

# GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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

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## UNFEIGNED FAITH Part 7 EXERCISING FAITH By Rayola Kelley

As many of you are aware, we have moved to Northern Idaho. One might ask if this was a sudden move on our part. The truth is this move was not sudden, but the door of opportunity to actually relocate proved to be quick. Four years ago, we made some necessary moves to relocate as far as our housing situation. Three years ago we became aware that God was not simply impressing us to move from our present home to another in the Treasure Valley area, but to actually pull up what roots we had and move north.



As a ministry, we began to see that God was changing direction in what we were doing for His kingdom. He confirmed it by phasing out the various ministries we were involved with and fine tuned our thinking in other ways.

We began to seek the Lord as to how far north we were to move. We were given a general locality, and as we considered the different towns in northern Idaho, we could see where Coeur d'Alene, Blanchard, and Clark could possibly be in the general vicinity in which we were to relocate. However, after we received a bit of enlightenment about change in ministry, we were met with silence that lasted for three long years.

During that time period, people who knew about the instruction we had received to move north began to ask us if we really heard correctly. Clearly, we have the examples of Joseph, Moses, and David who had to faithfully endure many years of waiting before they saw a matter through to completion. And, given our humanness, we want a matter

completed yesterday. In our weak, fleshly condition it is natural to occasionally venture back to the drawing board and ask the Lord if we had heard right. However, each time He confirmed the calling and brought us to a place of rest.

At times, we would feel overwhelmed about the obstacles that stood in front of us in relocating. Clearly, our moving hinged on the selling of our house, but as we all know, the housing market took a big nose dive. Krista also needed to have a job, and the economic prospects looked bleak in the areas we considered. We also had to have certain needs met to function as a ministry, such as high speed internet. In many of the areas of northern Idaho it is too remote for such luxuries. It was clear from all appearances that if God wanted us to be in Northern Idaho, He had to work some miracles.

It was during the three years of waiting that we could sense that our faith was being put into the fiery ovens of testing. This testing became more obvious when we occasionally found ourselves focused on the obstacles before us. This is when we would have to battle the black, dark whirlpools of unbelief. Many times it looked impossible for our present status to change. It was during those times that some would find occasion to mock us for believing that after so many months or years that God had indeed called us north.

As you now know, God did finally open the door. A young couple serious about buying our house began the negotiation process. This started everything in motion. The Lord also opened up a job for Krista that had His signature all over it. Miraculously we located a house the weekend after Krista's job was secured, and literally had to pack up everything in two weeks. Waiting may be a long-drawn out process, but once the current of God breaks through the door, everything from that point on will become a

big blur. At such times you cannot keep up with the current; thus, you must simply submit to its fast moving pace.

Usually, I do not mention the stout-hearted people who help us along the way, but due to the enormity of the task, I feel it is only proper to mention the names of these people with great appreciation. Our friend Carrie Seaney actually flew in from the state of Washington to help us to pack up, as well as ensured that we got settled in our new home. Thanks to other friends, Don, Jared, and Katie McCollough and Larry and Maureen Human, we managed to get all of our stuff packed up, and at 9 p.m. on February 23rd, our caravan set off from Nampa to a new location in Priest River, Idaho which is located not far from Blanchard, Idaho. Our plans were to travel as far as Grangeville, Idaho, the first night. Our many Christian friends across America who were aware of our plans to leave on February 23rd, were also aware of the extreme weather conditions that awaited us. They were faithful to pray because every weather report pointed to treacherous conditions. We also owe a debt of gratitude to faithful supporters.

In the past the Lord has gotten us through many challenges created by the weather. His incredible intervention met us that night as well. We bucked snow a foot deep between Council and New Meadows, Idaho. Our windshields and wipers iced up, but the lower areas, such as Riggins, allowed us time to thaw out enough to face more challenging conditions such as the total whiteout on the infamous White Bird Hill. We arrived in Grangeville at 4 a.m., exhausted and thankful.

Even though we were planning to make the last trek of our trip on the 24<sup>th</sup>, the Lord gave us a day off. Due to snow, ice and semi-truck slide offs and roll-overs, there were various road closures along the way. The Lord knew we needed the day to rest before we met the unpredictable road conditions the rest of the way. We not only took advantage of the day by resting, but we also

enjoyed fellowship with our dear friends, Howard and Nona Donaldson.

We arrived at our destination at 5 p.m. on February 25<sup>th</sup> when the temperature was a "balmy" ten below zero, breaking a record. Thanks to Krista's father, Tony, and two strong, young Christian men by the names of Patrick and Kyle Mulligan, we managed to get all of our stuff in by Saturday afternoon. Granted, some things were so cold they broke and food items and plants, along with my spackling compound froze, but the strenuous activity of moving kept people from experiencing the full effect of the freezing temperatures.

Tony and his talented partner, Peggy Beckmeyer, along with Carrie helped us to make the house livable. We not only had to deep clean everything, including the carpets, and paint the house, but the electrical situation had to be fixed along with a host of other things. Then we also had to contend with a flooded garage, where our books, paintings, and other stuff was stacked, as the weather warmed.

It is easy to talk about faith, but to exercise it is a different story altogether. Faith is not exercised when the things of life are going well; rather, it is tested and put into practice when everything around you seems to be going wrong. People have a tendency to think that if they are being obedient to God, all will go well for them. The reality is obedience to God serves as an opportunity for Satan to test our real level of faith. Faith cannot be enlarged or refined unless the fires of adversity are properly applied.

The truth is we have been in this place at different times during the 20 years we have been involved in ministry. Even though we have seen God move some incredible obstacles out of the way, and regardless of its length the waiting is never easy. In the past we have waited months for the door to open and in the last case three years, but the reality is we have waited for many years to see some matters come to fruition. The truth is only genuine faith towards the abiding eternal faithfulness of God can sustain people during such waiting. Even though

God may give you insight about a matter, you will often be met with complete silence. It is during such times you must exercise faith by choosing to believe that God means what He says and will bring it about in due time.

It is during the silent times of waiting that faith is truly enlarged to embrace the impossible. Hence enters the promise of *Isaiah 40:31*: "*But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*" We often limit God, not because we do not believe He can do the impossible, but because we have our ideas as to how He will bring it about. In such scenarios, God becomes an entertainer who is simply into sensationalism and not in the business of bringing to fruition eternal matters.

Faith can only be experienced when it is being exercised. However, there are two ways in which faith is exercised. It has to do with believing and trusting. Believing involves discipline, while trusting requires action. Believing enables you to abide in faith while waiting for God to open the door, while trusting God enables you to go forward once the door is opened. Believing also allows you to operate in persuasion that a matter is so regardless of whether it has come to fruition, while trusting causes you to walk in confidence towards a matter, knowing that it will come to fruition. It is for this reason trust is always in conjunction with obedience.

Most people think that exercising faith involves taking steps forward, but initially exercising faith begins with disciplining your walk. It is much like the children of Israel. When the cloud moved, they moved, but when it abided, they would abide. The disciplined ways of faith are necessary to teach a person how to properly discern if it is time to move or not.

A time of waiting is also a time of preparation. God will not require His people to walk before they are prepared to take on the challenge of the terrain. After all, genuine faith is always met with great adversity. It must experience the purging heat of the wilderness, the extreme cold of lifeless environments, and the insurmountable challenges presented by worldly obstacles.

The natural tendency of the flesh is to impulsively walk according to a foolish zeal. When the flesh responds to the matters of God, it throws all caution and discernment to the wind and foolishly and ultimately ends up putting God to a test. Keep in mind real faith shows wise restraint until it discerns that a matter is according to God's perfect timing and plan.

In *Hebrews 11:8* we are told that Abraham was called to a place where he would receive an inheritance. He obeyed, but he did not know where he was really going or where he would eventually end up. We do not know the exact time between when he left Ur and when he stepped into the Promised Land. We know that his initial claim to the land was during a sorrowful time. He bought a burial plot for his beloved wife, Sarah. As you study Abraham's life, he had to leave the old behind in order to embrace the new. He had to initially believe what God had revealed to him, and learn to trust and follow the leading of His direction to his final destination. We also know he took a detour to Egypt during a famine.

It is important to point out that Abraham's initial test of faith was to simply go in the direction ordained by God. However, each point of obedience enlarged him in his faith. When it came time to offer his precious son as a sacrifice, he was prepared to do so in confidence. He had thoroughly been prepared to pass one of the greatest tests of faith recorded in the Bible.

The other aspect about faith is that the test and lessons that must be learned or reinforced are always the same. Will you believe His Word even though nothing makes sense? Will you trust His character and ways even though nothing is going right? Will you maintain your footing on His eternal promises when wrong seems to be triumphing over righteousness? Or, will you succumb to the overwhelming circumstances that challenge your claims and commitment towards God, allowing unbelief to pull you down into the endless abyss of hopelessness and despair?

As with all faith experiences, we have clearly been tested. As in the past, we have chosen to remember that God never makes a mistake in the

## GIANTS AND MOUNTAINS

By Jeannette Haley

You know, right now I must confess that I am not in the mood to write about giants or mountains, but what has “mood” got to do with reality? The fact is, we all face our own personal “giants” and “mountains” as we travel through this world. I realize that through the years much has been taught, written, and preached on the subject of giants and mountains and the spiritual application to our own lives. However, until we reach our eternal home, there will continue to be various giants and mountains that we must face, not only in a personal and intimate way, but also on a much grander scale as the world suffers the last stages of its “birth pangs” prior to the return of Christ to set up His kingdom.

In our own lives, our latest “adventure” of packing it all up and moving to northern Idaho has, in many ways, reminded me of the battle against giants and mountains. Satan always has his giants in place—those people who possess both position and money have the power with which to oppose and oppress, while the literal physical obstacles looming before us are the mountains that must be climbed and conquered. It’s been our experience through the years that there is no shortage of giants, or mountains, for as soon as you (with the help of God) conquer one giant or mountain, instead of fair winds and smooth sailing, you find yourself facing more giants and mountains. It’s all very exhausting, as I am sure you so well know.

Through this latest mental, physical and spiritual “stretching” GSM has gone through, thoughts of Caleb (along with Joshua and David) have come to mind. What powerful examples they are of how to approach and conquer giants and mountains. While they may have possessed grim determination and physical exertion, their success was based on their entire consecration to the Lord. Caleb expressed this when he declared, “I wholly followed the LORD



my God” *Joshua 14:8b*. In *Numbers 32:11, 12* the LORD promised Caleb and Joshua that they would see the land which He swore unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob because they had wholly followed Him.

What does it mean to wholly follow the Lord? The answer is through love, obedience, trust, prayer, and repentance. These are the five necessary attributes of righteous motivation. Concerning love, *Deuteronomy 6:5*, says, “*And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*” *Psalm 119:2* reveals the secret of true obedience, “*Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.*” *Proverbs 3:5* tells us the essence of trust that is acceptable to God, “*Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.*” In regard to prayer, *Jeremiah 29:13* declares, “*And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*” Finally, true repentance is revealed in *Joel 2:12* thusly, “*Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.*” Therefore, if we approach giants and mountains with a fainting, half-hearted, hard, unbelieving, or rebellious heart, we cannot overcome and gain the victory or achieve our goals.

Caleb gives us a powerful example of a man who knew, believed, and served the Lord. Consider that Caleb (and Joshua), because of the unbelief of the children of Israel, were forced to spend at least 40 years of their lives wandering in the wilderness before they were able to receive their inheritance. Can you imagine spending four decades of your life in a wilderness because of the unbelief of others? One could fully understand if both of these valiant men had given up out of sheer mental, emotional, and physical exhaustion. Instead, they stood strong in their confidence in God and His promises. Caleb even declared to Joshua, “*And now, behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the LORD spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day*

*that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in*” *Joshua 14:10-11*. What a gallant man! No one would have blamed Caleb if he had decided to retire, kick back, and spend the rest of his days in leisure activities.

Caleb, however, wasn’t ready to abandon the vision that had carried him through the howling wasteland for so many years. He desired to see the Lord’s will carried out, to be productive, to make his life count for eternity. Caleb wasn’t interested in the vanity of this world. His burning desire was to be in the center of God’s will and purpose, not to sit in the safety of the sidelines as a spectator. He went on to say, “*Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said*” *Joshua 14:12*.

Consider for a moment, and picture in your mind’s eye this elderly, yet strong, determined man asking Joshua’s permission to take on a mountain full of giants. How many of us, after a very prolonged time of trials and tribulations, drudgery, and hardship would beg for a mountain full of giants to conquer? Caleb truly believed what “*the LORD said.*” That is the key to victory—knowing what the Lord has said, and believing it. We read in *Joshua 15:14*, “*And Caleb drove thence the three sons of Anak, Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmi, the children of Anak.*” Sheshai means “princely;” Ahiman means “brother of the right hand,” and Talmi means “brave.” Thus, Caleb in the strength of the Lord, brought down the ruling principality along with his strong and brave brothers. Nothing could intimidate or hinder the faith that Caleb possessed in the Lord and His Word.

Through the years of our own particular journey we have encountered our own brand of “giants” and have encountered more “mountains” than I care to think about. To me, those who have withstood us, come against us, tried to destroy us, use and abuse us, and hinder us are “giants.” Such people may not have been of great physical stature, but

they certainly possessed certain abilities (usually of demonic origin) to cause dissension, division, depression, distress, and destruction financially. Such giants can only be brought down through much prayer and spiritual warfare.

Unlike giants which are alive and operating in the flesh, mountains are problems that challenge us simply because we are limited to a physical body in a physical, material world. To me, two of the major elements that make up mountains are financial and physical woes. Add to that the stresses of everyday living, with all of the problems (great and small) that present themselves, and you end up with a mountain in front of you that seems too great to climb over. As Christians, we know that both giants and mountains are overcome by faith—even the faith of a “mustard seed.” Overcoming giants also requires spiritual warfare, prayer, and wisdom, while mountains usually demand physical strength, endurance, and determination.

On the other hand, the truth is we are merely human. We become tired, weak, and discouraged, especially in prolonged battles that involve suffering, loss, and hardship. We eventually become weary with it all and reach the end of our own strength; and, when that fails, it is easy to feel hopeless, helpless, defeated, and depressed. It is at this point of weakness that Satan begins planting doubts in our mind such as, “You wouldn’t be in this situation if you were in God’s will; God doesn’t love you anymore or He wouldn’t allow you to suffer; God doesn’t care if you end up alone and forgotten; God is punishing you for being a failure; God’s promises are for others, not you; Things will never improve for your life, and everything you’ve done is in vain.” On and on it goes, depending on a person’s point of vulnerability because Satan knows that if we buy a lie, we will be rendered ineffective against the giants and mountains in our lives. Hebrews 12:3 tells us to “consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds”.

This is when we must remember our Rock and our Tree. That is, the

Rock of our Salvation, and the Cross. Concerning the Rock, this is the Rock upon which Jesus said we would be safe and established if we would build upon it by hearing and doing His sayings (See Matthew 7:24-27). Consider Hanna’s prayer, “*There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God*” 1 Samuel 2:2. What a powerful prayer of faith and confidence! King David spoke unto the LORD in Samuel 22:2-4, 47, “*The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence. I will call on the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation.*” “*For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God*” Psalm 18:31? “*Unto thee will I cry, O LORD my rock; be not silent to me: lest if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit*” Psalm 28:1. David also declared, “*He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved*” Psalm 62:2 and 6. (See also Psalm 94:22.)

The Apostle Paul told us to “*put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*” Ephesians 6:11. Paul knew that it would require the “whole armour of God” in order to remain standing. He said, “*Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand*” Ephesians 6:13. Can anyone argue that we aren’t living “in the evil day?”

As you study the whole armor of God, note how the tree (cross) has opened up the way for us to be able to arm ourselves with truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, and the Spirit so that we can stand against the giants of “*principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*” Ephesians 6:12b. Concerning truth, remember that Jesus, the Word made flesh, is the truth; God’s Word is truth; we are sanctified by the truth of God’s Word.

(See John 1:1-5; 14:6; 17:17; 18:37). Truth will remain when all else fails, falls, and fades away.

It is impossible to overcome the giants and mountains in our lives without truth, yet people perish (are eternally lost) because they refuse to receive a love of the truth. (See 2 Thessalonians 2:10, 11). Through the years we have dealt with countless individuals who could not receive the truth because, for a variety of reasons, they wanted to believe what they wanted to believe. Lies, delusions, false religions, and philosophies all begin with a false light that deceives those who are seeking for something “more,” or “something beyond” the written Word of God. Curiosity, unbelief, intellectualism, pride, and indoctrination are some of the reasons people reject the truth, and seek to establish their own “truth.” However, there can only be one truth, and without it, man eventually comes to a dark pit of delusion, disorder, darkness, disappointment, despair, demonic influence, and death.

In the Revelation of Christ, He said of Himself, “*And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true...*” Revelation 3:7a; And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: *These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God*” Revelation 3:14a. How do we know those who are of the truth? Jesus declared, “*But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God*” John 3:21. Those who are true worshippers of God worship Him in “*spirit and in truth*” (See John 4:23, 24.) How do we know what is true? Jesus said, “*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you*” John 16:13, 14. Jesus told Pilate, “*... To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice*” John 18:37.

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route He leads us. He is able to turn what has been intended for evil into good. We also believe and know that God does all things well. He never has, nor will He ever, make a mistake. He will never leave His people without recourse or a way out. His faithfulness towards us is abiding and sure.

And, where does faith lead His followers? It is clear they lead to God's promises coming to fruition. Abraham, along with his descendants, were led to the Promised Land. According to *1 Peter 1:9*, faith will lead the Christian pilgrim to his or her full inheritance of salvation. Where did it lead us? We now reside with beautiful mountains and trees before us and the beauty of the Pend Oreille River behind us. However, we are aware that God did not bring us here to simply enjoy the beauty of the countryside, but to be prepared to do His bidding in whatever way He opens the door of ministry for us. Once again, we are faced with the test of faith. We cannot see what He has in mind for us, but we can trust that He will bring it to completion. The key for us is to continue to believe enough that we remain faithful, and trusting enough that we remain open and available to carry out His marching orders.

Faith has taught us that it will lead us into the place of God. It reminds us that we are simply strangers in this world and pilgrims in our journey. We may stop along the way to do His bidding, but the ultimate goal of genuine faith is to lead us into the fullness of God's eternal glory. It is in His glory that the promise of our faith will be fully realized: *"For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed"* (*Romans 10:11*). †



**NEW ADDRESS FOR GSM  
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What if we reject the truth of God's Word? Jesus warned, *"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day"* *John 12:48*. How do we know that God's Word is really the truth? Jesus said, *"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"* *Matthew 4:4*. The Word of God is how we live, the rock upon which we build our lives, and the sword of truth with which we overcome the "giants" that defy us.

The next piece of armor is the breastplate of righteousness. This righteousness is the righteousness of Christ. In and of ourselves, we have no righteousness that is acceptable to God. (Read the parable of the marriage of the king's son, *Matthew 22:1-14*.) The proper wedding garment in this parable is the "robe of righteousness" that only those who have been "washed in the blood of the Lamb" can wear. Any other "garment" consists of our own efforts at being "good," or "righteous." This type of "garment," regardless of how lavish it may be is fashioned from our own works and efforts and remains as filthy rags before a holy God, and is totally unacceptable to Him as Cain discovered so long ago. *Philippians 1:11* says, *"Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."*

The "gospel of peace" is what our feet are to be wearing; that is, this is what gives us sure footing to keep us standing upright and strong. Gospel means "good news" and that good news is that God has provided the way through His Son for us to be reconciled to Him—to have peace with Him. How can we possibly fight in confidence against the adversary if we have not been properly reconciled to God? There can be no peace with God outside of His Son, Jesus Christ. *Romans 5:10* declares, *"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."*

Next in our armor is the shield of faith. *"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked"* *Ephesians 6:16*. How important is faith?

*"But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith"* *Galatians 3:11*. *"But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"* *Hebrews 11:6*. Many people have faith in their faith; faith in their doctrines; faith in themselves and their works; faith in their philosophy; faith in what they "confess" or "visualize" or faith in a myriad of other things (which is unbelief and idolatry). The definition of real faith according to God is, *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"* *Hebrews 11:1*.

To "live by faith" means that regardless of the giants we must face, or the mountains we must climb, God is true, His Word is truth, and the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth, and comfort us. Faith is the undefeatable shield against the fiery darts (lies and slander) of the wicked one and his emissaries. The one thing that Satan seeks to destroy is our faith, because if he can destroy our faith, then we will, through unbelief, deny the Lord and bring destruction upon our souls. (See *1 Peter 1:7*; *Job 1, 2*.) *"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith"* *1 John 5:4*.

Two of the most important pieces of our spiritual armor are *"the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"* *Ephesians 6:17*. Of course the helmet protects the head. Our minds must be stayed on Christ, who is our salvation. However, being human, it's so easy to fill our minds with the things of this temporal world, ourselves, and other vain pursuits. This verse also defines what our sword is which brings us back to Spirit and truth.

Of course we are to "pray always", in the Spirit, and watch. Thus, our victory comes, not because we are anything in and of ourselves to slay giants and conquer mountains, but because of the Rock of our salvation. The key to possessing overcoming authority and power is summed up in *Revelation 12:22*, *"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony: and they loved not their lives unto the death."* This is how to "wholly follow the Lord." (*Next page*)

Finally, the Bible reveals the temptations, sufferings, weaknesses, and moments of despair and depression suffered by many of God's servants through the centuries. Yet, these people of faith discovered that their real strength did not lie with themselves, but with the One who causes us to declare with the Apostle Paul, *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"* *Philippians 4:13*. When Paul sought the Lord to remove his "thorn in the flesh," Jesus spoke to him and said, *"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness"* *2 Corinthians 12:9*. Therefore, if we put forth the impression that we are always strong, always "on top of it," and always victorious over giants and mountains in our own strength, who is receiving the glory? God forbid that we should touch His glory! *"He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord"* *1 Corinthians 1:31b*. Amen! †

## RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

### LAST DAYS

**Q:** *Are all the present events that are happening around the world a matter of signs or do they signal consequences and God's judgment or wrath?*

**A:** This is a very good question. To be honest with you, I believe the present incidents happening in the world fall into at least three categories. Each category requires a different response on the part of God's people. For this reason it is important to discern the season or time we are in, or are about to enter. Jesus was clear that we would be able to discern the times if we care to do so.

According to Matthew 24, many of the events such as wars and earthquakes are signs of the times we are living in. Such times serve as warning signs. These warnings are calling God's people to be sober and prepared and ready for the times of trouble the world is about to experience. We are not to be caught off guard or asleep, but watching, praying, and waiting for the Lord's leading, prompting, or coming. The initial signs are described as what a woman experiences when about to give birth. It is a grave time of intense struggle and

travailing to bring about the final results. It entails a struggle that brings one to the abyss of death in order to bring forth new life.

At this time I also believe we are seeing consequences brought on by the fruits produced by the evil practices and root systems of the world. These roots have been growing under the cover of darkness, but now their fruits are blatantly coming to the light. The Bible is clear that in whatever state a matter is sown, it will be reaped accordingly. There is no life that will come out of such evil. Bad trees can only produce lifeless and poisonous fruits. Eventually, such wickedness will turn on itself and bring everything to utter ruin that is part of its current.

Meanwhile, the fruit of such wickedness appears to be consuming everything around it. We can see this within the wicked plans and operation of many of the leaders in our government. It is clear that the financial collapse, the loss of authority and respect as a nation, and the lawlessness that has greatly escalated in our communities are the fruits of the insane, unethical, and immoral philosophies and practices of our leaders. Such consequences will affect the just and the unjust alike. However, as God's people, we must prayerfully identify with the conditions that are being represented by the consequences. We must not only humble ourselves before God to seek mercy, but we must be ready to repent in sorrow and dismay. In such periods, it is not time to party, rejoice, and arrogantly claim such matters will not touch our lives. Consequences of this nature will most assuredly touch our lives, and like the prophet Daniel, we must be ready to honestly identify with it in order to properly respond.

Finally, judgment can also be identified in these happenings. Judgment and consequences walk hand in hand. Consequences are a form of judgment. However, there are other types of judgments. Judgment points to a separation in a matter as it brings contrast between wickedness and righteousness. In a sense, judgment defines the line between light and darkness, forcing people to choose which side they will ultimately serve on. In such judgment there are no

gray areas of indifference or compromise.

There are two conditions that will bring on the latter judgment: wrong attitudes towards Israel and moral deviation. If any nation or people have a wrong attitude towards Israel, they will stand cursed. Eventually, a curse's existence will immerge, causing total mayhem and despair for the nation or people. Moral deviation also brings people under curses. If moral deviation is preferred and declared as being righteous, and righteousness as being evil, the land will eventually respond by spewing the people out in complete revulsion. For God's people the choice is clear, we must always choose the side of righteousness regardless of how unpopular it may be. We must be sure that the light (life of Christ) in us shines brightly.

When I study the signs of the times, I realize that Jesus was warning us of the consequences and judgments that would signal a time of great trouble. When you read Paul's moral description of the days in 2 Timothy 3:1-7, it is easy to understand why such consequences and judgments would be present and abound.

We are told the time of God's wrath that will be unleashed against all disobedience in Revelation 6:13-17. It is important to point out that during the great time of trouble (or tribulation) man's wrath, Satan's wrath, and God's wrath will be unleashed. Man's wrath results in death, Satan's wrath in utter destruction, and God's wrath ends in judgment and purging.

### SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE

I perceived how that it was impossible to establish the lay people in any truth except the Scripture were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue. - William Tyndale (c. 1494 - 1536) was a 16th century scholar and translator who became a leading figure in Protestant reformism towards the end of his life. In 1535, Tyndale was arrested by church authorities and jailed in the castle of Vilvoorde outside Brussels for over a year. He was tried for heresy, strangled and burnt at the stake. The Tyndale Bible, as it was known, continued to play a key role in spreading Reformation ideas across Europe. †