the error of textualism, which is simply orthodoxy

without the Holy Spirit. Everywhere among conservatives we find persons who are Bible-taught but not Spirit-taught. They conceive truth to be something that they can grasp with the mind. If a man hold to the fundamentals of the Christian faith, he is thought to possess divine truth. But it does not follow. There is no truth apart from the Spirit. The most brilliant intellect may be imbecilic when confronted with the mysteries of God. For a man to understand revealed truth requires an act of God equal to the original act that inspired the text. **Spirit-Taught – A. W. Tozer** †

After the flood the human race was split up into nations, and God called off one stream of the human race in Abraham, and created a nation out of that one man. The Old Testament is not a history of the nations of the world, but the history of that one nation.

In secular history Israel is disregarded as being merely a miserable horde of slaves, and justly so from the standpoint of the historian. The nations to which the Bible pays little attention are much finer to read about, but they have no importance in the redemptive purpose of God. His purpose was the creation of a nation to be His bondsman, that through that nation all the other nations should come to know Him.

The idea that Israel was a magnificently developed type of nation is a mistaken one. Israel was a despised, and a despicable nation, continually turning away from God into idolatry but nothing ever altered the purpose of God for the nation.

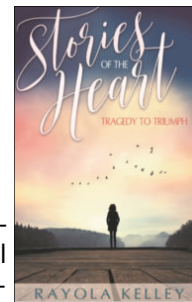
The despised element is always a noticeable element in the purpose of God. When the Savior of the world came, He came of that despised nation; He Himself was "despised and rejected by men," and in all Christian enterprise there is this same despised element, "things which are despised God has chosen." - **The Oswald Chambers Daily Devotional Bible**, p. 675 †

Every day in which I do not penetrate more deeply into the knowledge of God's Word in Holy Scripture is a lost day for me. - **Dietrich Bonhoeffer** †

GOD GAVE TEACHERS

(Ephesians 4:11)

AND INSPIRED SOME TO WRITE BOOKS!



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Readers will also gain insight into how each woman's inner struggles with issues such as pornography, abuse, adultery, hypocrisy, betrayal, abortion, rejection, lost love, and other traumatic and destructive difficulties that were fought and won, and the remarkable inner strength and courage these women gained through their journey to utter reliance on the Lord. As you travel with them through their stories, you will discover that in spite of the raw emotions left in the wake of some of life's toughest tragedies their lives were changed from TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH.

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RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

Q: *"What does it mean to not give the appearance of evil?"*

A: To understand this particular concept you must consider the context it was given in. The Apostle Paul stated "Abstain from all appearance of evil," but it was after he instructed the Thessalonian Christians to prove all things and hold fast that which is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21). When you consider these two Scriptures together you can keep the one about avoiding the appearance of evil in the right context.

To "prove" something has to do with testing, trying, examining, or discerning something to see if it would be approved. Such approval for Christians would have to come from God. Once a matter is approved then we are to hold fast to that which is good. "Hold fast" means to seize upon it and not let it go.

"Good" in this text points to that which is virtuous. Consider that evil has to do with the lack of character while wickedness is a matter of doing that which is wrong, profane, and corrupt. To be good or virtuous one must be morally upright, righteous in motives, honorable in conduct, honest about what is true, doing that which would be worthy of consideration, and beneficial to those involved. Keep in mind these are the things we are to cling to, seize upon when considering a matter. We are not to let go of what is good in order to do something that would not be beneficial to our testimony or God's kingdom.

There is also another Scriptural reference we must consider that is found in 1 Corinthians 8:9, "But take heed lest by any means this liberty of your's become a stumblingblock to them that are weak."

Now with this in mind, we can now consider what it means to abstain from all appearance of evil. Our life is not our life and we need to remember that we are living the life of Christ by faith (Galatians 2:20). We must ensure that our actions never bring a reproach on Christ. Even though a certain action may not be a sin of commission, nor will it lead to sin, such actions can turn into a sin of omission because we failed to consider how it might be a stumbling block to

others. Questionable actions will bring your character into question. Dubious appearance leaves a door open for speculation to gain momentum about our character. It is natural for people to think the worst if they are allowed to speculate. We need to show discretion by being honest with ourselves as to the type of impression our actions will leave. We do not have the luxury to convince ourselves that we know what we are doing and for those who want to think the worst that it's their problem. However, if you are going to speak into their life about Jesus and their soul, it will become your problem because they will not trust you.

As believers we must remember we are a walking letter, epistle of Christ; therefore, we have to keep in mind the world is watching us and our visible actions will confirm our claims or imply we are a hypocrite that speaks the words but in actuality will ignore them when God's Word fails to justify selfish desires. It is important to remember we can justify questionable actions when we know there is no real sin attached to them, but we cannot risk tarnishing our testimony by doing something that has no eternal significance to it. It is easy to become a hypocrite and once we do, we lose respect and credibility to those who have been reading our lives (2 Corinthians 3:2-3).

We are to have the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5). The main focus of Jesus was to do the will of the Father and our main focus should be to do the will of our Lord Jesus Christ. He left us an example of how we are to conduct ourselves in our bodies and even though some of His actions brought debate, they were never brought into question as far as His moral conduct. Since He never compromised His conduct, His motives were not questioned by those who believed and followed Him.

As Christians it is vital that we show wisdom as to how some of our actions might affect those watching us. We need to display discretion and realistically avoid walking into some innocent situation that will give our testimony a black eye. We need to discern and ask ourselves some tough questions about where we are walking, who we are becoming identified with, and how will those who have

a tender conscience in Christianity see it.

There will always be those who speculate about you, but it must not be because of some questionable appearance on your part but because they have a small, wicked mind. A good way to determine whether you should be doing something that might be questionable to others is ask yourself one question, "If I was on the outside watching my particular action, would I question the integrity of it?" As the saying goes, "What is good for the goose is good for the gander." †

QUOTABLE

Some are now making an attempt to accredit the Bible by presenting it as a book for literary study. It is said that by "a judicious selection" of its most graphic and eloquent passages it may be made a source of literary, as well as spiritual, stimulation. As expressed by one writer: "Who shall say that it is not to be included in the curriculum of polite learning as a theme, perhaps of equal moment with Shakespeare?"

This is meant to do the Bible high honour. But how could we find a more significant sign that it is ceasing to be regarded as an inspired book, unfolding to men the character and purpose of God, His mercy and grace in His Son, salvation from sin, and the terrors of judgment? Instead of being read as a book in which the voice of God is heard calling all to repentance, to obedience, and to righteousness, a voice which no man may disregard but at the peril of his soul, we are told to read it as literature—a collection of elegant extracts, of biblical masterpieces. Doubtless the purpose is by appealing to the literary taste, the imagination, the sense of the beautiful and sublime, to obtain for the Bible a new hold upon the attention of cultivated people.

But its sacred character is thus lost. It is merely a book among books—of value for intellectual culture, but no more the one book, able to make us wise unto salvation, to which we come, upon the bended knee, praying for that light from the Spirit who inspired it, without which we read in vain.—Samuel Andrews