

GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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

THE BLESSED HOPE

Part 2

By Rayola Kelley

For years, I have tried to come to an understanding of the Blessed Hope in the midst of all the debates concerning the rapture, the most popular ones being the pre-trib, mid-trib, and post-trib beliefs. I am sure you have heard these debates, as well as others, and probably have your own take on which one you believe to be true. In my Christian life, I have been taught these various presentations. I have considered each presentation according to logic, reasoning and Scripture. Instead of coming out with an assurance that one is right, therefore, negating the arguments of the others, I have seen the validity in each argument.

To resolve this controversial matter, I sought the Lord. I had to resolve if these arguments represented truth, the pure doctrine of Christ, or man's personal conclusions. After all, if one is correct, I must receive it as such. If any of these arguments are in compliance to the pure doctrine of Christ, then I must develop the proper attitude towards the presentation with the intent of allowing it to line my life up to scriptural responsibility. However, if any of these beliefs represent man's conclusions, then I must regard it as such, and avoid the incessant unprofitable practice of arguing over something that has nothing to do with the real issues concerning salvation, righteousness and godliness. As the Apostle Paul reminds us in *Titus 3:9*: "*But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and striving about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.*" In this case, it is striving about what man believes to be the truth, the law or the practices of God.

The question is how do you resolve a matter that seems to be clouded in confusion, surrounded by

passionate debate, and consumed by possible skepticism? To answer this question, we must come back to center. In other words, we must come back to what constitutes truth and pure doctrine according to the Word of God. Let me state, if we are going to come back to center, we must put aside our present conclusions. The reason for this is because we will consider everything from the premise of these conclusions. Any time we do this, we will simply confirm them, not challenge, shake or test them.

This brings us back to what constitutes truth and doctrine when it comes to the matter of the Blessed Hope. When we consider the truth in light of the Blessed Hope, we must not regard it in light of the events that surround it; rather, we must recognize that the Blessed Hope is the actual event we are looking for. For example, when you consider the different rapture theories, the emphasis is based on the events that surround Jesus' coming, rather than the fact that He is coming back for His Body.

The problem with putting the emphasis in the wrong place is that you will undermine the real intent of the promise. For instance, if you write a sentence, you will use punctuation positioned in the proper places to emphasize the idea or theme. This is to ensure that people come out with a proper understanding of what you are trying to communicate. As someone who writes a lot, I know that it is so easy to change the emphasis of something by simply changing the punctuation. This can change the whole intent or focus of the sentence, thereby changing the point of importance.

My concern is that the way these different debates are being presented is resulting in a wrong emphasis being highlighted. When we put the wrong emphasis on a scriptural matter, we actually undermine truth. When the truth is undermined, then it loses its authority and power to impact our lives in a godly way. As I have consid-

ered the debates surrounding the Blessed Hope, I have noticed that there are a couple of unproductive fruits manifesting themselves.

One such fruit is that people are focusing on who is right or wrong about these different rapture theories, resulting in unnecessary division. Sadly, heretics have used this division to bring in their own take of this event. For some, instead of Christ coming back in the clouds as He left, He is now coming back through a Christ-consciousness that will reside within believers. For others, the Christians will have to first usher in Jesus' kingdom on earth before He comes back. Most of the wrong presentations find their origins in the occult or New Age, but sadly, there are some in the Christian realm who have bought into them and are putting their own perverted twist on these erroneous presentations. Clearly, this is proving to be unprofitable for the whole Body.

The second bad fruit is that I actually see people putting their faith in a belief, rather than putting their confidence in the hope that Jesus is coming back. This is a wrong emphasis. The Blessed Hope rests in Jesus physically coming back for His Body. Clearly, we are to put our hope in the Person of Jesus, and not in what we consider to be doctrinal beliefs. Jesus is worthy of our confidence, because He is the truth. In fact, He is the truth about why we can possess such hope. There is no deception, darkness or change in His character and ways. He is our Rock upon which we stand to confront adversity, and whom we cling to in the storms of life (*John 14:6; 1 Corinthians 10:4; Hebrews 13:8*).

This brings us back to the simple certainty of the Blessed Hope. The truth is Jesus is coming back. This is the anchor we must stand upon to possess hope. Our hope rests upon this truth, and not on the popular conclusions or beliefs of others. This hope we must know to be true in order to stand when the world around us appears to be falling apart, regardless of the seasons and times we are living in.

Now that we have established the point of truth, we must come to terms with the doctrine that is to serve as a means of discipline to prepare for Jesus' coming. One of the major arguments we have heard against these rapture debates is that the word "rapture" is not mentioned in the Bible; therefore, they say we cannot legitimately regard it as a fundamental belief or doctrine of the Church.

Whether we like it or not, this argument has some validity in it. The reason is because all truths establish us in pure doctrine. Pure doctrine points to doctrine that has not been tainted by unholy influences or emphasis. Although the word "rapture" describes the Church being quickly taken out of this present world, it still fails to associate us to the doctrine that will be confirmed and upheld by this incredible event. In a sense, we fail to have the correct emphasis, so that we can connect the dots, in order to possess a right attitude in regard to our Blessed Hope.

It is important to point out that doctrine involves attitudes that result in upright conduct. A person's conduct may appear acceptable, but if the right spirit and attitude are missing, it will not be considered upright conduct before God. Therefore, the integrity in pure doctrine is maintained by having a right attitude. When you study the doctrine expounded by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, you will see that He is dealing with people's attitudes towards God, life and sin as much as He is contending with ungodly conduct. Keep in mind that our conduct towards God, life and others is a manifestation of the attitude of our heart.

This brings us to the doctrine that is to discipline our attitude and conduct in light of the truth of Jesus coming back for His Church. Let us face it, whether we believe in pre-trib, mid-trib, post-trib, or some other belief, does it really change our attitude or lifestyle? Doctrine is to affect our attitude about a matter, so we will line up our conduct accordingly.

Some of you might be wondering if there is such a doctrine that has been clearly explained and expounded upon in Scripture that

would affect both our attitude and conduct. The answer is yes. There is such a doctrine. In *Hebrews 6:1-2*, we find the principles of the doctrine of Christ. Believe it or not, the doctrine that is upheld by the Blessed Hope of every saint can be found within the principles of the doctrine of Christ. Let us now consider the fundamental doctrines that have been clearly established for the Church: *"Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment."* Out of these six doctrines which one would you choose?

Before I present my understanding of the doctrine that is associated with the Blessed Hope, let us consider the two main texts that made reference to Jesus' second coming. They are *1 Corinthians 15:51-57* and *1 Thessalonians 4:13-18*. The Apostle Paul is the one who penned these Scriptures. In *1 Corinthians 15*, the Apostle is talking about the miracle that confirms our faith in the Gospel. This miracle is the main theme of this chapter.

The theme of *1 Corinthians 15* can also be found in *1 Thessalonians 4*. Let me give you a little history about the books of Thessalonians. The people in this church were experiencing tremendous persecution. Some had even died because of their faith in Christ. These new Christians were struggling with the death of their brethren. As a point of comfort, the Apostle Paul explained that Jesus was coming back for the Church. And, when He comes back, those who are dead in Christ will rise first; then those who are alive and remain shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the clouds.

The doctrine that is associated with the Blessed Hope is the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. Jesus spoke of the resurrection in *John 5:25-29*: *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this;*

for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

According to Scripture, there are two resurrections. There is much debate about who will be part of the first resurrection. However, if there are only two main resurrections, we must conclude, with our limited understanding, that everyone will be part of one of the resurrections. Based on the information found in *Revelation 20:4-5*, Jesus coming for His Body would be clearly identified with the first resurrection. Although believers are present with the Lord, they have not experienced the fullness of resurrection. As you study the two texts in *1 Corinthians 15* and *1 Thessalonians 4*, it points to believers being called forth from the grave, and raised up with those who remain in new glorified bodies. In their new changed bodies, they will reign with Him for a thousand years.

The second resurrection will entail raising up those who rejected Jesus, so that they can be justly judged by the Son of man. *Revelation 20:6* gives us this insight: *"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."*

For some Christians, the Blessed Hope signals deliverance from this present world. However, this is the wrong emphasis. As a result, many will miss the real impact of the blessing and hope in regard to Jesus' coming. His coming is clearly meant to signal resurrection unto a new and wondrous existence, not deliverance from this present age. It was from this premise that each generation of believers was to live in the assurance and hope of being part of experiencing the power of the resurrection unto eternal life. They were to be prepared for that time by living in expectation, regardless of whether they were in the presence of the Lord or present in their body, of being raised up in their new bodies to reign, serve and live in the fullness and presence of the Lord.

This brings me to the attitude that the doctrine of the resurrection from

WHERE IS YOUR HEART? By Jeannette Haley

February is an interesting month. Not only is it the shortest month of the year, but every four years, we have to remember "Leap Year." Two Presidents' birthdays are remembered, and sometimes the weather along the Washington coast is milder in February than in warmer months. I know because I lived there once. Make that "once upon a time."

I remember, too, how it delighted my heart to see the budding "pussy willows." Gathering pussy willows to make a table arrangement, especially for Valentine's Day, was fun. After all, pussy willows brought with them the promise of spring flowers soon to follow.

With Valentine's Day comes the big commercial push to send cards, and buy candy and flowers. Well, who doesn't enjoy candy (especially chocolate) and flowers? Of course, the theme is hearts and love. I suppose it can be a bit of fun if one keeps it in the right perspective.

In fact, as believers, we need to keep everything in the right perspective. But, how can we know if we have the right perspective? After all, we all have our own ideas, standards and opinions upon which we often base our goals, decisions and reactions to people and situations. The problem is our ideas, standards and opinions may be influential in shaping our perspective, but, regardless of how "good" or "intelligent" they may appear to be, they lack the heavenly perspective. Allow me to quote from one of Rayola's devotional books on this subject for Christians: "As believers we are not of this world. Positionally, we are actually sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. What does this mean to be in heavenly places? Keep in mind we are positionally in Christ. He is the essence of our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Our life is actually hid in Him. There is no indication that any aspect of our old self or life is even present.

"This shows us our hope. Our hope is not of this world. Our life is not from this world. Our perspective is not based on this world. Such an understanding shows us that our expect-

tancy will direct our focus heavenward. Our pursuit for this heavenly existence will find its source in Jesus Christ. And, our perspective will possess a heavenly perspective.

"Such a perspective brings us to the importance of possessing the life of Jesus. We must possess Him to understand our position in Him. By coming to terms with our position in Christ, we will also find our place in Christ. As Christ becomes our all and all, we become more and more aware that it is indeed His life, His work and His bidding. There are no residues of self, the influences of the world, and the overwhelming dictates of the flesh. It will be about Christ, for Jesus, and because of Him." ["Being A Child" by Rayola Kelley]

Possessing a heavenly perspective gives us a completely different approach to the issues of life. What our worldly hearts once yearned for is no longer effective. Self-serving interests, such as marrying the perfect mate, having the perfect children, living in the perfect house in the perfect neighborhood, securing the perfect job with the perfect salary, enjoying the perfect vacation in the perfect place, and perhaps attending the perfect church, and, of course, enjoying perfect health, are all fantasies of this world that quickly fade away when the river of reality sweeps us into its powerful current. Why? Doesn't God love us and want us to be happy? What's wrong with wanting a perfect life in this imperfect world? The answer is just that—we live in an imperfect world because of one thing—*sin*.

God didn't create an imperfect world. He didn't plan it that way. Consider *Genesis 1:31*: "And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good." Sin, sickness, suffering, and sorrow were not God's plan for this earth. Yet, all creation suffers because of sin, and longs for the day of redemption. *Romans 8:21-23* tells us: "Because the creature [original formation, creation] itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting

for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." (Brackets added)

Perhaps you're sensing certain agitations wiggling their way into your heart about now. Perhaps there are sensations of anger, a sense of unfairness, or frustration. Maybe despair, like a rising tide, is lapping at the door of your heart. *How could a good God allow such terrible things? Why should one man's sin be passed down upon the entire human race, and affect all of creation as well? It just doesn't seem fair!*

Through the years, people have done their best to come up with answers to these questions. Philosophers, poets, psychologists, and preachers have all offered their best conclusions to struggling mankind. Some, deeply offended by the seemingly unfairness of it all, choose to become atheists, denying the very existence of God. Untold numbers plunge headlong into psychology, searching in vain for answers. Others, many of whom are godless humanists, choose to throw themselves into humanitarian work to help relieve the suffering of others. Other people see themselves as protectors of the environment, and spend their lives trying to save different aspects of creation. Of course, they don't really believe in creation. Darwin is their guru and fact-less evolution serves as their "doctrine." Then there are the multitudes who seek, not after the Jesus of the Bible, but after spiritual experiences, thus opening the door to dangerous deceptions and doctrines of demons.

Some place all of their faith in science and believe that scientists are going to solve all of mankind's woes. Others look to their spirit guides, or "entities," those invisible "spirit guides" which appear as wise and kind benefactors, but are in reality, demons. Still others occupy themselves with a type of "self-brainwashing" as they partake of different streams of polluted and perverted "spirituality." If they perceive that something is of a "spiritual" nature, they may decide to fit it into their own developing spiritual reality. These people are blind, operating under a false light, a light so terrible that the "light" within them is great darkness and deception. While every born-again Christian is a spiritual person in the truest sense of the word, not

every “spiritual person” is a Christian! Don’t be fooled because someone appears to be “spiritual.” *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” 1 John 4:1.*

On this same vein, it’s dangerous to assume that just because somebody has written a runaway “best seller” that is presenting a “new, different or revolutionary” definition of God through imagined conversations with Him, or fictional stories that stir up the emotions, that it is a true and accurate presentation of the Almighty. It’s interesting to note how Jesus, who is *“the way, the truth, and the life”*, is either missing altogether, or is reduced from His Incarnate state and eternal godhood to the status of a mere human who is on the same level as the rest of humanity, and who meekly falls into step with whatever presentation is made of Him for self-serving purposes. I don’t know about you, but the very thought of misrepresenting any member of the Godhead in any way causes me to tremble.

Because we all grapple with the big questions of life from time to time concerning suffering, death, sorrow, loss, and so forth, doesn’t mean that we absolutely must have all the answers to these questions in this life. We are not going to understand it all. We are not going to have all the answers to every issue or situation this side of heaven. It is dangerous to begin to formulate our own conclusions, in order to resolve these issues in our minds and hearts, which are based upon nothing more than the prideful hot air of human reasoning, imagination and emotion. It amounts to building our house upon shifting sand.

Therefore, let us go back to the beginning and that powerful little word that nobody wants to think about—*sin*. If we are going to gain an understanding of how we got into this sad plight, we must begin with God’s perspective. Nothing short of God’s perspective makes sense. We can gain much insight from Oswald Chambers on this subject and the definition of sin. He wrote: “Sin is the outcome of a relationship God never ordained, a relationship which maintains itself by means of a wrong disposition, viz., my claim to my right to myself. That is the

essence of sin. Whenever God touches sin it is independence that is touched and that awakens resentment in the human heart. Independence must be blasted clean out, there must be no such thing left, only freedom which is very different. Freedom is the ability not to insist on my rights, but to see that God gets His. Original sin is ‘doing without God.’ That phrase covers sin in its beginning in human consciousness and its final analysis in the sight of God. ‘For from within, out of the heart of man proceed . . .’ (see Mark 7:21-23). We should get into the habit of estimating ourselves by the rugged statements of our Lord. ‘. . . Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners’ (1 Timothy 1:15). What is a sinner? Everyone who is not one with Jesus as He is one with God.”

Why is it that God’s solution to sin and its devastating results are so simple that until we utterly come to the end of ourselves and face Jesus Christ as He is, we try every other avenue to find relief, solace, peace, and comfort for our unsettled and tortured minds and hearts? Why is it that we search for “another way,” and experiment with the ways of the world when there is truly only “one Way?” Why do we desire to taste of the many tantalizing false “truths” presented to us, thus placing our souls in eternal jeopardy? What drives the inner man into the beckoning arms of the angel of light whose seductive celestial song woos our hearts into another dimension that is devoid of reality, or of God’s presence? Why do we, like Adam, hide among the “trees” of the world’s solutions in our attempt to escape the searching eyes of the Spirit of God?

The answer to that is as close as our unbelieving and prideful hearts wherein the fierce desire to be god of our lives resides. Pride says *there has to be another solution other than Jesus Christ for the misery of my life—for the misery of mankind. Sin can’t be the root of my discontent, and the ills of the world. Pride says the Gospel isn’t relevant to solve mankind’s problems. We need human ingenuity. Pride says I can do a better job than God when it comes to saving, or changing the world. Pride says Jesus Christ isn’t enough! Isn’t He?*

If the Jesus Christ of the Bible (not “The Message” or any of the other perverted so-called “versions”) isn’t “enough,” then you do not know Him. As A. W. Tozer wrote: “Some of you know something of that which has been called ‘the dark night of the soul.’ Some of you have spiritual desire and deep longing for victory but it seems to you that your efforts to go on with God have only brought you more bumps and more testings and more discouragement. You are tempted to ask, ‘How long can this go on?’” . . .

“Yes, there is a dark night of the soul. There are few Christians willing to go into this dark night and that is why there are so few who enter into the light. It is impossible for them ever to know the morning because they will not endure the night.”

It may minister to your heart to read the following, also by Tozer: “We are all idealists. We picture to ourselves a life on earth completely free from every hindrance, a kind of spiritual utopia where we can always control events, where we can move about as favorites of heaven, adjusting circumstances to suit ourselves. This we feel would be quite compatible with the life of faith and in keeping with the privileged place we hold as children of God.

“In thinking thus we simply misplace ourselves; we mistake earth for heaven and expect conditions here below which can never be realized till we reach the better world above. While we live we may expect troubles, and plenty of them. We are never promised a life without problems as long as we remain among fallen men.”

The question is where is your heart? Is it humbled under the mighty hand of God, willing to cry out with the Savior, “Not my will, but thine be done?” Or, is it retreating into a corner of self-pity, anger, fear, and rebellion? Perhaps your heart has been committed to the Lord Jesus Christ, but you still find yourself drawn to outside sources of comfort and assurance that have no solid foundation in the Word of God. Maybe your heart is broken, and filled with unresolved issues that keep you from going forward in your life in Christ.

Wherever your heart is right now,

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the dead must establish in us towards Jesus' return. February is a month to consider those you love. The challenge for this month in regard to Jesus' coming is no exception. As believers, I want to challenge each of you to regard Jesus' coming in the right way. This will ensure the proper discipline in your life and conduct. However, we must possess the right attitude towards the Blessed Hope to understand our scriptural responsibility.

The Apostle Paul gives us insight into the right attitude in *2 Timothy 4:8*: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (Emphasis added.)

If we love Jesus, we will look forward to that time when we can experience the power of His resurrection, so that we can live with Him in unhindered service, devotion and glory. The question is, do you love the idea of His appearing because you will be raised up with Him in His likeness? Or, do you love the idea of being spared unpleasant times and possible judgment? Consider the emphasis of your love as to whether it is proper, and whether it will impact your life in the ways of truth, righteousness and godliness.

In next month's issue, I will be dealing with the attitude that will be prevalent if we are ready because of our love for His appearance.

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won't you go before the Lord and ask Him to show you what He desires for your heart? Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised" *Luke 4:18*. No one, or nothing, can do what Jesus can do. He is God's solution to every problem, and to every heart. That, my friends, is God's perspective—Jesus Christ!



RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

WHAT LAWS SHOULD CHRISTIANS KEEP?

Q: *There are a lot of teachings today about keeping the law in order to be saved. Does that mean Christians have to keep the Ten Commandments? I'm confused over this issue. Just what laws are we to keep? Thanks.*

A: One of the Apostle Paul's big contentions in some of his epistles, especially *Galatians*, is the part that the Law plays in the Christian life. The Bible does make it clear as to how we as believers are to regard the Law. First of all the Law could not save or justify anyone. As a result, it was to serve as our schoolmaster that clearly points to our need for Jesus (*Galatians 3:24*). After all, the Law's main goal was to show each of us that we are transgressors against God's Law (*Romans 2:12; 3:20; 4:15*). In other words, in our state of sin, independence, rebellion, or lawlessness, we oppose His justice and righteousness, thereby, we are deserving of His wrath.

The Law passed a death sentence upon all sin (*Romans 6:23*). The only way the Law could be satisfied was through atonement or through one becoming an advocate who would satisfy the judgment of the Law on all sin. For the Old Testament, atonement or the shedding of the innocent blood of certain animals where the Law required it, was the only means to address certain sins, but not all of them could be covered by such sacrifices, such as idolatry, murder and adultery. The blood simply covered some of the sins, but could never take them away. However, in the New Testament, the Bible clearly shows us that Jesus Christ came as the Lamb of God, and served as our advocate (took our place on the cross), to satisfy the death sentence pronounced by the Law. As a result, He actually took away our sin. (*Hebrews 9:11-15, 22; 10:1-20; 1 John 2:1-2*).

The Bible tells us that Jesus actually fulfilled the Law (*Matthew 5:17-18*). In other words, He satisfied all of the requirements and judgments of it. As a result, He is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes (*Romans 10:4*). Since our life is

hid in Christ by faith, God sees us in the light of Jesus' righteousness (*1 Corinthians 1:30*). However, we also have a responsibility to fulfill the Law. The Bible tells us to walk after the Spirit and not the flesh, which will ensure that we will fulfill the Law. We also are responsible to fulfill the Law with godly love (*Romans 8:4-5; 13:8-10*).

This brings us to another aspect of the Law. The Law is made up of commandments (moral laws), testimonies, statutes (ordinances and rituals that had to do with how the Israelites were to conduct themselves in religious matters, such as holy days, sacrifices, sanitary practices, food, dress, etc.), precepts (similar to our doctrines), and judgments (how they were to handle different issues that would confront them, and the consequences that would follow deviant actions).

Testimonies serve as a record or a witness; therefore, the Law was to serve as a record of what is acceptable according to our holy God, and as a witness against those who have transgressed it (*Romans 3:19-21*). Since the sins of Christians have been taken away by Jesus' redemption, and they are now positioned in Christ, making them subject to a greater law; that of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, the testimony or record of the Law no longer applies to them (*Romans 8:2*). However, those who are walking in the flesh will be held accountable by the record of the Law that clearly serves as a witness against all sin or transgression (*Romans 7:4-6; 8:3, 8, 12-13*).

Colossians 2:14 tells us that the statutes or ordinances of the Law were blotted out by nailing them to the cross. The reason they were blotted out is because they served as beggarly elements or shadows that simply pointed the Jewish people to Jesus and His work on the cross (*Galatians 4:8-11; Colossians 2:16-17*). When Jesus died on the cross for our sins, He fulfilled these statutes; therefore, blotting them out.

In the matter of precepts, as believers, we have been translated into a spiritual kingdom that not only calls for excellent conduct on our part, but excellent character. Keep in mind that the children of Israel were to stand distinct among the pagan nations by the conduct that was clearly stipulated by the

holy Law. However, for Christians, it is not just a matter of conduct, but possessing an excellent character that expresses itself in a right spirit, with acceptable attitudes, and in honorable ways in every matter. This reminds us that, as Christians, we must walk in the Spirit, in order to fulfill and maintain the integrity of godly doctrines.

Judgments are to serve as the Christian's example. Examples of such judgments can be found in the laws such as the laws of jealousies (*Numbers 5:29-31*). These judgments bring a contrast to a matter as far as the fruits or results of rebellious, wicked or immoral actions. We see these judgments being passed down on the children of Israel in various ways, but for the Christian, it is not a matter of making a judgment, but discerning between good and evil (*Hebrews 5:14*). Once again, we must walk in the Spirit, in order to properly discern such matters, so that we can rightly judge a situation (*1 Corinthians 2:9-15*).

This brings us to our moral obligation (commandments) towards God and others. Such obligation has never ceased to be our personal responsibility. However, as Christians, it is not just a matter of obeying these commandments but fulfilling or satisfying the real intent or principle behind them. It is not unusual for people to comply outwardly with the commandments of God. But, such compliance will not really fulfill the Law (*Mark 12:29-31*). This is why, as Christians, we must be motivated by godly love to ensure inward integrity towards our godly responsibilities. This inward integrity will ensure that our conduct towards God and others is honorable or exemplary in every way. Granted, initially God is the only one who will know if we possess integrity that truly fulfills the intent or spirit of the Law, but others will eventually know if we possess it by the fruits that are coming out of our lives.

I do hope this concise summation on the subject of the Law answers your question.



WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

"As always, it [December newsletter] was nourishing and comforting, with just enough "challenge" in it to make me dig deeper into the riches of God's Word!" - FL

"I was just wondering if you've received any feedback or comments on these devotionals? I think they are SUPERB, and look forward to opening them every day! THIS is the kind of stuff believers NEED to read/hear, rather than the 'normal' FLUFF devotionals that so many send out you know the kind -- completely MILK!!! My thanks to all of you for taking on yet another ministry to us!!! This daily devotional is WAY MORE meaty than the junk that I've had forwarded to me by others! It's almost like they are FEARFUL of offending with the Truth of God's Word! I say KUDOS to you gals!!! - FL

"My wife and I want to thank you so much for your ADOPTION article [devotion]. This is VERY special to us in light of the fact that we have an adopted daughter rescued from the streets . . ." - NJ

"In these crazy times I have found your newsletters to be sound and good reminders of good biblical teaching. A few years ago I finally said to myself, "what is going on here (in Christendom)?" People I thought were "supposed to be" sound Christians were coming down on all sides of issues that didn't make any sense to me. And now we see supposedly Christian universities having Mormons speaking at graduation. That is nuts!! I came across your website as I began my search for some answers. I was stunned at what I found and amazed at how few people recognize sound doctrine anymore. So much is motivated by Power, Fame, and Money, the very 3 temptations we are supposed to avoid!" - Email

I wanted to take a minute here to tell you all how REFRESHING it is to receive a devotional such as this daily! This is so plain, and straightforward, without ANY fluff! It's so comforting to me, as a Believer, to get the TRUTH so simplistically stated, from a heart of love that is unfeigned! Thank you ALL for taking on this aspect of ministry to all of us! - FL

HE'S TAKING ME TO GLORY By Betty Swinford - Continued

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Occasionally I wished there was someone to ride with me. But if riding with others would disturb that sacred Presence, I couldn't have stood it. This was it, my trysting place with God. He didn't always come! He was always with me, but He didn't always come in His manifested presence, that inner presence that was so wonderful to me. That precious communion with the Holy Spirit that made Jesus so real and caused the trees, mountains, rocks and desert burst forth to sing His praises. At least—that's the way it seemed to me.

He came today. I felt the breeze caress the tears on my face, tears of deep-down joy and gladness. "Jesus!" I said brokenly. "Oh my Lord, I love You!"

And he came! Suddenly He was there, so real that I could have explained it to no one. I understood why Jesus had said if the people didn't praise Him, the rocks would immediately cry out. For His praise came from bud and flower and tree and rock! A swell of praise to the Lord of Glory. Yet I heard nothing.

He came like the wind itself. For, as the Scriptures themselves testify, "The Wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell from where it cometh, and where it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." John 3:8

He came from all over. The universe sang of His glory! The swaying palo verde trees bowed their great golden boughs in worship. The great snowy thunderheads moving steadily across the heavens declared His majesty. ". . . . We have such an high priest, who is seated on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." Hebrews 8:1

Everything was alive with His presence! Without and within. The earthen vessel was so aware of its overflow with the Treasure sent back from heaven it could scarcely contain itself. What divine reality.

~To Be Continued~