

GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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

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God's Glorious Attributes Part 4

HIS PROVIDENCE

By Rayola Kelley

This month we will be celebrating Thanksgiving. For some people it is another holiday to watch football, stuff themselves with food, and gather with family and friends. However, for me this holiday is one celebration I value deeply because it was something the founding fathers of this nation realized was of great importance when it came to the wellbeing of this nation.



We know the first Thanksgiving in 1621 entailed a feast after the pilgrims had suffered much loss due to sailing over the Atlantic Ocean to a new, unsettled land in order to have religious freedoms. Their trip took two months and they had to stay on board the Mayflower ship the first winter, but even so they were not prepared for the weather conditions. At the end of the ordeal out of the 102 passengers that sailed from Europe only 53 remained and only half the crew survived. The Mayflower did safely sail back to England, but the new residents of the land had to build shelters and plant food in preparation for the following winter. If it were not for the natives of the land, they would have perished. They called for a feast after having their first harvest and invited the Indians who had helped them through their ordeal to celebrate a very solemn moment as they remembered their Creator who brought them thus far and provided the means for

them to survive.

Through the first years of our fledging nation, there were different leaders who called for a day of Thanksgiving, one being President George Washington in 1789 to remember that if it was not for the great intervention and blessings of Providence (their word for the sovereign God), that America would have not been. It was finally in 1863 that Abraham Lincoln made it an official holiday during the Civil War.

I think that after studying the history of Thanksgiving I realize that our leaders knew the importance of being thankful towards their Creator, especially in troubling times. As a result of their understanding that no nation would survive without God's intervention, America not only survived but in WWII became a leading nation in the world.

When you consider the struggle of other countries all over the world, you realize America is an exceptional country. We are not exceptional because we are unique or superior as a people, but because our leaders recognized that without God's blessings and intervention we would not be here as a nation. Now note they did not promote one religion over the other; rather, they pointed to God as being the decisive factor in determining if the American experiment of a Republic, where people would govern themselves while the main role of the federal government was the responsibility to protect the people, would survive, and SURVIVE IT DID BY THE GRACE OF GOD.

As pointed out by our founding fathers, this nation can only remain a true republic as long as the people remain moral. We know that morality stands as a cornerstone to true justice, but the pillars of justice are truth and mercy. All justice will line up to the cornerstone of morality while considering all matters in light of truth with the desire to show mercy where it is truly sought.

America has been a very blessed nation because some of the leaders in our nation had the foresight to recognize that without the providence of our Creator, of our God, America would never become the nation that it did. When I first heard the word "providence," I assumed it had a similar meaning as "sovereign," but sovereign has to do with supremacy over all, while providence points to wisdom, foresightedness, prudence, and far-sightedness working within the providence of events in light of future vision.

As I thought about our forefathers' presentation of God, I had to stand in awe of it all. They sought the help of Providence to establish a government by the people and for the people. They seemed to know that without Providence on their side, they would not be able to stand, withstand, continue to stand, and endure the challenges that would plague an infant nation coming to maturity. They wanted to put together a government (three branches) that would have the necessary checks and balances to prevent tyranny, and if one branch became abusive in its authority and power, the other two branches along with the people would have the means to correct it and bring it back into balance.

They established the goal and identity of this country (Constitution) along with the Bill of Rights which was the first ten amendments passed by congress in September 25, 1789 and ratified in December 15, 1791. I want you to think about this for a moment; the greatest miracle is that men could actually agree on a certain government, a Constitution, and amendments. They actually could come to a place and reason together in such a way that a solution could be presented and I believe the reason was because the Constitution and Bill of Rights pointed to that fact that they were honorable in regard to all people. To me this is the greatest example of Providence. These men sought Providence

for the wisdom to put a document together to declare their intention of being an independent nation from the tyrannical rule of a king and a Parliament that was indifferent to their needs and problems as a people. They stood up knowing that it might well cost them their lives, but they would not back down even though it would cost them their land, and once they put their hand to the plow, they had to count the cost because it could also cost them their families, or even their very lives.

These men had a sense of destiny that was bigger than they could imagine and at best could only be expressed in a simple, but beautifully written document, the Constitution. Clearly, no one will be willing to sacrifice all for something that is not greater than they, that won't reach beyond a few generations, a vision and dream that could last for a couple of centuries and beyond. These men knew they would be counted as traitors to the cause of the king, but they could not be traitors to the vision and dream. They risked taking the position of statesmen, leaders, and representatives as they looked beyond the present danger to dare dream of thirteen colonies unified under one government, their own flag, and becoming sovereign as a nation. To them the vision was worth it even in light of utter destruction and defeat.

Today we enjoy the fruition of their vision and dream. Sadly, there are those who do not know what they have because there is no contrast, no understanding of past cost, and no appreciation for sacrifice. Tragically, without an understanding of the cost, those who follow and benefit from the sacrifice of others fail to see living in this country as a privilege, but rather see themselves as deserving it, and will trample under the pearls of past sacrifices in their piggins of ungratefulness and foolishness.

Throughout it all, different leaders overseeing a struggling nation with the belief in Providence knew there was One to thank for not only the blessings upon this nation but the opportunity for people to pursue the best and reach the heights of excellence. Keep in mind, there were those times that leaders were encouraged to come back under tyranny when the

times got tough, but they remembered that the American experiment was that people do not need tyranny to keep them in line because of being morally depraved and lawless; rather, they could take control of their destiny by holding themselves to a higher standard. This understanding gave these leaders the foresight to see that man can individually govern himself by being moral and responsible.

I have watched the core of this country being attacked by those who have no respect for such things as freedom, morality, truth, and justice. These individuals do not realize the darkness that drives them to oppose and rage against what made this nation distinct causes them to appear as dumb sheep, ignorant and oblivious to the destruction that awaits them. Clearly, what they are advocating will not only prove to be dark to them, but it will devour them in the end.

As I have studied the history of our nation, I realized that each generation had to be conditioned to embrace the lie of each age. Sadly, the lie has been repackaged to hide the history and destruction of it. The great lie is Communism. Communism is not only a type of government, but it is a religion of Satan. Regardless of what many have advocated, it is not dead but is the beast, the monster that is being methodically raised up behind different guises such as Socialism and Progressivism. Communism uses the doors of evolution, humanism, and liberalism, where all moral accountability is thrown aside to create a moral crisis in order to usher in Political Correctness that stands for nothing as a means to silence all absolutes as far as God, morality, and justice are concerned.

Sadly today, the generation that will soon take the reins of this nation had been indoctrinated to buy the lie of Communism by our school system, they have been conditioned by liberal Hollywood to believe this type of wicked government is the solution to what ails society, and they either have been rendered into activists that will bring about their will through violence, or into "cupcakes" that are reduced to crumbs when challenged by the teeth of reality, or who melt into a puddle of hopelessness when the heat becomes uncomfortable.

As I consider the courage of our forefathers, I am so thankful they cannot see our country now. Their hard-fought battles to provide a lasting government that would be as moral, just, and excellent as its people has been rendered into mockery by the corruption and contempt of leaders who miserably failed to be the necessary salt to ensure and maintain the Republic. As Benjamin Franklin answered a woman who asked him what kind of government had been handed to the people, he told her a republic; that is, if the people could keep it as a republic. Clearly, there are many forces against such a government because it represents something that requires its people to be moral, its leaders honest, its judges just, and its business dealings fair.

America still stands as a sovereign nation, even though it is staggering from the cancer of corruption that is now rooted and growing in our government institutions. Such cancer must be cut out, but some fear it might take another revolution.

To me it will take a revolution: not a physical revolution but a spiritual revolution. The true church must repent of all selfish, worldly practices, and come out and be separate from the world in order to stand distinct and bring a contrast. Leaders need to either repent of wicked agendas, or the lack of true character to stand against the wicked tide, or repent of their pursuit of greed for power and money as they sell the soul of this nation to the globalist world planners. Keep in mind, these planners must rid the world of much of the population so that they can control it with an iron fist. Everyone will come into subjection to their tyranny for the purpose of serving them.

The Bible tells us that God set the boundaries for people and nations (*Exodus 23:31; Acts 17:26; Deuteronomy 32:8; Nehemiah 9:22*). There are various reasons for this, but the main one is that Satan has been actively trying to bring the whole world under his rule. The Tower of Babel and ideologies such as Nazism and Communism are His tools to do it. The Bible is clear about the mystery of iniquity working within governments and this world to bring about this one-world government, but in the end Sa-

tan will not succeed in doing it. The real King of kings will come back, and the meek, not the wicked, will inherit the earth. We are told that when Jesus does come back, these wicked leaders will cry out for the rocks to fall on them; meanwhile God laughs at their attempts because they have already lost the war (*Genesis 11:1-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; Revelation 6:15-17*).

We hear about separation of church and state which is not part of our Constitution but is Russia's. The principle behind any separation of church and state in America is for the sake of the church and not the state. The government cannot interfere in a person's personal worship or preference. A person has a right to speak his or her heart and mind without fear of being silenced because those in power may not like it. I must point out that you can't freely worship unless you have the freedom of speech to do so openly and publicly.

Today the freedom to worship and express convictions is being threatened by the Communist (Socialist, Progressive) movement in this country. The insane practice of Political Correctness is a Communist ploy with the main goal to silence the absolutes of a society as to truth, morality, and justice. The picture may look bleak for this nation, but as a Christian my future is not bleak. I am aware this nation needs to come back to a place of moral goodness, reason, and sanity but I believe there are many people waking up to these wicked forces. I do not believe that as yet these forces represent a majority. Granted, they have the platforms to make it appear as if they are in the majority but they are not.

The question is what must we, as a majority of the people do because we don't have the platform that the wicked enjoy? We may not have a visible platform but we do have a voice by way of voting for someone who will at least stand for the freedom to worship as one chooses. This is the real key to all true freedom. Freedom is not about a person doing as he or she chooses because everyone has different moral standards, but it is the freedom to worship as one's conscience dictates and not be afraid of persecution when there are disagree-

ments. I want to point out we cannot stand against a matter unless we are willing to take a stand for what we believe is right and stand with those who closely represent our concerns.

Besides taking a stand in the voting booth, we need to intercede for this country. To intercede, we must become identified with the sins of this nation as Daniel did in Daniel 9. In a sense, we must own them as a priest and intercessor if we are to have any authority in heaven. Abortions, the onslaught of immoral attacks on the family that is instituted by God, pornography, drugs, and the attraction to the demonic are just a few examples of the sins that are tearing apart the very fiber of this country, dulling people down to what is moral, right, and holy.

Once we stand up in the voting booth and stand in the gap for the country, we need to continue to stand, while seeking God's providence for this nation. We need to come back to the vision our founding fathers had for this nation. We must ask for wisdom to walk through the vicious affronts taking place against the principles of the Constitution and the fundamental rights of freedom guaranteed to the citizens of America.

The next thing we need to do is ask the Lord for the foresight to safeguard the principles and laws that have made this country a shining refuge to others. It often amazes me that those seeking refuge in this country want to oppose its laws and fundamentally change it, but to what? In the past people came to America to be Americans, but now people come to America to change it to fit their culture, religious preferences, causes, and wicked ideologies—to make Americans bend, bow, serve, support, and adjust to them, ultimately oppressing the citizens and creating the same environment that they left behind.

Finally, we need to understand that it is God who blesses and sets people up in leadership, and He alone deserves our worship and our sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. America still stands and exists because God has had mercy on this nation while extending tremendous grace towards His people.

We are told that being thankful is

part of the will of God (*1 Thessalonians 5:18*). As His people we need to take this Thanksgiving celebration, line up to His will and truly give thanks for His many blessings, especially for the freedom to still openly worship Him. We need to do it in a state of humility, a spirit of meekness, and with sobriety, while keeping in mind that the freedom we now enjoy came with a high price and is being threatened by various factions that have an agenda contrary to the vision our forefathers had for this nation. We need to ask the Lord to have mercy on this nation and then avail ourselves to become His vessels and instruments in the great harvest field of the world.

PURITAN QUOTES Of J. C. RYLE

"Cease to regard the Gospel as a mere collection of dry doctrines. Look at it rather as the revelation of a mighty living Being in whose sight you are daily to live. Cease to regard it as a mere set of abstract propositions and abstruse principles and rules. Look at it as the introduction to a glorious personal Friend. This is the kind of Gospel that the apostles preached. They did not go about the world telling men of love and mercy and pardon in the abstract. The leading subject of all their sermons was the loving heart of an actual living Christ. This is the kind of Gospel which is most calculated to promote sanctification and fitness for glory. Nothing, surely, is so likely to prepare us for that heaven where Christ's personal presence will be all, and that glory where we shall meet Christ face to face, as to realize communion with Christ, as an actual living Person here on earth. There is all the difference in the world between an idea and a person."

"Are we converted ourselves? This is the one point to which our attention ought to be directed. Our experience may not tally with that of other believers. But that is not the question. Do we feel sin, hate it, and flee from it? Do we love Christ, and rest solely on Him for salvation? Are we bringing forth fruits of the Spirit in righteousness and true holiness? If these things are so we may thank God, and take courage."

TWO POWERFUL WORDS

By Jeannette Haley

*"There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger."
- Luke 17:17*

There is great power in words. Words can communicate and express our deepest feelings, aspirations, longings, griefs, hopes, fears, loves and dreams. Words can soothe our fears, calm our emotions, bring hope and healing to unseen wounds, and encourage our hearts. Words can also bring division, cause anger, bully people to the brink of suicide, start unfounded rumors, and stir up anarchy. And, words can and do start wars. Concerning written words, how true the old saying is, "The pen is mightier than the sword."

As soon as we learn how to talk we toss words around our entire lives like New Yorkers toss confetti on New Year's Eve. Words are flying everywhere, not only audibly but through worldwide wireless communications. The human race has returned to Babylon, except this time it's through technology that the ancients would have never dreamed of. Sometimes we may feel as if no one is really listening to what we have to say, but rest assured, God hears every word. In fact, the Bible tells us that He knows all of our words. *"O LORD, thou has searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me"* Psalm 139:1-5. Nothing is hid from the Lord.

At this point, I want to share an interesting scientific finding with you, and hope you find this discovery as fascinating as I did: From Science News, 5/27/00, pp. 344-346, "Building Blocks of Talk." "The Bible tells us that everyone on Earth spoke the same language until God confused the languages of rebellious people at Babel. 'Foreign-accent syndrome' suggests that many of the detailed characteristics of language may have been origi-

nally wired into the brain. It also helps us see that language is more than just noises to which we have given meaning. Language is God's gift. *Genesis 11:1* Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. The Bible teaches that until several centuries after the Flood all people on Earth spoke the same language. The fact that many supposedly unrelated languages have similar sounding words with the same or similar meanings supports this teaching. Some language researchers say that this is simply due to chance. Now some language researchers say that they have developed another line of research that supports the belief that all humans once spoke the same language.

"Language researchers have spent years listening to babies in many different language groups babble. Babies younger than four months make a variety of sounds as they learn to use their voice. Speaking is a highly complex activity, requiring the coordination of 70 different muscles as well as several different body parts. By seven to ten months of age, babies typically begin making sounds that alternate vowels and consonants. Researchers found that there are three distinct patterns of alternating sounds that are universal among babies in English-speaking households. Then they found that these three patterns are also common among infants from a wide range of language groups around the world. Researchers comparing infants from varying language groups then identified a fourth pattern among all groups. These findings have been interpreted as independent evidence that all people once spoke one language."

Undoubtedly none of us can remember the first word we ever spoke, but the Lord does. In *Matthew 12:36*, Jesus said, concerning our conversations, *"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."* "Idle" in the Greek means "useless." Just try to imagine all the useless prattle that, no doubt, we have all uttered in our lifetime! How are we going to explain that to the Lord? I pray that He will kindly "blow it all away" on my part so I don't have to face Him on Judgment Day to give an account, because there aren't

any words I can think of that would be able to explain it, except to say, "O God! Have mercy on me, a sinner!"

How wearying it is to find yourself in a situation you can't escape from where everyone is spewing out vain rhetoric! (A neighborhood meeting we recently had to attend comes to mind!) The only words going through my head after we had been there for what seemed to be an eternity were, "I want to go home!" I hate to admit it, but I've sat through many a sermon in churches where those same words echoed through my mind as well. If you're honest, I bet you have too!

This brings me to the main subject of this November article, "Two Powerful Words." They aren't by any means the most powerful words, or the only powerful words, but they are powerful words because of the lasting effect they can have on the heart of a battle-worn, weary soldier of the cross. These two words also tell a lot about a person's level of understanding, spiritual maturity, and personal relationship with the Lord. In addition, these two words also reveal the heart condition of the one who uses them, his or her true level of humility and love for Jesus.

By now you may have guessed that these two powerful words are *"thank you."* Two basic, simple words that we need to learn to never demand or expect from others if we would be at peace; yet these are two powerful words that we should be quick to express to others. If we had decent, upright parents we hopefully learned these two words in early childhood, and planted them within our hearts, carrying them with us through our lifetime, and graciously using them in every situation and circumstance that calls for them. Sometimes we use words and phrases such as "thank you" or "I love you" out of politeness or sheer habit, but to say "thank You" to God as only lip service to Him is speaking words in vain. When we worship God in the only acceptable way, which is "in spirit and in truth" then our thanksgiving to Him will be genuine, heartfelt and powerful.

We experienced three instances recently where those two powerful

words or the lack thereof, made a lasting impression on our lives. In one instance, a certain individual who was greatly blessed failed to consider the hard work and sacrifice made on their behalf, but in due time, finally managed to communicate a certain appreciation that was totally unexpected. In the second situation, a person indicated they needed help in different areas of their spiritual life, so time and expense went into trying to meet that need, only to have the individual viciously turn on us, returning evil for good. The other instance concerned a realization on my part that I had to let go of two young people whose spiritual lives this ministry had greatly invested in throughout their growing up years with solid biblical teaching and counseling. They have gone on with their lives without any sign whatsoever of thankfulness or appreciation for all the love, commitment, training and work provided for them. All we can do is pray that someday they will look back and give thanks to God for His faithfulness on their behalf.

Not being a parent or grandparent, I can only imagine the stinging, aching heartbreak they experience when their wayward and rebellious children, after having been greatly cherished, provided for, instructed in the ways of the Lord and righteousness turn to the ways of the world. When your heart is melting because of the lost state, blindness, unbelief, rebellion and, yes, ingratitude of others tears can freely flow. But, we have this promise, and I repeat it to myself often: *“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” Revelation 21:4.*

We know we are in the last of the last days for many reasons. *2 Timothy 3:1-5* reads like today's news: *“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godli-*

ness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.” (Emphasis added.)

It's interesting that when Jesus entered into a certain village ten leprosy men met Him, and cried out *“Jesus, Master, have mercy on us” Luke 17:13b.* They knew who He was, they knew He had the power to heal, and they believed His Word as they all turned to go show themselves to the priests. But, only one, a Samaritan, when he saw that he was healed, returned to Jesus, glorified God with a loud voice, and fell down on his face at the feet of Jesus, and gave Him thanks. And Jesus asked, *“Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole” Luke 17:17-18.* It's hard to understand how nine men who had been healed from the horrible devastation of leprosy could fail to give thanks to God, and those were the Jews, the chosen people.

Jesus told the Samaritan to go his way (not to the priests) because his faith had made him whole. This wholeness was more than physical healing; it was complete wholeness of body, soul and spirit for his faith was manifested when he returned and glorified God, loudly and publically, falling down on his face at Jesus' feet. His actions bore witness to the fact that this “stranger” knew who Jesus was; that is, God Incarnate, and he worshipped Him. A person may be physically healed by God, and still not be made “whole” if his or her faith lacks true reverence and acknowledgment that Jesus is God in the flesh. The only thanksgiving that is acceptable to God will come out of a heart of faith that is offered in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24.) *Matthew 15:8* says, *“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.”*

It's been my experience that those who have very little of this world's goods, and those who suffer extreme poverty in third world countries are often the most thankful and joyous people when even just their basic needs are met by those in the family of God. In most Western coun-

tries we all take food, water, shelter and clothing for granted; and, when we take things for granted, we have a tendency to overlook being truly thankful. It's a sad commentary to realize that the more we get, the less thankful we can be. Yet, without God we not only have nothing, but we are nothing. Jesus is all in all, the *“Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending” Revelation 1:8a.*

I've told this story before, but for those who have not heard it, I'll repeat it here. Before the Lord merged Rayola Kelley's ministry with mine (back in the late 80's), I was struggling to come higher in God. I wasn't happy to settle for nominal, mundane Christianity, and came to a point where I confessed that one of the things that seemed to be lacking in my life was genuine thankfulness. So, I simply prayed to the Lord to give me a thankful heart. As the saying goes, “Be careful about what you ask God for” because not long after that I found myself in an old empty farmhouse with next to nothing. I will never forget how thankful I was when I found an old wood kitchen chair for 75 cents at a yard sale. Other yard sale items were weekly added to that, and I discovered true thankfulness for what the Lord provided.

In the years that followed there were lean times and times of plenty, and through it all I experienced what Paul meant when he said, *“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”* Philippians 4:11. The key is in the word “learned” which implies that a person doesn't suddenly “arrive” in a place of contentment, but that there is a process involved. That process can mean different things for different people depending on how they naturally respond to their particular situation, but regardless of the situation or circumstances, contentment is a result of a deep, abiding faith in God and His Word which humbles us, causing us to rest in the reality of Spirit and Truth. It is then that, with Paul, we can declare with thanksgiving what he said in verse 12, *“I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suf-*

fer need." Note that Paul was "instructed," and who was his instructor? Jesus Christ.

Charles Spurgeon said, "He who would serve God must begin by praising God, for a grateful heart is the mainspring of obedience. We must offer the salt of gratitude with the sacrifice of obedience; our lives should be anointed with the precious oil of thankfulness. As soldiers march to music, so while we walk in the paths of righteousness we should keep step to the notes of thanksgiving. Larks sing as they mount, so should we magnify the Lord for his mercies while we are winging our way to heaven." A. W. Tozer said, "The constant tenor and spirit of our lives should be adoring gratitude, love, reverence, and thanksgiving to the Most High."

The question is how could anyone ever thank God enough for all He has done for us in drawing us to Himself, convicting us by the Holy Spirit so that our hearts would answer the call of the Savior to come to Him? We can never repay the debt that we owe. "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" Hebrews 13:15.

2 Thessalonians 5:18, says "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." This Scripture brings to mind Job who said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." Such a statement in light of all that Job lost and suffered could only come out of a thankful heart because no one can truly glorify God with a thankless heart! Romans 1:21 says, "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

Thankfulness is what God desires from His children. It is a disciplined heart attitude that we must choose to develop in our inward character, regardless of how difficult or painful our circumstances may be. It must be cultivated, practiced and guarded as part of our Christian testimony of faith in the sovereignty and goodness of God. Interestingly thank-

fulness is not a fruit of the Spirit, nor is it one of the virtues listed in 2 Peter 1; yet like a ribbon interwoven within the fabric of godly Christian character, it colors and binds together the gifts of the Spirit, and Christian virtues into a perfect whole that is pleasing to God.

Thankfulness and contentment go hand in hand, but like the delicate wings of a butterfly, they must be perfectly balanced in order to work properly. Therefore, if we become caught up and ensnared with the things of this world, failing to obey Colossians 3:2, which states, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" we will fall into the insidious, destructive trap of covetousness. Luke 12:15, "And He said unto them, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.'" Covetousness, lust and greed to not a thankful, contented Christian make.

It should be noted that there are different degrees to thankfulness, and all correspond with the amount of love a person has for the Father and the Son. In Luke 7:36-50 we read the beautiful story of the Pharisee and the sinner woman and how each treated Jesus. In verse 47 Jesus said, "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Love and thanksgiving go hand in hand, and when I see an ungrateful, complaining, miserable and unthankful Christian, I am tempted to wonder if that person has ever really humbled themselves, repented of sin, and been forgiven by the Lord.

I thank God that He has given me so much that I don't deserve, and has not given me what I do deserve! Oh God! You are so good to me, a sinner!

If Adam and Eve had been thankful for the special relationship they had with the Lord God, and for all the other blessings they did have, would they have ignored the enemy's lies? One can only wonder. But, this we do know: self-serving people who are tormented with covetousness, lust, greed, and the desire for power over others can never be truly thankful because no matter how much they have it is never enough. The same

goes for those who think more highly of themselves than they ought to think, because such people think they deserve more than they need. [Philippians 4:6-7](#) tells us, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

This Thanksgiving may the peace of God fill all of our hearts with joy and gratefulness for all we have been given by God in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is coming in power and great glory to gather us to Himself, so that where He is we shall be with Him forever. Hallelujah! †



BE YE THANKFUL

"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." - 1 Corinthians 15:57

"O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever." - 1 Chronicles 16:34

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." - Colossians 3:15,17; 4:2

"But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord." - Jonah 2:9

"So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth thy praise to all generations." - Psalm 79:13

The Pursuit of Power By Skip Moen

Her princes inside her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves. . .
Zephaniah 3:3 American KJV 1999

Roaring lions/evening wolves – “The hunger of the powerful knows no satiety; the appetite grows on what it feeds. Power exalts itself and is incapable of yielding to any transcendent judgment; . . . It is the bitter irony of history that the common people, who are devoid of power and are the prospective victims of its abuse, are the first to become the ally of him who accumulated power. Power is spectacular, while its end, the moral law, is inconspicuous.” [Abraham Heschel]

“A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves largesse (generous gifts) from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidates promising the most benefits from the public treasury, with the result that a democracy always collapses over loose fiscal policy, [which is] always followed by a dictatorship.” [Unknown]

When Thomas Jefferson said that public debt was the greatest enemy of democracy, he was undoubtedly reflecting on the indisputable historical record of past civilizations. From Egypt to Rome, from Greece to the Holy Roman Empire, power corrupted every hierarchy of leadership, eventually resulting in massive spending at the expense of those who produced. No civilization has ever recovered from the addiction of the powerful.

But Jefferson need not have looked further than his Bible. In fact, all he had to do was read the prophet Zephaniah. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that peace and prosperity are the result of *righteousness*, not power. Zephaniah warned us all. Power breeds lions and wolves; lions whose roar is the sound of mayhem and slaughter, wolves whose feasting on the vulnerable leaves nothing for the morning. Woe to any people who believe that the powerful will save them. Woe to those who, given power, oppress the help-

less. Of all the world’s addictions, power is to be feared the most for it is the unbridled warrant for destruction. No man or woman who *wishes* to be powerful is fit to wield its sword. This is why God chooses leaders who are unsuited for the task. This is why God is the only King, the final authority and the arbiter of the good. No man can hold the sword of power for long without abusing its force and any man who thinks he is able to do so without the humility that comes from standing before a Holy God is a bigger fool than the Father of Lies.

What is the biblical solution to the addiction of power? Prayer! A leader who is not in constant conversation with the Father is a ravenous beast in civil disguise. Prayer makes us human. The lack of prayer turns us into roaring lions and evening wolves. The only antidote to power is standing in His presence – often. †

BE HAPPY! By T. A. McMahon

The Bible doesn’t set happiness as a temporal goal for Christians, but it does include it as a great by-product of living one’s life in submission to our Lord. Being happy also presents a demeanor that reflects favorably in regard to our Christian witness. Most people enjoy being around others who are generally and genuinely happy. Jesus gave us a number of ways for this to take place in our lives, especially in John 13:12-17: “So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord: neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, *happy are ye if ye do them*” (emphasis added).

Serving others is the Lord’s point in this passage, and it’s the best remedy for self-preoccupation, a condition that ultimately results in unhappiness.

PREPARING FOR JESUS’ RETURN

By A. W. Tozer

To give any kind of prediction about world events apart from the Scripture is to practice a form of religious insanity that serves only to confuse people, who then finally give up and say, “I can’t understand prophecy; I guess it’s not for me.” Any prediction of our Lord’s return that relies on education or technology is sure to be wrong and leads only to discouragement, and finally to abandonment of what the Bible has to say about Jesus’ return. The Blessed Hope is for the believer, and it brings comfort, assurance and confidence to the heart of the believer in the midst of this world’s turmoil. Our focus is not on the calamity around us, but world’s turmoil. Our focus is not on the calamity around us, but on His glorious coming. Prophecy is not for the critical or curious eye, but for that eye focused on and looking for the Lord Jesus Christ, the Coming One.

Therefore, the point of Bible prophecy is not to alarm us but to alert us to circumstances leading up to the Lord’s return. This alertness is to spur us on to be ready; and the Bible says a lot about how we can be ready for His return. †

FROM WILLIAM MACDONALD

“...His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: Great is thy faithfulness” - Lamentations 3:22-23

God is faithful and true. He cannot lie or deceive. He cannot go back on His word. He is absolutely trustworthy. No promise of His can ever fail...

God wants His people to be faithful and true. He wants us to be true to our word. He wants us to be dependable in keeping appointments. We should not be given to lies, exaggeration, or half-truths. We should be faithful in keeping our promises. Christians, above all people, should be faithful to their marriage vows. They should be faithful in discharging their commitments in the assembly, in business, and in the home.

How we should praise and thank the Lord for His faithfulness. He is the God who cannot fail. †

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

Q: "What does it mean to not be a partaker of other men's sins?"

A: It is important to understand what the word "partake" means. It points to "allotment," "inheritance," "participate," "pertain," "suffer hardship," "fellowship," "partner," and "in company with." If there is one word that summarizes "partake," it would be "identification." Jesus became a partaker with us when He gave up the glories of heaven and was fashioned as a man in order to become identified in our sin as the great sacrifice (*Philippians 2:6-8; Hebrews 2:14-15*). *Hebrews 10:5, 10* states, "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared for me...By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

Partaking is coming into agreement with someone on a spiritual level. To come into agreement in such a fashion, means you are opening yourself up emotionally and intellectually to be influence by the spirit motivating that person, action, or narrative. Consider what *Ephesians 5:6-7* states, "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them."

The particular Scripture reference you made mention of is found in *1 Timothy 5:22*, "Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure." Many people know that New Agers and those in the occult transfer spirits to others by the laying on of hands. The Old Testament priests would lay hands on the offering signifying the animal sacrifice was becoming a substitute. The leadership of the New Testament Church would lay hands on those who believed to impart the Holy Spirit and His gifts to them, and it is for this reason the laying on of hands was one of the six principle doctrines of Christ found in *Hebrews 6:1-2*. Partaking points to spiritual agreement.

When individuals come into spiritual agreement with someone who is in sin, they are not only becoming

identified to the person's sin, showing a type of approval, but they are opening themselves up to be influenced by a wrong spirit. It was for this reason the Christians in Corinth were told to separate from the fornicator who refused to repent in *1 Corinthians 5*. A person who opens self up to the wrong spirit will lose the necessary discernment to rightly judge other matters and risks losing the authority to speak into the lives of others.

We are told in *1 Corinthians 10:17-21* that we cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils. We are to keep ourselves pure and such a mixture is considered unholy or profane and to come into agreement with it would pervert us. It is for this reason we are instructed to become partakers of holiness, spiritual things, His promises, our inheritance, our heavenly calling in Christ, and even the afflictions of the Gospel so we can become a source of consolation to others (*Romans 15:27; 2 Corinthians 1:1-7; Ephesians 5:7; Colossians 1:12; 2 Timothy 1:8*).

Christ became identified to us to become sin for us, but we must not become identified with others in their sin. We must separate from such wrong environments to ensure that we remain pure, our conscience clean, our spirit discerning, and our soul free from all oppression. †

QUOTES TO PONDER

"A church fed on excitement is no New Testament Church at all. The desire for surface stimulation is a sure mark of the fallen nature, the very thing Christ died to deliver us from."

- A. W. Tozer

"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

"Socialism is a philosophy of failure, the creed of ignorance, and the gospel of envy, its inherent virtue is the equal sharing of misery."

- Winston Churchill

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.

- Pastor Shahram Hadian

CREATION MOMENTS

Genesis 11:1—"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech."

After suffering a stroke, a man in Baltimore suddenly began speaking with a Scandinavian accent. Though he had no experience with languages other than English, he suddenly sounded Nordic and appeared unfamiliar with English! In the weeks after the stroke, his speech gradually returned to normal. After three and one-half months, he again spoke with no trace of accent.

This affliction is real. It's called "foreign-accent syndrome." It's a rare condition in which a brain malfunction causes speech to sound as if the speaker has a foreign accent. Americans have also reportedly developed apparent German, Welsh, Scottish, Irish and Italian accents.

Scientists say the fact that speech follows certain patterns in this way suggests something about the way the human brain is wired. A growing number of studies and experiences – such as "foreign-accent syndrome" – suggest that humans have been programmed with much



more than just language ability. Some of the unique features of specific languages may actually be programmed into our brains.

WISE WORDS OF ANDREW MURRAY

"Humility is perfect quietness of heart. It is to expect nothing, to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing done against me. It is to be at rest when nobody praises me, and when I am blamed or despised. It is to have a blessed home in the Lord, where I can go in and shut the door, and kneel to my Father in secret, and am at peace as in a deep sea of calmness, when all around and above is trouble."

"Pride must die in you, or nothing of heaven can live in you."