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

REDEMPTION Part 8 MISSED OPPORTUNITY By Rayola Kelley

One of the spiritual truths I was reminded of recently is that people often miss opportunities because they do not discern the times they are living in. In God's kingdom, everything is brought about during an appointed time and season. This is why many people miss windows of opportunity. They do not realize that opportunities occur at specific times when everything has been made ready. The environment is right; the circumstances are in place to bring about a certain result.

When you study the concept of "appointed times", you realize that Jesus made an entrance into this world at an appointed time. The people of Israel had been waiting for Jesus to make His entrance for hundreds of years. When He did make it, it was not according to any real attempts on their part or based on their needs, but according to an appointed time. Can you imagine what the results would have been if Jesus had not come at the appointed time? Everything in history would not be in sync. It would appear as if everything surrounding Jesus was ahead of schedule or behind schedule, but nothing would be falling into place as far as the events or happenings taking place. For example, can you imagine the angels declaring Jesus' birth at any other time than the appointed time of His birth? Can you imagine the star shining, but pointing to an empty manger? Can you see shepherds going to a manger, only to find that the child had not been born or that they missed the event because He was located in a different place?

The children of Israel were given an appointed time in which they were to enter into the Promised Land. Everything that led up to the time had to be just right for them to possess their promises. Events were

in place, and as a people, they had been prepared to take their place as a nation. The time for entering in to possess the land, as well as reap the abundant harvest of it was ripe. They had come up to the very entrance of their promises, now they needed to enter in and possess them. They were so close, but in their hearts and minds, possession of the land was still far away. As a result, they failed to enter in at the appointed time. Within minutes, the door of opportunity slammed on them.

How could this have happened? Was God's redemption for naught? Was the appointed time too short or unexpected? Were the present events too unrealistic? What can we learn from the children of Israel in relationship to the time in which we live? Perhaps what stands before us in our present day is not the Promised Land, but an ark much like the one Noah prepared. Instead of a land of abundance, God may be providing an ark of safety where the door will be securely shut before judgment consumes all that is around us.

To me the urgency to recognize the time and age is clear. We are told that the age we live in will be marked by great deception, that if it were possible even the elect would be deceived. We live in a time much like Noah where perversion and wickedness have not only filled the cup of judgment, but are spilling over as evil becomes more apparent. We are also living in an age where man has clearly become the center of the world. In such a world, there is no consensus or desire for God. It will take every bit of resolve to avoid being sucked into such a world of vanity and foolishness.

As Christians, we must recognize the time, the instructions and the challenges in order to adopt an attitude of sobriety towards the time we live in and the willingness to follow the leading of God's Spirit in whatever way necessary to possess His promises. With this in mind, let us now consider what it will take to walk through doors

of opportunities to possess the promises of God.

Faith: We are clearly told in Scripture that only through faith and patience can we inherit the promises of God (*Hebrews 6:12*). Faith is active and points to a walk that will count all things as dung, or insignificant, in light of gaining the promises of God. It will recognize the opportunity afforded it because it has already believed that such a way has been provided; therefore, it is ready to respond in obedience once it receives the call to possess the promises or the inheritance.

We see such faith in the lives of Joshua and Caleb. They were the two spies out of the twelve that were sent into the Promised Land that were ready to possess their inheritance. To them, they did not see the obstacles before them concerning possessing their inheritance; rather, they were seeing the opportunity to go in confidence in their God finally to take possession of what they knew had been clearly designated and prepared for them. However, instead of being free to walk through the door of opportunity, these two men found themselves hitting a stone wall of unbelief. Unbelief will quickly cause small windows of opportunity to slam shut as people give way to the darkness of debate and logic as to why something is not possible in the present circumstances.

Failing to listen to reason: In spite of unbelief that plagued the ten spies, there were the two voices of reason that were trying to subdue the fear that was taking hold of those who were listening to the "so-called" voices of logic regarding the Promised Land. God desires to reason with us about our sins (*Isaiah 1:18*). All sins find their basis in unbelief. Unbelief refuses to agree with God's evaluation about something. In essence, people simply do not believe God about a matter regardless of what already has been clearly established by His Word and examples.

The initial manifestation of unbelief is fear. Fear makes itself apparent in a couple of ways. It begins with those small doubts that rise up and state, "Did

God really mean what He said?" These doubts give way to subtle accusations directed against the character or intent of God. "Can we trust God to do what He says?" "Is God big enough, caring enough and committed enough to pull the impossible off in regard to protecting, guiding and keeping us in what appears to be impossible odds, or is God setting us up to be destroyed as some big, cruel joke?" The only way to step through such fear and avoid its onslaught of false accusations is to choose to trust God regardless of the possible outcome. Like the people of faith in *Hebrews 11* who did not see such promises fulfilled in their lifetime, they still chose to believe that their real inheritance was not of this world, but of the next. Since their vision was fixed on the eternal, they were not distracted or caught up by the temporary. They had truly become sojourners in this world in order to possess the inheritance of the next that they were counting as worthy of all consideration. Job committed all matters of his overwhelming circumstances to God by declaring that even though God would slay him in his present situation, he would continue to trust Him in regard to that which would ultimately prove to be eternal (*Job 13:15*).

Lacking the foresight, and forgetting about the hindsight: The Bible tells us to forget what we thought was important in our former life in order to put our focus on the life that awaits us. The Apostle Paul counted the things of this world as dung and chose to remember that which was wrought by Jesus in order to press towards that which had been promised.

The children of Israel often chose to remember the temporary, thereby, losing focus of the blessings of God that were before them. They lacked the foresight or vision of going forward because they forgot the slavery from which God had redeemed them. Since they lacked the hindsight of the uselessness and death attached to their former life, they were not disciplined enough to possess the foresight of realizing their real life was before them, not behind them. As a result, they failed to remember their present status of being in the wilderness, a place that had

brought separation to the past, but offered no future that possessed promise or hope. Because they forgot where they came from, they forgot where they were, as fear clouded their vision to the life that awaited them.

This can be true for Christians. It is people's tendency to look backward, thereby, losing the necessary focus that will cause them to put the present in proper perspective. This will compel them to press through any obstacles before them as a means to possess the promises in front of them. When we, as God's people, fail to keep our foresight disciplined and our hindsight in the proper perspective, we can become lost in and to our present status. When we become lost in and to our present status, we will fail to realize that we cannot go back to that which is condemned, but we also will not enter that which promises life, hope and purpose. As we become lost to the way we must travel, the door of opportunity will become lost to us, causing us to become wanderers in a barren wilderness that will prove to be void of abundance and purpose. It is for this reason I appreciate Peter's response to Jesus when he asked if he would be like many of His other followers and turn back because of taking offense to His teachings. Peter's response showed hindsight, foresight and personal fortitude: "...Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God (*John 6:68b-69*).

Assumptions: The children of Israel assumed that God would afford them other chances, options or opportunities. Obviously, He had shown much leeway in the past concerning their insecure, rebellious actions. Granted, He had judged their idolatry, but their response in light of the Promised Land was not a matter of idolatry but uncertainty and confusion in regard to the obstacles in front of them. Surely, He would understand why they could easily give in to fear and debate the matter. Perhaps, they assumed that He would provide another way, or allow them to wait until they were more comfortable about confronting the present environment. We can only speculate what assumptions they were making concerning possessing their inheritance, but in such matters one can find the presence of assumptions.

It is not unusual to assume much about God, but in doing so we will ultimately put Him to a foolish test. We will make decisions and assume He will bless them. We will give way to what seems right and practical and assume His stamp of approval or blessings will naturally follow. However, such assumptions will put us at odds with God. We will find ourselves tasting the harsh bitterness of consequences as our assumptions prevent us from seeing the opportunities before us. We will assume our life and the promises of God will remain in sight as we decide to hide our fear behind indecision. However, in the end we may be allowed to see the promises of God from a distance, but we will never enter into their fullness because we missed the opportunity to inherit them according to the appointed time allotted us and the season of reaping that which had finally come to full maturity. This is why we are told that today is the day of salvation. Today is the appointed time to reap what has been made obvious and necessary by the present season that is upon us. However, if the door is closed there is no way in which we will be able to enter.

Presumptions: The final picture of missing opportunities is that of presumptions. In assumption, we assume that God will understand our logic and reasoning, but in presumption, we are presuming that if we show some type of acknowledgment that we were wrong and try to rectify it in some way, that we can reverse the consequences brought on us by unbelief and God will show us lenience. The truth of the matter is that once the door is shut, trying to open it is the same as trespassing in an area that is now off limits.

The people of Israel could not possess what had become off limits to them. They had no official claims or rights to the inheritance. In a sense they had squandered it away with their unbelief and disobedience. Clearly, they could not inherit the Promised Land without God's intervention.

God's redemption has afforded each of us a window of opportunity to possess our spiritual inheritance. The question is, how many of us are taking advantage of the different windows of opportunity to come into the place where we will realize the fullness of our inheritance? †

THE MOST DANGEROUS PEOPLE IN THE WORLD

By Jeannette Haley

If someone were to ask you who you think are the most dangerous people in the world, what would you say? Perhaps you might answer, "Atheists," or maybe "Muslims." Other options could most definitely be communists, Marxists, revolutionaries, Satanists, globalists, big government, and environmentalists, the Black Panthers, Satanists or even Obama. There is no doubt that all of these, and many other visible people and groups, are a very real threat to life, liberty, and the "pursuit of happiness" (or property). As the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, *"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come"* 2 Timothy 3:1.

This is a very important warning for the times in which we live—a warning that should grab our attention. What makes the time in which we live any more perilous than the previous ages that have come and gone since Adam? After all, there have been grievous catastrophes, plagues, famine, conspiracies, inquisitions, and wars. Humanity's cruelty to both man and beast is beyond comprehension, and is a subject that can drag any person who contemplates it for any length of time into a dark pit of depression and despair. The history of this world from antiquity to the present reeks with misery, destruction, suffering and death. So what makes the end days any more perilous than previous times?

"Well," you might be thinking, "Duh, Jeannette. Take a look at modern technology, nuclear devices, and weapons of mass destruction, germ warfare, electronic spy devices, satellite surveillance, and so forth..." While this is definitely a fact, there is yet another factor, and that is the culmination of evil in the heart of man. Couple that with a form of *religion*, and you have the most dangerous people on the planet. Before we go into detail on these people, let us consider God's explanation for the warning concerning perilous times, beginning with verse 2 of 2 Timothy 3 through verse 5, which states as follows: *"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 godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."

A closer examination of these traits reveals some interesting facts to consider. For example, *"For men shall be lovers of their own selves"* does not appear on the surface to be extraordinary. After all, every person since Adam has had love for self. However, in this verse, the word "lovers" is derived from the Greek word *philautos* which means "fond of self, i.e. selfish:--lover of own self." This fondness for self implies a deeply rooted priority. In such a person, it is the ruling factor in his or her disposition, where everything and everyone else is subjective to this ungodly self-love. In other words, there is no room in his or her heart or life for genuine, selfless, sacrificial love for anything or anyone else. In fact, such a consideration is never even remotely entertained because it is "beneath" them. This type of self-love is narcissist, and idolatrous because the person worships themselves. On occasion, they may give God lip service, but the fact is their heart remains cold and indifferent to the Lord of glory, and all that He has created. There is no room in such a person's world for anyone who fails to unceasingly adore and worship him or her. I am sure we can all find at least one example of this type of individual in our world today, and may God help us if that one example is staring back at us from the mirror.

Of course, people who love themselves in this manner need others to adore and worship them as well. As long as everyone around them agrees with everything they say and do, their "good guy" façade remains; however, should anyone dare to disagree with such a person, or fail to show them the proper "respect," they become treacherous.

It does not take a great deal of imagination to realize what treachery lies within the heart of such an individual. We read about them in magazines and newspapers, we see them on the television, and we know that such people are in the highest levels of government, as well as in powerful positions

in our society. Worse yet, we can find such lovers of self in churches as well—even behind the pulpit. Such love of self scorns humility as weakness, and walks hand in hand with the pride of life. Of such the Lord says, *"These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren"* Proverbs 6:16-19.

Please bear in mind that the self-esteem teaching that has saturated our society for years is this type of self-love that God warned us of and which He repudiates. What we need instead is self-respect. The difference between the two is that self-esteem translates as a high estimation of oneself rooted in pride itself. It is unmerited favor bestowed upon oneself by one's little god of *self*. Self esteem manifests as self-exaltation over others with no regard to *reality*, common courtesy and manners, let alone godly virtues. Self-respect, however, is an intelligent and realistic respect for one's life based on the knowledge of God. True self-respect is rooted in knowing God, having a relationship with Him through the Lord Jesus Christ, and understanding His design and plan for man. It is not *self-love*, but *respect for self*, or the *essence* of one's life out of the fear of and love for God. Furthermore, however, if a person lacks self-respect of this nature, he or she cannot properly respect and love others, whereas true self-respect is humble, teachable, reasonable, and of good character.

People steeped in self-esteem possess a puffed up, overrated view of self that assumes Jesus came because they are "worthy" or that there is something "good" within them that is redeemable. With such self-love, is it any wonder that so few people have come to true, saving repentance? Jesus said, *"I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish"* Luke 13:3.

This type of self-love is unreasonable, unbending, unyielding, and unbreakable. It is Satanic in nature, self-deceptive, and according to 2 Timothy 2:2, we find that covetous-

ness is also a product of this extreme self love. While covetousness has been part of the fallen disposition of man since the Garden of Eden, why would the Lord specifically list it as a sign of the end times? In Strong's Concordance, the usage of the word covetous is *philarguros*, which means "fond of silver (money) or avaricious. Avarice, according to my Webster's 1965 edition dictionary, means "excessive or insatiable desire for wealth or gain: greediness, cupidity." What is interesting is the meaning of "cupidity." The root of this word, "Cupid" is the god of love in Roman mythology, and cupidity is strong desire, lust, inordinate desire for wealth, avarice, and greed. Thus, we can conclude that this type of covetousness, which comes out of self-love, is extreme rather than "normal."

It is obvious that avarice, greed and lust have cast a shadow over the entire world, but can we find it in the church system? Concerning this, the Apostle Peter wrote of our days, and I quote: *"But there were false prophets also among the people, [before Christ] even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not"* 2 Peter 2:1-3. [Emphasis added.]

Using feigned words, covetous false teachers, lovers of themselves, (but not lovers of God), teaching false doctrines, offering false hope in order to build monuments to their god of lust and avarice, fleece the sheep (make merchandise out of them), and heap to themselves damnation. If you cannot see this happening in these times, then you need to cry out to God to heal you of your blindness!

Back to the third chapter of 2 Timothy, verse 3, we find the third manifestation of self-love, and that is "boasters." In the Greek, this word is *alazon*, which means "vagrancy, braggart, boaster. While we all associate vagrancy or vagrant with a person who wanders about from place to

place usually with no means of support, what is interesting is it also means, "Having a fleeting, wayward, or inconstant quality, having no fixed course." How fitting a description of many of our youth today! We can drive down any street in the town in which we live and see youth, hands shoved deep inside the pockets of their baggy pants, heads down, with glowering countenances, and usually hooked up to some electronic device, while being totally detached from their environment.

Concerning "braggarts," we have encountered many such people in our years of ministry, especially in the street missions. Rayola's sermons were routinely interrupted by rude braggarts who considered themselves to be the most brilliant men in the world. Of course, in reality, they knew nothing.

The next descriptive word in verse 3 is "*proud*." At first glance, one might wave this word off as being somewhat redundant; after all, the Bible clearly teaches about the pitfalls of pride, and conclusively teaches that it was the cause of Satan's fall. However, a closer examination of this word as used in this particular passage of Scripture, pinpoints the distinct essence of pride in these perilous times. This form of pride comes from the Greek word, *huperephanos* which means, "appearing above others (conspicuous), haughty." While some forms of pride can remain subdued or hidden from view through fake nobility while manifesting itself in different venues, this particular form of pride is "all out there" for the whole world to see. It is the essence of "*the proud look*," which God hates, and is Satanic to the core. Arrogance of this type is dangerous, implacable, cold, cruel, merciless, and vindictive, and is so blatantly obvious that no spiritual discernment is necessary.

It is no surprise to find "*blasphemers*" following on the heels of "proud" on God's list. After all, when men have inordinate self-love, are given over to avarice and greed, braggadocios and haughty, it would be unusual if they were not blasphemers as well. The Greek word in this verse is *blasphemos*. It means scurrilous, calumnious (against man), or specifically impious (against God) and railing. Scurrilous is defined as "using

or given to the language of low buffoonery; being vulgar and evil; low; containing low obscenities or coarse abuse." Here we have blasphemy on two fronts—against man, and against God. No doubt, you can think of more than one source of on-going blasphemy in the world today, on every level.

Following blasphemy is "*disobedient to parents*." It is appalling how disrespectful and disobedient children are these days to their parents. What is even more shocking are the growing numbers of children who murder their parents, and equally shocking is the victimization of elderly parents by their offspring. Jesus warned of this division in families. He said, *And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death"* Matthew 10:21. As one asks, "Why? How could this be?"

Perhaps the answer to these questions is contained in the next word, "*unthankful*." The Greek word is *acharistos*, and it means "thankless," or "ungrateful." When was the last time you saw a truly thankful child or adolescent, (or even an adult) who was thankful both for and to his or her parents, and thankful to God? The bitter fact of the matter is a person who is enamored with self, covetous, boastful, proud, and blasphemous, cannot be truly grateful or thankful for anybody or anything. If such a person does open his or her mouth on occasion and utter a phrase of praise or thankfulness to God, it amounts to nothing but mere lip service. What does such a selfish person know about true gratitude for the sacrifices made by his or her parents on his or her behalf? How could such an ingrate be filled with gratitude to God for His plan of salvation when he or she has never repented of his or her wretchedness and sin in the first place?

Now we come to "*unholy*." The Greek for this word is *anosios* and it means wicked. To be unholy means ungodly. Either a person belongs to God, walking after, and being led by, and filled with His Spirit because he or she belongs to Him, or he or she is lost in his or her sins. Either a person is born again, or he or she is not.

There are no in betweens. The Bible does not give us a “cushion” between the saved and the unsaved, even though we may have a natural tendency to believe that just because an unsaved person is not “holy,” neither are they lost. We all want to fudge the lines and think in terms of the “good” people somehow being spared of eternal judgment.

It all comes back to holiness. God is holy; therefore, He cannot receive unsanctified sinners into His presence. Christians today tend to think in terms of what is relevant to our modern times instead of standing on the eternal truths of God’s Word that never change regardless of what transpires in our culture or nation. If holiness is “outdated,” then by what standard do we hold people accountable? If holiness is not longer relevant, then when did the immutable God change? In addition, if God did somehow change and He is no longer holy, how can we trust in His word? If we diminish the holiness of God, ignore His attributes, and re-fashion Him into our likeness, then does it not naturally follow that we might just as well worship ourselves?

Moving on to verse 3, we read: *“Without natural affection.”* This means, “to cherish affectionately” as opposed to “hard-hearted towards kindred.” In other words, this type of affection is natural and normal as opposed to being inordinate, perverted, self-serving, or base. Is not the murder of innocent babies, the rise of euthanasia, and the disdain for one’s own children, and perverted practices (such as pornography) a lack of natural affection? We see lack of natural affection in the jihadists, the haters of Jews and Israel, the racists such as the Black Panthers and the Neo Nazis. We witness the mind-numbing lack of natural affection in the plans of the Globalist elite to exterminate over two-thirds of the world’s population through their homosexual agenda, abortion, wars, germ warfare (over populated areas, such as “chem trails”), toxic vaccinations, planned famines and other forms of genocide. These are perilous time indeed!

The next are the *“truce-breakers.”* This is an interesting word, which appears only once in the Bible. In the Greek it is “aspondos,”

which means, “without libation (which usually accompanied a treaty), i.e. truceless: implacable, trucebreaker.” This paints a picture (at least to me) of a person in a position of authority and power who is involved in making treaties with others, but who has no intention of keeping his word. Implacable describes such a person as “not capable of being appeased, pacified, or mitigated: unalterable.” This suggests that nothing can be presented in any manner whatsoever to such a temperamental individual that will change his, or her, mind.

You know the saying, “The accuser is the abuser.” Such are *“false accusers,”* our next category. Perhaps the Greek meaning of “accusers” may shock you, for it is “diabolos” and means, “Satan, false accuser, devil, slanderer.” Who and where are such people in our world today? We could start at the top of the scale where world rulers dominate the spotlight, then move on down through the different ranks of self-serving bureaucrats and politicians, the liberal news media, God-hating Hollywood actors, writers, bloggers, educators, ad infinitum. Slanderers are definitely not on the endangered species list. Sadly, they are in churches as well. No professing Christian should use his or her tongue as a slanderous weapon, bringing a reproach on the Gospel and shame upon him or herself.

Next, we have *“incontinent.”* In the Greek, this word is “akrates” and it means, “powerless, i.e. without self-control.” (And you thought it might mean a “leaky bladder” didn’t you?) All kidding aside, when you contemplate the ramifications of wicked people who lack any form of self-control, you begin to get a picture of unbridled violence, mayhem, chaos, and utter destruction. Such people have no conscience, and having lost all control of self, are being driven and controlled by demons instead.

“Fierce” aptly follows incontinent. The Greek word is “anemeros” and it means “savage.” In order for you to get a more complete understanding of the importance in understanding the broad scope of this word, here is a complete definition of savage: “Not domesticated or under human control; untamed; cruel, ferocious; uncultivated, wild; boorish, rude; uncivilized; primitive; barbarian, fierce; a brutal person; a

rude or unmannerly person; to attack or treat violently or brutally; to attack furiously (as by biting or trampling).” I think this definition of what we see in the world today is not only fitting, but needs no further explanation except to say that this type of person is likewise controlled by demons.

Our next category is, *“despisers of those that are good.”* According to Strong’s Concordance, this means “hostile to virtue.” Therefore, those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, and who are virtuous in that they live in obedience to His commandments, are the target of such hostility. One does not need to look far to see the vicious hostility growing against those who have a Christian testimony, and who take a stand for righteousness, and who expose and are against the evils of our age.

The list goes on in *2 Timothy 3:4*, *“Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.”* Thus, we see that men shall be betrayers, rash, inflated with self-conceit, lifted up with pride, and proud. On top of all this, they shall be false brethren and idolaters who love pleasures, more than they love God.

No doubt, at this point, you are able to identify many people in positions of great power and prestige who aptly fit every description given. In addition, you can likewise categorize those who are blatantly dangerous, and a very real threat to life, liberty and property. You realize that we are indeed in the latter days and *“evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” 2 Timothy 3:13.* However, do you also realize that the most dangerous people in the world are likewise *religious?*

We read in verse 5 of *2 Timothy 3*, this final and important summation of the traits belonging to the “lovers of self:” *“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”* This is where so many of God’s people have an Achilles’ heel, or great weakness. When they see a religious person with an outward show of piety, or belief in “God” (or a “god”), or faith in a “higher power” or any one of the many pseudo faiths presented today, they let down their guard. However, as we have seen in verses 1-4 of this chapter, all of these evil traits can be found in people who have an outward appearance of godliness.

Today we can see the fulfillment of these prophetic words, which Paul penned to Timothy. The Holy Spirit revealed to him in amazing detail (if we care to study it) the perilous times in which we live, specifically bringing to light who are the most dangerous people in the world.

Therefore, the question is are you anchored in the Rock, fixed in your heart, prepared to fight the good fight of faith, and having done all to stand in these end days? The eternal well-being of your very soul depends on it.

May God have mercy upon us all in these times, and may He find us watching, wise and ever faithful to the end. †

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

THE SINS OF THE FATHERS

Q: *"I have heard reference made concerning paying for the sins of our fathers. For instance, as a nation we must pay for the sins of slavery through redistribution of wealth, as a family we must pay any inheritance to those less fortunate in order to be saved, and we must pay for the sins of the previous generations for daring to be successful by taking on a debt that will literally bury us for generations to come. What is your take on this matter?"*

A: To be honest with you, such a philosophy is nothing but a false gospel that is being promoted by those who are using propaganda and rhetoric to cover up their covetous, hateful thieving ways and wicked, socialistic agendas. I was introduced to this false gospel a few years back when the craze was to apologize to the Indians for taking their land and the blacks for slavery, but the reality is that conquering nations have always made slaves of those they conquered. Taking land from those who have been conquered to enlarge the borders of a nation, kingdom or country is the way of the world we live in. Ask any people who have a history such as the Jews. People that have been found to be weak or made weak have lost their land and tasted the harsh reality of slavery by those who prove to be stronger. In Scripture, we see that servitude was not condemned, but Christians were given clear instructions as to the attitudes they

were to have towards those who may be their lords or towards those who were serving them. (See *Ephesians 6* and *Colossians 3*.)

Slavery never has been nor will it ever belong solely concerning the blacks. If you know history, you know that initially it was not the whites who sold blacks into slavery; it was the blacks who represented warring tribes or greedy individuals within their own ranks who initially sold them into slavery. Granted, ruthless men may have brought them as slaves to America's shores, but oppressive slavery is the result of wicked, darkened hearts that are already enslaved by the tentacles of that which is wicked, and not a matter of race, color or culture.

At the time, I thought such apologies to be nonsense, but I suppose it appeared quite noble to those who were buying the folly of such teaching. Admittedly, I did not recognize that the Church was being conditioned to accept the gospel of social justice where "so-called" justice is being demanded from the present and future generations for the past practices of others. However, to use the word "justice" in this text is not only a contradiction of real justice, it is a slam against all that is decent, true and righteous.

To try to pay for the past sins of others through governmental or social tyranny or oppression makes the accuser of such crimes the actual abuser who practices such tyranny for personal gain. It is nothing more than a front that allows for the tyrants and despots of society to take and oppress others. Promoting this belief as a Christian practice is an abomination to God, and his wrath abides upon those who foolishly mishandle His truth to justify such wickedness (*Romans 1:18*). The promotion of it as a gospel frustrates the real message and work of the true Gospel (*Galatians 2:21*). Instead of salvation being a free gift of God, it has become a matter of works by paying some type of penance for other people's actions (*Ephesians 2:8-9*). The Bible is clear in *Ezekiel 18* that we do not pay for the sins of our fathers, nor do they pay for our sins. We each will be held accountable for our own moral deviation when we stand before the Great Judge who will execute true righteousness in all matters.

It is obvious that those who are promoting such a gospel are using it to get rich for themselves. However, people are attracted to it because it lets them off the hook for personal actions. After all, the next generation can pay for their indiscretions. Interestingly, people are more apt to take responsibility for others' actions than their own. This allows them to appear noble about the sins of others, while covering up their own sins. However, salvation is not collective, it is an individual choice. No one can receive the gift of salvation for me, I must humbly seek it out for myself by seeking out the redemption God has acquired for me through Jesus Christ. He has bought me back from the spiritual slavery of sin, and I am not to give my liberty away to those who would once again try to take me captive with their insane and ridiculous claims or false gospels

This brings me to an interesting Scripture that has caused some confusion about this subject. It is found in *Exodus 20:5*. It talks about God visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him. The word "visit" has to do with oversee, deposit, appoint, commit, and or count. It appears as if iniquity is passed down from generation to generation, but it is important to point out that this is in reference to God bringing judgment on the third and fourth generation of those families or dynasties who fail to repent of the iniquities that plague them. You can see in Scripture where God gave certain families or lineages three to four generations before He brought judgment on them. This is brought out in the instances of Eli's descendants and Jehu's dynasty. It simply proves that God is long-suffering even towards those who hate him, but eventually the people's iniquity will come to full fruition in the third or fourth generation and at that time He will bring judgment on it.

If you encounter this false gospel of "social justice" in a place or church near you, I have one suggestion: flee from it. It is a perverted gospel that stands cursed. God will give this false gospel room to test the hearts of men, but do not be fooled by it, in due time He will judge it as perverted and heretical, and His wrath will consume it.