

# GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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

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## SPIRITUAL SURVIVAL

It Is...

Part 9

By Rayola Kelley

If you ask me what I would consider to be the biggest challenge for people to survive in these days, my answer may surprise you. To me the biggest challenge to survive is reality.

Last month we talked about the tsunami of deception that is sweeping the world. The reason deception is so attractive is because reality is rarely desired by the flesh, pleasing to the taste buds, and comfortable to the selfish disposition. However, the definition I use for reality is that it is what it is. We can try to change it, ignore it, adjust it, or control it, but it will remain what is so. Reality is what something may be, but a love for the truth allows one to honestly face reality in order to come to terms with how to survive it. In truth there is a solution that not only gives hope, but it will show a way out or through a matter.

This brings us to the state of things. Until the last decade, many Americans have had the luxury of not having to face the harsh reality of life. It is only the intrusion of some type of loss and death that has caused Americans to realize that every person is in an unseen current that he or she cannot control. Granted, the current that runs against the bows of our diverse "boats of life" may vary, but the types of waves that we encounter on the ocean of life are the same. They may hit us differently and bring destruction to different parts of our lives at varying intervals, but never-



theless, they are the same. After all, the waves of life do not distinguish from class, race, or age, for life is what it is.

It is because life is what it is that many people in America find themselves struggling with the reality of the days we are living in. In their former fanciful realities it was easy to harbor fairytale notions about life, while ignoring the storm clouds on the horizon caused by a breakdown of the family, a blatant moral decline, and a caustic political environment.

I was aware of such immature fanciful notions in my younger adult life. My immature philosophy was that in the end all would turn out well. Even though I knew storms would come and go, I felt they would not be able to touch the core of what I valued or perceived as being important. I concluded that I could take the world on and change it in spite of the bumps in the road.

In reality, I was an unrealistic optimist. My optimism rested on sentimental hogwash that the hardness of life touched others, but somehow I was one of its favorites or elite and my fragile world would survive unscathed. I would somehow avoid the devastation that waves of challenges cause, and the cycles of life that could bring death and destruction my way. In a sense, I saw everything through a romantic frame of reference.

What I have learned through the years is that the waves of life have their way of stripping individuals, such as myself, of sentimental hogwash, bringing each of us to face the rocky shores of reality. In the past, I have struggled to keep from crashing against the formidable shores of reality in order to maintain my fantasy about life. Although at times I felt I had prolonged the inevitable, I realized that I could never stop the forces of life from slamming me against the harsh boulders of realism.

Due to my immaturity, I did not

realize at the time that my inward character was not only being tested, but it was being exposed. As my real character was being unveiled by reality, I had the shocking discovery that I had no real character. It was a form of outward character, but it had no real inner substance to maintain the person that I thought I was or hoped to be.

It took some harsh reality checks before I wisely concluded that the waves of life were intent on pushing me towards the shorelines of my destiny, where my silly notions would be flung against the rocks where they would be ripped to shreds, while character would be forged in me. It was when the foolishness of my notions were shattered that I learned the most important lessons of life. As I have shared in the past, there are only three of them, but they must constantly be reinforced even in calm waters.

They are 1) there is a God, 2) we need Him to save us, and 3) nothing makes sense outside of Christ. It is clear that only a fool will deny in his or her heart that there is a God. It is also a harsh reality that man in his self-sufficiency sees no need for God until life knocks him to the ground and begins to bury him under a pile of the useless rubbish consisting of nonsensical hopes, dreams and pursuits. It is from the pit of desperation that man begins to seek God to intervene. And, finally as the world becomes more insane, nothing makes sense except Jesus, the Son of the Living God.

The world is constantly revealing its madness. Some are mad for power, while others are obsessive about money, and some have become fixated towards material possessions. It is for these reasons that the revelation of Jesus alone can bring a semblance of order and hope in the midst of such lunacy.

The truth is, the currents of life and the storms of the world are escalating as mankind rushes headlong towards the climax of this age. The formidable

storm clouds are no longer on the horizon; rather, they are upon us. The winds are carrying the gale forces that point to judgment. Before it is over with, every foundation will be shaken, all worldly governments will be brought down into utter defeat by an unseen hand, and the unbelieving, despots, and infidels will know God's wrath is about to consume them in the fiery ovens.

The question we must answer as we face the angry waves of this present age, the destructive rocky cliffs of judgment, and the unmerciful shorelines on the horizon is, are we ready and prepared to stand? As believers, we know that all that is unfolding in the Middle East and throughout the world has been prophesied in God's Word. As those who stand steadfast because of His Word, we must be realistic about the signs of the times. The signs are telling us where we are in this present age. Granted, we can hope that we will be spared or wish away the momentum of what is happening. We can selfishly pray it will happen to the next generation or we can ask God to stay the inevitable, but nevertheless, it is what it is. Prophecy must be fulfilled for it is what it must be for God to carry out His eternal plan of redemption and fulfill His promises.

The reality of this present age is that we are living in the last generation. We have the blessed hope before us, but we also have the great travail that will produce the culmination of monumental, unspeakable wickedness that the Bible refers to as the mystery of iniquity. This mystery has been in the working since Satan took dominion of this present world. It has been planted and sown in darkness, but in each age it has made various types of appearances through godless philosophies, tyrants, and dictators. However, an unseen hand has kept it from coming to full bloom, and whether we like it or not, it is again being unveiled to make another final appearance. The signs declare that it is time for it to come to fruition. When it does, it will be judged by the righteous Judge of heaven. It will not only be completely defeated, but it will be rooted out.

Meanwhile, as Christians, we must brace ourselves to face the re-

ality of our times. These are precarious and ugly times that we live in. The reality of this time is frightening and overwhelming. It could cause the strongest heart to collapse in utter fear. Even though we have the hope of Jesus' soon return, we do not know what we will have to face and endure until He appears.

For example, according to my initial understanding about the days we live in we were not supposed to be here to witness some of the events we are now seeing on the horizon. Because of some of the popular teachings concerning the end days, I fear some religious people are going to fall away from their real source of hope, Jesus. We know Jesus is coming back and our hope must be in the person and not events. We must cling to the immovable Rock instead of grabbing at the various "winds of doctrine" that appear to be failing to hold true in the contrary waters of testing.

The reality of the time we live in is, it is what it is, and until we honestly face it, we cannot be prepared to endure it until we put off this body and walk through the door of glory. Whether it be through the door of death, or meeting Jesus in the clouds, we must be ready to face what comes at us.

The first thing we must do to prepare to face the present is to get rid of fanciful notions about the world we live in. So much of our unrealistic emphasis is about being able to selfishly live above personal conflict, slide through discomfort, and live in denial about tough times so that we can feel good about our particular life. I am sure Abraham would declare that it was not easy for him to leave his home and relatives in obedience to God. Joseph found no joy in being rejected by his brethren as they sold him into slavery. Not only did he experience the bitterness of rejection, but he was falsely accused and went to prison. I am sure it was not fun for Noah to build the ark under the watchful eye of the mocking, and with the speculation of the unbelieving, knowing that the whole of his generation was under a death sentence. Clearly, Moses felt overwhelmed with his new role as leader and deliverer of Israel. What about David being on the run from Saul, and I sure that Jesus' ordeal leading up to

Calvary was not fun, nor did Paul feel good about his zealous attempts to destroy the new Church and the persecution and trials that followed his conversion. However, each of these individuals realized it was what it was. You cannot change *what was* without first accepting the reality of it. You can only face *what is* as you realize that life is not here to bow down to you, and you can only impact *what will be* by making the right decisions in light of eternity.

Now comes our relationship with the world. The world produces its own form of reality. It is true that we have a certain dependency on the world around us. However, when we strip away much of our dependency, we must acknowledge that it has nothing to do with our spiritual well-being; rather, it is about maintaining some type of vain lifestyle that has no eternal purpose to it.

I cannot begin to tell you the number of people who refuse to face present reality because they desire to hold onto unhealthy aspects of their present life. Even though some of these individuals are Christians, they will not let go of their fanciful notions about life. They become anxious, angry, and mean-spirited as they attempt to secure their life here. Sadly, they sacrifice their relationships, testimonies, and credibility as they chase after the illusive, the useless, and the ridiculous.

The truth is, the abundance of America is almost gone. This is the other reality we must honestly face. Life as we once knew it has forever changed. We cannot let the currents take us into the deep, miry waters of wickedness, but we must be realistic about what has happened to America and why we are in such a mess.

As Americans, we have bragged about the type of nation we were according to the vision of our founding fathers without facing the people we have become. I must mention that this indictment against America must be more so leveled at the Church. It seems that much of what I call the visible Church is going apostate because it has compromised with almost every aspect of the world including the recent unholy agreement with Islam. This state in the Church was also prophesied in Scripture. As a result, many of the sheep who have been involved in

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## THE QUESTION

By Jeannette Haley

And, there I was, innocently bouncing happily through my ordinary day, kind of like the Duracell pink bunny, when somebody asked *the question*. Shocked into a frozen silence, no doubt my widened eyes and dropped jaw gave mute evidence that my brain had just gone into the blank zone. Maybe “blank zone” doesn’t quite do it justice. No, I’d say it was more like my mind got sucked into a black hole in space.

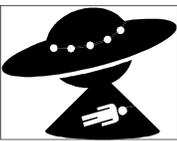
To prove my point, I can’t even correctly recall who asked me *the question*; however, the incident itself is still floating around in its own little orbit, taunting me every time it manages to flit past my consciousness. If I could only have had enough suave intelligence to blurt out some classy answer such as, “I dunno,” that would’ve been good enough. But, oh no. Being about as bright as the dumb bunny aforementioned, I had to try and explain my answer to *the question*.

That was mistake number one. In fact, if I had simply ignored *the question* in the first place, I may have risked appearing rude; but, rudeness may, in some aspects, be far preferable to the alternative. After all, rudeness can be overlooked. Well, at least once. Perhaps the person really didn’t hear *the question*. I am stone deaf on one side you know. And, everybody has their “off days,” so perhaps that would justify being rude. Besides, ignoring *the question* is definitely not as rude as flat out stating, “That is none of your business!”

The problem is, in my case the answer to *the question* falls somewhere in the gap between ignoring it altogether, and slapping someone with the “None of your business” quip. Besides, people, being what they are, (and that includes myself as well) will automatically dive to the bottom of the pond to try and find what terrible secrets lie hidden in the mud that the person never, ever wants anybody to know. However, that not being the problem in my case where *the question* is concerned, I had to come up with an appetizing answer. Besides, being told that something is “none of your business” simply serves to wake

up the curiosity of others who have never really given much thought to “your business” in the first place. Thus, with my brain in “park” and my mind in “drive” I aimed for the middle of the road.

I recall instinctively knowing that the person who asked me *the question* enjoyed a spicier “life menu” than I did. His taste pinnacled in terrain I had only viewed on TV from the safety of my spot on the couch, and his appetite for adventure and action ranged far beyond the outer reaches of my limited “culinary life radar.” Nevertheless, *the question* had been asked, and it remained silently suspended in the air like an alien spacecraft with its unbearable spotlight aimed at me. There



was nowhere to run, nowhere to hide. It was time to come up with an honest and truthful answer to *the question*.

Desperately hoping my brain would thaw out from its trip into outer space, I tried to flip through the pages of my mental English dictionary, searching for adjectives that would somehow, some way rescue my feeble attempts at describing a “meat and potatoes” existence in mouth-watering terms. By this time, resentment at *the question* began to claw its way up my spine like an angry cat claws its way up a tree. After all, it wasn’t fair, given my age. Maybe fifty years ago I might have had a better shot at answering *the question*; on second thought, probably not.

Why do most of us want to appear “normal” by the world’s standards? In my case, it’s simple: I fear rejection, and fear being misunderstood; therefore, being cornered by *the question* was a perfect opportunity for me to suffer both. You see, *the question* contains the dreaded, and most often exaggerated “E” word. That word is, *excitement*. By now you may have correctly guessed that *the question* is “What do you do for *excitement*?”

I suppose the “E” word means different things to different people, but, when *the question* originates from a person of the world, you have a general idea of what his or her idea of excitement is. Since the Bible tells us in no uncertain terms that all liars end up in the lake of fire, there was no way I could compete at the top of the “E” lad-

der by spinning a yarn that included bungee jumping, sky diving, ultimate skiing and snowmobiling in avalanche country, deep sea diving, big wave surfing, alligator wrestling, car racing, four-wheeling, attending every sporting event there is, and traveling to exotic places that hate white American women. Even though I live in northern Idaho, I don’t fit in with the campfire group made up of hunters, fishermen, hikers, explorers, trappers, and survivalists whose experiences are the stuff of legends. Just for the record, some of my ideas of excitement are having time off to read a well-written, inspirational book, walk the dog, beach comb, rock hunt, paint a picture, listen to good music, play the piano, write, watch an inspiring dvd, learn new things, or eat out. Listening to an anointed sermon such as Rayola preaches is also exciting to me, because it thrills my soul to hear truth, be personally challenged, and brought closer to God. That also goes for reading the Bible.

Perhaps *1 Corinthians 2:14* will help shed some light on the dilemma I find myself in whenever someone asks me *the question*. It is written, “*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*” So, how did I answer *the question*? The answer to that is, I recall answering it rather vaguely. Lame would be another way to put it. How does one find the words to explain to a non-believer or a nominal, carnal “Christian” the true excitement involved in the Christian’s “E” words? Worldly excitement is no comparison to these three “E” words—*eternal*, *spiritual experiences* and *enlightened*?

“Eternal” speaks of eternity. It is realm so far removed from the temporal existence on this earth that no mere mortal can ever fully comprehend or imagine what it is like, or what it involves. Any excitement that the world has to offer, no matter how splendid, wonderful or incredible is temporary and fleeting, while works that count for eternity will never vanish. “*Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work*

of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward" 1 Corinthians 3:13, 14. How can any earthly excitement compare with: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" Ephesians 2:4-6? What can be more exciting than knowing Him, "and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" Philippians 3:10? How can a person who looks to the world for excitement possibly understand the eternal joy that awaits those who cherish these words: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" Colossians 3:1-4?

"Experiences" in the spiritual realm may not bring physical thrills and chills, but there is no way to compare them with any excitement this material world has to offer. Spiritual experiences are on a much higher plane than physical and emotional experiences because they involve the spirit, and have a lasting and eternal impact on a person. The word experience occurs three times in Scripture. The first is in Genesis 30:27 where Jacob's father-in-law, Laban, said to Jacob, "I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake." Here was a man who was known as an opportunist to the core, yet he had learned from experience that the LORD had blessed him for Jacob's sake. Laban's experience far exceeded the vain experience that comes from worldly excitement and entertainment, but instead was priceless in its wisdom. The second can be found in Ecclesiastes 1:16, "I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great ex-

perience of wisdom and knowledge." In this verse we see that Solomon considered his experience of wisdom and knowledge as great. He recognized, respected, honored, and was thankful for the invaluable experience he had received from God. He prized it above any worldly experience he may have enjoyed in spite of the fact that he was the richest man that ever lived.

The third verse in which we find the word "experience" is in Romans 5:4, "And patience, experience; and experience, hope." Again, this word is in reference to spiritual growth, character, and godliness. Since experience, to the carnal mind, is joined at the hip with excitement, whenever the question is posed, the idea of experience is automatically assumed to be part of the equation, making it doubly hard to respond to the question. It's basically like two people trying to communicate in two separate languages.

What about the word "enlightened?" How can being enlightened possibly compare with the hair-raising excitement that death-defying stunts and sports offer? In Job 33:27-30 we read, "He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light. Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living." "Enlightened" in this verse means, "break of day, glorious, kindle, give, show light, set on fire, shine." What can be more exciting than being enlightened by the awesome reality and glory of God, who has the power to not only create life, but to bring it back from the grave? Psalm 18:28 carries this wonderful promise, "For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness." In Hebrew, enlighten in this verse means, "to glitter; to illuminate, lighten, cause to shine." Again we must ask ourselves what this world has to offer that is more exciting than being able to experience God's light penetrating the darkness that lies in our hearts and minds? How can you explain to an unbeliever the joy and wonder of experiencing God's words

when they give light to your understanding? "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" Psalm 119:130. In Ephesians we also read concerning enlighten, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 1:18-20)

Concerning the question, it usually comes at you when you least expect it, from someone who lives from one stimulating event, or high, to another. You can generally find such people traveling on the broad path of death and destruction that Jesus warns us of—people who have no clue, no interest, and no desire to find the narrow path of light and life for their wandering feet. Sadly, there is a growing number of people who consider themselves to be Christians who are on this broad path, not only in their self-serving lifestyles, but in their churches as well. What we find in most churches today is a staggering loss of interest in anything that goes beyond the "milk stage" of Christianity. People, especially the younger generations, are forsaking the "old time religion" for churches that offer excitement, entertainment, and extreme experiences bordering on the profane and the occult. Like drug addicts they live from one exciting high to another. Such people with a "form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" merely give Christ lip service, tacking Him on to their worldly lifestyles as they run from one form of vain excitement and entertainment to another.

It's one thing to occasionally enjoy worldly events that are neither "right" nor "wrong" in and of themselves, and quite another thing to live for them altogether. Since we, as followers of Christ, are called upon to redeem the time, for the days are evil, shouldn't we pause to ask the Lord where He wants us to spend our time, energy, and resources? After all, we

who truly belong to Christ have been bought with a price. We no longer belong to ourselves. *Galatians 5:24* states, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Therefore, if we would live satisfying lives that have the touch of eternity, spiritual experiences, and enlightened minds and spirits upon them, should we not strive for godliness with contentment which is great gain? (See *1 Timothy 6:6*)

In conclusion, even though unbelievers and carnal "Christians" may have exotic and titillating answers to *the question*, as believers, our excitement concerning the empty tomb of the risen Christ should far exceed anything they may temporarily feel. After all, what is more exciting than knowing that the crucified Lord of glory not only took our place on the cross, paying in full the debt we owe, but He also rose from the dead, so that we who are in Him by faith will likewise receive an immortal body at His appearing? What can the world offer that brings more everlasting joy than the knowledge that Jesus is coming soon to establish His kingdom on this earth?

If you are discouraged by the darkness and destructive events taking place in this world, and feel that your sacrifices of praise and good works are insignificant in the scheme of things, remember this, "*my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord*" *1 Corinthians 15:58*.

May your joy be full, may your cup run over, may He cause your face to shine, may you be anointed from above, and may the hope that is within you be a powerful witness to others of the resurrected Christ in your life. Amen. ✠



such organizations are scattering, searching for the real living waters of heaven.

The truth is, we as a people have let that which was valuable slide into a cesspool of immorality, while trying to maintain some image of greatness that can only exist when man is morally responsible to God and others. As a result, we flung our sense of purpose on the ever-moving waves of pleasure, traded our moral compass for the false promise of comfort and happiness, allowed our identity to be stolen by despots, and squandered our real heritage away on things that have no lasting or eternal purpose. Granted, we have been a benevolent nation, but in so many ways it had nothing to do with an inner charity that spoke of character, morality, and kindness. Rather, much of this benevolence has either been given from the wicked premise of social justice (a false gospel) or because some humanistic sentiment was aroused in us. It also appears that Americans gave because we had excess; however, will that benevolence still exist when the waves of judgment erode America's wealth into the angry waters of the world, dispelling it by the many currents of despotism and judgment?

Reality is hard to face, but for Americans, the luxury to avoid the inevitable is no longer. We are now being forced to face what has become because we did not properly confront what was. In essence, we are facing what has been sown for the past 100 years by the liberals, progressives, and Communistic influences of educators and government officials. With the merciful intervention of God, past generations recognized it and pushed it back. Each time these despots retreated back into their dark dens to reinvent themselves in such a way that the unsuspecting would buy their image and sell their soul to gain their wicked, self-serving goal for them.

As God's people, we must face what is in order to spiritually survive what is about to be. The only way we can face such harsh reality is in light of the great I AM. He is the beginning, the end, and the "in-between" of all matters. He knows what was, but He is in charge of what is, and will work

out what will be in light of what has been ordained in the courts of heaven. As the great Redeemer, He has addressed what was. As our Lord and Savior He addresses what is, and as our soon and coming King, Judge, and God, He will bring about what will be.

I am saying all of this because as I look at the events of today, I have had to stop and admit it is what it is. I can pray about what is, knowing that God's work is not done. I can push through the fear of what is about to be in order to come to a place of abiding rest and confidence in the Lord. I can know what will be in the future because of the sustaining promises of God.

As believers, we must deal in reality in order to face each day in lieu of embracing the hope of tomorrow. We are not of this present world; rather, we are citizens of an unseen kingdom that will be unveiled at the end of this age. It is at the point of reality that we can choose the way of faith as the fiery ovens of the age refines it. We can choose the way of self-denial in light of walking towards our fleshly demise to gain greater life. We can embrace what is in light of the glory that awaits us.

We must remember who we are in Christ. As we celebrate the victory of Resurrection Sunday, we must keep the promises of God ever before us. As we cling to the reality of our life in the Lord as to *what was*, we can stand in confidence that this is the beauty of our Christian life, heritage, and inheritance. This reality in the midst of great darkness must become our perspective in light of *what is* and our hope in light of *what will be*. It is from this premise that we will be assured of standing and surviving the present darkness as we endure to the end of the time of travailing and testing.

### QUOTABLE

"Wisdom may ensure that you make sound judgments, but righteousness ensures that you keep on the right path." - Rayola Kelley

"In every generation the number of the righteous is small. Be sure you are among them." - A. W. Tozer

"We fear men so much because we fear God so little. One fear cures another." "Great comforts do, indeed, bear witness to the truth of thy grace, but not to the degree of it; the weak child is oftener in the lap than the strong one." - William Gurnall

## RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

### HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU ARE SAVED?

**Q:** *How can one be sure he or she is saved?*

**A:** Salvation can be broken down into three aspects. They are: I was saved, I am being saved, and I will be saved. Salvation is an ongoing work that will be completed. It is for this reason that we are told to work out our salvation in fear and trembling (*Philippians 2:12*). Salvation is clearly not a matter of an intellectual understanding, but a heart revelation of what Jesus accomplished on the cross, and embracing its eternal hope on a daily basis as the way and truth to everlasting life (*John 14:5; Romans 10:9 & 10*). It is important to point out that Jesus *died for sin* so that we would not *die in sin*; rather we would *die to sin* in order to live unto God.

According to Paris Reidhead there are four tenses to salvation. When you combine the three aspects of salvation with the four tenses of it, you can somewhat begin to see a complete picture emerge. The four tenses of salvation are: the perfect tense is repentance, the past tense is justification, the present tense is sanctification, and the future tense is glorification.

Let us begin with the perfect tense of salvation. True repentance will turn you away from the ways of death to face what it means to possess life. As Jesus stated in *Luke 13: 3 & 5*, "Repent or perish." Repentance has to do with a complete change of mind, attitude, and conduct in order to come into agreement with what would be considered proper. In this case, we would come into agreement with God and His Word about our sin and His righteousness. Repentance from sin is not one-sided. In other words, we not only turn from sin in order to be saved from it, but we must also be ready to embrace what we must be saved unto. For example, we must be saved from the ways and judgment of sin in order to be saved unto the ways of righteousness. Clearly, the other side of repentance, in relationship to being saved from sin, is being converted to righteousness.

When one repents, it is to cease from an old way of life to receive, embrace, and possess a new life. Salvation is the essence of receiving Christ as the

solution to sin. By receiving Christ, we are actually given the gift of His eternal life. It is the life of Christ in us that stipulates that we have been justified by faith. When we receive the life of Christ, we are born again with the very breath of God, His Holy Spirit. It is the breath of the Spirit that causes the very life of Christ to pulsate through our inner soul. We will have an inner witness as to our spiritual status as children of God. We will no longer stand condemned in our sin, but we have been marked by a heavenly seal to receive an eternal inheritance (*Ephesians 1:11-14*).

As you can see, the past tense of salvation, justification, is received by faith. We choose to believe that God is true to His Word. We receive His promise and provision of salvation in our heart as truth. Keep in mind, salvation has to do with addressing the influence, workings, and activities of sin upon and in our lives. Even though we may struggle over past failures, we must choose that our present reality is justification. Justification addresses the past influences of sin and declares that they are no more. Because of redemption, we stand before God as if we have never sinned.

The present tense of salvation deals with the present workings of sin upon our lives. *Hebrews 6:9* tells us that there are things that accompany salvation. Sanctification is the work of holiness where we are being set apart by the Spirit of God to live unto God and serve Him in a way that is pleasing. It is important that I reiterate that we are not saved by "good works"; rather, we are saved unto good works that were ordained by God (*Ephesians 2:8-10*).

Sanctification is a matter of the Spirit working the very life of Christ in us. The more we learn of Christ, the more we will become like Him as we will take on His disposition of lowliness, His attitude of meekness, and His humble walk of obedience before the Father. We will become more uncomfortable with the profane, more bent towards the ways of righteousness, and more concerned about the lost. As our love for God grows, so will our love for the brethren develop and mature. We will become more so servants in our disposition as we become restless in our souls and home-

sick. In our restlessness we will learn to wait in expectation for the day in which all activities of sin will be forever silenced, and when we finally enter the door of glory to live with our Lord forever.

I have long been aware that there are believers who wonder whether they are saved. They do not feel any real assurance about their salvation. It is important to keep in mind that since the seal of salvation is unseen, we must believe we are saved by faith in what Jesus did on the cross, walk as if we are saved because it is the right thing to do, and know we are saved because the assurance of our salvation is based on the character, words, and promise of a loving, merciful God who never changes and is powerful and faithful to see a matter through to the end. †

### QUOTEABLE

A very great portion of modern revivalism has been more a curse than a blessing, because it has led thousands to a kind of peace before they have known their misery; restoring the prodigal to the Father's house, and never making him say, "Father, I have sinned." How can he be healed who is not sick, or he be satisfied with the bread of life who is not hungry? The old-fashioned sense of sin is despised.... Everything in this age is shallow.... The consequence is that men leap into religion, and then leap out again. Unhumbled they came to the church, unhumbled they remain in it, and unhumbled they go from it.—C.H. Spurgeon, 1882

Our critical faculties are given us for the purpose of self-examination, and the way to examine ourselves under the control of the Spirit of God is to ask ourselves—"Am I less sensitive than I used to be to the indications of God's will, less sensitive regarding purity, uprightness, goodness, honesty and truth?" If I realize that I am, I may be perfectly certain that something I have done (not something done to me) has seared my conscience. It has given me, so to speak, a bloodshot eye of the soul and I cannot see aright.—Oswald Chambers