

# GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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

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## SPIRITUAL SURVIVAL

### Part 6

### Aimless

By Rayola Kelley

I have been talking about spiritual survival. How do we survive the times we are living in? How do we get through the darkness that is consuming the world? How do we get above the environment of fear to embrace the ways of life and hope?

The key is we must be prepared to meet the tidal wave of darkness head on. If people run from it, the wave will grab their ankles and drag them under. If people try to find a place of safety behind walls of denial and indifference, the wave will strip away the fortifications and unveiled spiritual nakedness. It is for this reason that each of us must clearly face these times as well as our spiritual condition to avoid disaster. This means we must cease to be aimless in our Christian walk and begin to focus on what is happening in the world, as well as our spiritual condition.

Clearly, if a person is not focusing on the destination, he or she will become lost. In essence, such individuals will become wanderers in the world. They will go from one pinnacle to another, one problem to another, one crisis to another, and one cause to another. Such people will be able to tell you what they do not like about a matter, but they cannot tell you what they are after. In a way, they are shooting in the dark hoping they will hit the right target; and, when they do hit it, they hope that everything will make sense to them. The reason these people are in such a state is because they do not really know what they are looking for. They may know what they want to leave behind, but they have no idea as to



what they are aiming at. If they did see the right target, they would not even recognize it. All they can do is strive to make sure that the unpleasant aspects of their life do not define them, but because they have no real direction or purpose to line up to, those aspects of influence they are rejecting will define them in the end.

I understand what it is like to be aimless in life. In my childhood I had dreams, in my teenage years I had ideas, and in my initial years as a young adult I had high opinions, but eventually life revealed that my dreams were unrealistic, my ideas unobtainable, and my high opinions ridiculous. When life finally slammed against my wobbly notions, all collapsed and were stripped away, causing me to realize I was indeed lost. What stood before me in relationship to identity and purpose had been shredded into so many pieces that nothing fit together, nothing made sense, and I found myself stuck in a muddy rut of ridiculousness.

At such points one must make a decision. Do you become a skeptic about life, bitter towards it, or do you decide to try to find something that will make sense out of it. I have to admit I fought bitterness up front. After all, I had become disillusioned with life for it let me down. Then, I had to realize that no matter how much life had made a mockery out of my existence, that I could not let it make me a skeptic towards it. I could not let cynicism become an endless pit of torment and despair for me; therefore, I wanted to find something that made sense out of the ridiculousness of my pathetic reality.

My problem was that I did not know who or what I was looking for. There was a sense that God was a key, but I did not know what I needed to consider when it came to my Creator. In essence, I was looking for Jesus, but did not know what I was looking for. After all, I already had a vague notion about Jesus; therefore, I could

not see how or in what way He would be my solution.

It was not until the Holy Spirit parted the darkness of my state with the light of hope that I realized why Jesus was my solution. He alone would end my aimless search for the meaning to life.

Sadly, I still see this same aimlessness in some who call themselves Christians. Instead of standing on the Rock of ages, it appears they are wandering from one church to another, one doctrine to another, one gospel to another, and one religious experience to another. The truth is if we are not grounded on the foundation of heaven, we will not survive the times in which we live. If we are not lining up to the true cornerstone of eternity, we will not be able to weather the storm on the horizon. If we do not grow up in Christ, who is the head of righteousness, we will not have the means to finish the course set before us.

Perhaps the greatest example of someone who wandered aimlessly is Cain. We can read about Cain in *Genesis 4*. Cain knew about God. He even prepared a sacrifice for Him, but he did not appear to know what pleased God. He was more interested in his own accomplishments and not how God viewed a matter. When Cain presented a sacrifice that was not acceptable to God, he became offended. After all, Cain had presented the best of himself, but *Isaiah 64:6* is clear that the best of man is considered filthy rags before God. God was, and continues to be, the ultimate judge as to what is acceptable to Him, not man in his best form. In the end, the Lord did not regard Cain's sacrifice but accepted his brother Abel's sacrifice.

Keep in mind that Cain was quite proud of his sacrifice. Apparently, he had seen himself as being wise and clever in the sacrifice he had presented. We have all been there. We are so proud of how smart we have been in a matter that we are swinging quite high with expectation. Surely, our action will

bring us honor. But, when we fail to find the next branch to swing from and come crashing down into the abyss of disillusionment, we become angry, giving place for a root of bitterness to be conceived. When Cain discovered his brother's sacrifice was accepted over his, jealousy came to the forefront. This is the only way unabated pride can respond in such matters. It cannot afford to be overshadowed by someone or something else. It must be recognized and honored.

It is for this reason that James writes this exhortation in his epistle, *"But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work"* (James 3:14-16). Cain's jealousy found its source in the wrong place. His handling of the matter was earthly in attitude, sensual in the emotions it produced, and devilish in behavior.

This is why the Lord warned Cain that sin was lying in wait at the door of his heart. If he opened the door, it would lead to strife due to his wrong frame of mind. Strife can only produce something that would be dishonorable. However, Cain possessed a worldly wisdom, not a heavenly one. He refused to be reasoned with because he wanted to maintain the intensity of his anger with the intent of expressing it. In the end, he murdered his brother.

Jealousy will set out to defame and destroy in order to silence the tormenting rage that is driving it. I cannot tell you how many people have thrown other people under the bus because of jealousy. They proved to be cruel and indifferent to the fact that the sin of jealousy rests with them, and that it does not belong to the one who has innocently stirred it up out of the cesspool of insecurity and lust.

When God confronted Cain about his murderous actions, he once again proved to be unreasonable. He refused to own his actions and repent. He had a short opportunity to throw himself on the mercy of God in humble repentance. Instead, he acted ignorant about his wicked

behavior. However, the Lord knew what had happened. A curse was pronounced on him. Cain would become a vagabond, a fugitive in the world. Nothing would grow for him again.

Sin has broken man's relationship with God. It brings him under the curse of always being a fugitive when it comes to his Creator. He will only know the bitterness of sorrow. He must hide, flee, and run from the presence of God. The Bible confirms this by telling us that Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and he ended up building a city. This is where man's government was established.

Granted, Cain had to be an intelligent man to establish a government, but as I have pointed out, he had to leave the presence of the Lord to do so. He did it as a vagabond. Since his actions had no life to them, they could only result in death.

Except to use him as an example, Cain fades quickly from the pages of the Bible. He gave way to darkness, hid his sin in darkness, went out from the light to walk in darkness, and produced only that which emitted the fruits of darkness.

As I observe the times we live in, it is obvious that darkness is becoming gross due to iniquity abounding around us. It seems as if many people have opened the door to sin. It is clear that it is running rampant as darkness takes people's hearts and minds captive. Under the cloud of darkness, people are trying to build their own kingdoms without any consideration of God. Granted, it may take shrewdness and abilities to build such kingdoms, but they will only emit the fragrance of death and the fruits of darkness (2 Corinthians 2:15-16). In the end, these kingdoms will lay in complete ruin as the dust of time entombs their silent, decaying remains.

We must take note of Cain's plight. Pride set him up for a fall, jealousy took him captive, strife became his preference, and murder his action. Instead of repenting, he tried to hide the darkness of his own heart. Instead of seeking mercy, he held his wicked position as mercy fled his grasp and darkness claimed his soul and death his destiny.

In this present darkness it would be easy to be a Cain. *Proverbs 29:18* states, *"Where there is no vision, the*

*people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he."* Vision points to that which is outside and beyond us. It is about having aim, taking aim, and hitting the target. Therefore, what should our vision be as believers?

In some translations, the word "vision" is translated as "revelation." From this perspective consider *Revelation 1:1a*, *"The revelation of Jesus Christ..."* Jesus should be our revelation. Our spiritual vision must be on Him. We must take aim to know Him, and hit the target of knowing Him by walking according to faith towards Him. Scriptures confirm that Jesus should be our aim in life, knowing, loving, and serving Him. Meditate on the following Scriptures in regard to this issue:

*"And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son; and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day"* (John 6:40).

*"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me"* (John 12:32).

Jesus said this in regard to the work of the Spirit, *"He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you"* (John 16:14).

*"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12).

*"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified"* (1 Corinthians 2:2).

*"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel"* (1 Corinthians 9:16). Remember the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). The light in the Gospel is Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:3-6).

*"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ"* (Philippians 3:8).

If a person is seeking Christ, focused on Him, pursuing a greater knowledge of Him, and desires to be possessed by Him and to possess Him, he or she will cease to wander and will begin to follow the Lord's light to his or her final destination.

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## FOR ALL THAT IS LOST

By Jeannette Haley

If you are reading this, you've made it through another year. Considering the times in which we live, it almost makes a person feel like congratulating themselves. Now we begin our journey into the uncharted, and in many ways dreaded, waters of 2012. What the future holds for each of us in detail no one can truly know except the Lord. We do know, however, that with each passing year more biblical prophecies are being fulfilled, and the challenges we face as a nation, and as Christians seem to be mounting up like tidal waves.

On the other hand, with every new year some of us tend to remember events and situations that not only occurred in the old year, but in past years as well. It seems the older I grow the more frequently cherished scenes from my childhood and younger years bubble to the surface where they burst upon my mind's eye. Such cherished, yet obscure, memories flood my soul with an acuteness that embraces the different senses. In other words, it's as if I can still hear the salty waters of Puget Sound lapping against the hull of the small wooden fishing boat that my parents rented to go salmon fishing. I can hear the sputter of the unreliable outboard motor, and I can even recall the smell of the exhaust fumes wafting my direction which never failed to result in the misery of seasickness. Now, thankfully, I can relive such moments in a happier frame of mind, minus the seasickness.

For me, poignant memories are usually spontaneously triggered by different sights, sounds, tastes, and smells that suddenly take me back to different points in my life. All of this causes me to look up in awe at the great Creator who fashioned us in such a marvelous way. However, not all memories I have are delightful and no doubt the same holds true for everyone. All of us have failed along the way—failed to consider God and others; failed to respond in love because of our selfishness; failed to do what was needful and right; failed to make righteous and wise decisions and then



failed to go to the Lord with a humble heart, confess and repent of it in order to receive His forgiveness and healing. To be sure, memories are painful when the heart has not been made whole, and the spirit healed of its wounds—wounds either inflicted upon it by our own wrongdoing, or wounds put there by others.

In one of my previous articles about misdirected sympathy I indicated that such sympathy had overruled common sense and good judgment, causing me to make some very poor decisions which resulted in grief, misery, loss, and devastation. The loss of material goods is one thing and can be bad enough, but the loss of understanding and acceptance from friends and family is hard to bear. So many people have heavy hearts because of the loss of reputation and self-respect. Others are depressed, having given up all hope of ever seeing their dreams materialize. Sickness and physical pain are also a deep, dark valley that countless people dwell in, along with encroaching old age that erodes health, vitality, energy, and physical life itself. There are people who live day and night with the searing pain of losing a child, or a loved one, either through death or disappearance. There seems to be no end to the regrets, suffering, misery, and sorrow that afflicts life on this planet.

In spite of it all, there is great hope for the future. We have this hope today in Jesus Christ who is "the same, yesterday, today, and forever." Even though He may not return today, or tomorrow, this hope *will come*. It will come because, regardless of how we feel, how low we get, or how fragile our faith may be, "*yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself*" 2 Timothy 2:13b. Our souls must have an immovable anchor that cannot be moved even though the physical heavens above and the earth beneath are destroyed. Hebrews 6:17-20 assures us, "*Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and*

*which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.*"

The Apostle Peter, concerning our hope, wrote, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*" 1 Peter 1:3-5. Peter not only writes of hope, but of a "lively hope". This is not just a flimsy "hope so" feeling, but a hope that is living, and alive with Spirit and truth, filled with power and joy. This hope is tangible because it is embodied in the resurrected Christ. *He is our hope and He is our incorruptible, and undefiled, inheritance that will never fade away.*

Consider the things that you have lost through the years due to the passing of time, or consequences of your actions or others. What have you lost because of poor judgment or circumstances beyond your control? Material things are corruptible, and most do fade away. We may cherish items that bring back special memories of loved ones, or of a time in the past that was sweeter, happier, or more innocent, but the truth is, we cannot take such items with us when our allotted time on earth comes to an end. Our promised inheritance is so much greater because within such great glory and joy, there will be no more nostalgia, regret, mourning, sadness, and feelings of pathos and loneliness. We cannot even begin to comprehend the width and height of the joy of the Lord.

This great inheritance is undefiled. My heart overflows with joy, awe and reverence at this promise. As this world sinks deeper and deeper into the repulsive foulness of unabated debauchery, evil, sin, and wickedness, its defilement seemingly permeates the very air we breathe. This defilement is everywhere because of man's rebellion against the God of heaven. The very food that God gave to mankind for the health of his body

is defiled, thanks to genetically altered produce, hormones, chemicals, pesticides, and antibiotics. Even aborted babies have found their way into major food producers in America (and vaccines as well) as discovered by investigators into this unspeakable atrocity. Talk about defilement! Our water is defiled, and our air is deliberately being poisoned through incessant chemtrail spraying which is a top secret ploy to eliminate at least 80% of the world's population. It goes without saying, it is no secret that mankind has given power to Satan's one-world devices through greed, immorality, idolatry; uncleanness; witchcraft, hatred, and the lust for fame, fortune, and control. (Example: Galatians 5:19:20, 21.) There can be no doubt that we are living in the last days as foretold by Jesus and the prophets.

Today, defilement of the Word of God through Scripture twisting and watered-down so-called "versions" of the Bible is global. From pulpit to pew, this defilement is prevalent through pride, idolatry, unbelief, wicked imaginations, lust, and immorality of every sort, not to mention heresies, witchcraft, sorcery (drugs), superstition, blasphemies, and New Age beliefs and practices. Of course, this is all done with the name of Jesus tacked on in some way, or in the name of "love." 2 Timothy 3:1-7 provides us with a good check list of what to watch for in our day that indicates we are in the "last days." God's people desperately need to wake up and discern the signs of the times!

With all of this in mind, as we return to 1 Peter 1:4, 5, we have a fresh appreciation and longing for that incorruptible and undefiled inheritance that God has given us through Jesus. We also read that our inheritance "fadeth not away." This inheritance is not illusive, like the proverbial carrot dangling in front of the donkey's nose: no one can step in and snatch it from us, leaving us in a beggarly situation, neither can it ever be destroyed by the antichrist in the visible world, or Satan in the invisible world. It is *our* inheritance, "reserved in heaven" for us.

How do you know that you are one who will receive this precious and priceless inheritance? The answer is in *verse 2 of 1 Peter 1* which reads,

*"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."* We cannot sanctify ourselves through self-effort. Sanctification is the work of the Spirit to set us apart unto God so that *"by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God"* Romans 12:1, 2.

According to *verse 5 of 1 Peter 1:5*, we are *"kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."* Destroying that precious faith is the goal of the enemy, beginning in Genesis in the Garden of Eden, and progressing through time past, time present, and as recorded in God's Word, time to come. It was Job's faith that Satan targeted through tragedy and great loss, yet Job maintained his integrity. How many people who have suffered great loss can stand and proclaim with Job, *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him. He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him"* Job 13:15, 16.

As each day fades into another, we sense that time, as we know it, is fast drawing to a close. In "the last time" those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation will greatly *rejoice "though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls"* 1 Peter 1:6b-9.

As we enter 2012, let us do so with faith in our omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, and immutable God, in assurance of our inheritance in the blessed hope of Jesus Christ. In

spite of the troubled times in which we live, we have great and precious promises. Therefore, seek those things which can never be lost, watch and pray, and *"Let not your heart be troubled"* John 14:1a. Rejoice, for we have this sure word of promise in *Romans 8:21-25*, *"Because the creature [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. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."*

May the Lord bless and keep you unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ! †

## LIFE SONG

Our soul is drawn down memory's path,  
Through the misty corridors of time,  
Haunting and enchantment intertwined,  
Emotions rising from secret chambers of suppressed memories,  
Notes of joy and sorrow,  
Melancholy chords mingled together  
In memory's song-  
Descending tones of somber  
Contemplation, blurred images  
Of that which was lost,  
Never to return, to be grasped-  
Music in a minor key,  
Dark and deep, overshadowing  
Heaviness,  
Spurned opportunities,  
Open doors unexplored, sour notes,  
Despair balances on the edge,  
The abyss of hopelessness beckons.  
Then, swiftly, as an eagle rising,  
Our life song soars upward,  
Heavenly orchestration compels  
Towards the Light Eternal—Jesus,  
Echoes of joy, visions of beauty,  
Pure and serene,  
The holy angels, gloriously sing-  
Our life song—and peace reigns.

—J. Haley

As we consider this past year and consider the possible seriousness of the New Year, we should examine whether we have been found by the great Shepherd, or whether we are still wandering in the barren wasteland of the world—lost in its endless maze of vanity, entangled in its darkness, and groping at its fading or illusive promises. †

## RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

### IF GOD IS LOVE

**Q:** *I have heard that God turns His back on sin. In fact, some imply Jesus cried on the cross about the Father forsaking Him because He turned His back on Him. My question is if God is love, how can He turn His back on us, or His Son because of sin?*

**A:** I think that people become confused about this matter because they try to bring together three different issues. It is true that God loves us, but such love does not rejoice in iniquity, only in truth (*1 Corinthians 13:6*). The reason for this is because God in His love is committed to bring us to our highest potential. His desire is to save us and bestow upon us the best heaven has to offer.

The second matter is God hides His face from sin. *Isaiah 59:2* makes this very clear, "*But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*" As you can see, the concept of God hiding His face away from someone because of sin is in relationship to hearing their cries or pleas to save them. God cannot save people in their sin no matter how hard they cry or plead in their plight. They must repent and receive the provision of His Son before He can save them from the devastating consequences of sin.

It is important to point out that God is holy. He cannot look upon sin without judging it. It is for this reason He has provided the sacrifice of His Son. When sin is present, He displays longsuffering towards the person in order to give him or her time to repent so that he or she will not perish in his or her sins (*2 Peter 3:9*). However, do

not be mistaken, sin will not be overlooked, tolerated, or accepted in any capacity by Him.

In relationship to Jesus, the Father did not forsake Him on the cross. God will never forsake the righteous. Granted, Jesus became a sin offering. He paid the price for our sins as man. It is also a harsh reality that sin separates and isolates, as well as wounds the spirit and bruises the soul. We are told by Scripture that Jesus experienced everything man experiences in His flesh, except committing sin (*Hebrews 4:15*).

This brings us to another aspect about sin. Most likely in His humanity, Jesus experienced the devastation of sin upon the soul. At such times it does feel as if God has forsaken the person. We can see this even in King David's case. When you read the Psalms, David made reference to feeling forsaken by God, yet by faith he chose to believe God's promise and not his feelings. In His humanity Jesus may have experienced the grave feeling of separation from the Father as the Father hid His face with the covering of darkness from how sin was devastating His Son on the cross; but, it was not because the Father was forsaking Him during His ordeal (*Matthew 27:45*).

When Jesus cried from the cross, "*My God, My God, why have you forsaken me,*" it was mainly to fulfill the prophecy found in *Psalms 22:1*. No doubt in His humanity, Jesus was displaying the devastation wrought by sin upon that which is pure and righteous. He was giving insight into the distress caused by the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual suffering brought on by sin. He was also describing the great tragedy that plagues mankind because of sin: being separated from God. However, it was also a fulfillment of Scripture to confirm His identity as the Messiah, the Promised King.

The reality of understanding the reasoning behind some of the events surrounding Christ is that we must remember we can only know in part (*1 Corinthians 13:9*). What we need to know concerning salvation and the faith walk is black and white. In other words, there is no debate or gray areas of confusion and conflict when it comes to salvation and obedience. However, there will always be points of discussion as to the real implication

behind other spiritual matters. There is no problem in having a healthy discussion about such points, but as believers we must always make sure that we do not strip God of His divine character, minimize or do away with the real issue, destroy the intent or purpose of a matter, or adjust it to our way of thinking to make it fit into our comfortable theology.

For example, the real issue concerning the above subject is sin and how God responds to it. In God's holiness He will have no part of sin. Sin was addressed on the cross by God. Even though Jesus became judgment for sin, sin cannot be looked upon, regarded, or casually observed. It was clearly hidden by the cover of darkness and its claims and consequences upon our lives defeated by redemption.

I just want to caution you about getting too caught up with the various debates taking place in Christendom. As believers, we are told to receive and preach the message of the Gospel, not get caught up with debates that have no merit to them when it comes to salvation. For example, the Gospel is that Jesus died for sin, was buried, and three days later rose from the grave (*1 Corinthians 15:1-4*). The Gospel and the victory of the cross do not hinge on whether God hid His face from His Son when He was on the cross; rather, it hinges on Jesus' resurrection (*1 Corinthians 15:14*).

The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation; therefore, to major in that which will not ensure the salvation of others is to take an unnecessary detour (*Romans 1:16*). It is for this reason the Apostle Paul stated in *1 Corinthians 2:2* that he did not want to know anything among us, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. In *1 Corinthians 9:16*, he stated woe was he if he did not preach the Gospel. In *2 Corinthians 11:3*, the apostle's main concern was that our minds would be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

I can tell you that in my couple of decades of service to the Lord, the Gospel has provided ample material to preach and share without having to take detours. It is okay to discuss some of these debatable issues, but the rule of thumb is that if you get the character and ways of God right, much of the confusion surrounding these issues will be cleared up. †

## GOD'S PROMISE

*"Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." — Mark 11:24*

"That faith is an indispensable condition of prevailing prayer is undoubtable. I am speaking now of the kind of faith that *secures* the blessing. We are to believe that we shall receive a specific thing we ask for. We are not to think that God is such a being that if we ask a fish, he will give us a serpent, or if we ask bread, He will give us a stone. In Mark 11 the disciples were to have faith for a miracle, and it is plain that they were bound to believe they should receive the very thing itself. That is what they were to believe. Now what should men believe in regard to other blessings? Is it a mere loose idea that if a man prays for a specific blessing, God will by some mysterious sovereignty give something or other to him, or something to somebody else, somewhere? Such a thought is utter nonsense and highly dishonorable to God. No, we are to believe that we shall receive the very things we ask for.

"When are we bound to make this prayer? When are we bound to believe that we shall have the very things we pray for? I answer, when we have evidence for it. Faith must always have evidence. A man cannot believe a thing unless he sees something that he supposes to be evidence. He is under no obligation to believe, and has no right to believe, a thing will be done unless he has evidence. It is the height of fanaticism to believe without evidence.

"Suppose that God has especially promised the thing. For instance, God says he is more ready to give His Holy Spirit to those who ask Him than parents are to give bread to their children. Here we are bound to believe that we shall receive it when we pray for it. You have no right to put in an *if* and say, "Lord, *if it is your will*, give me Your holy Spirit." This is to insult God. To put an *if* into God's promise, where God has put none, is tantamount to charging God with being insincere. It is like saying, "O God, if You are sincere in making this promise, grant the blessing I have prayed for." -Charles Finney

## COMMENTS & LETTERS

"It sounds like you're very needed in the church you're at right now. Your ministry seems to have always been helping in small communities in struggling churches. God sees all your hard work and only in heaven will we fully see the lives touched in a profound way by the ladies of GSM!" - WA

"Hold on tight to the Lord because everything is in place. Hard, rough, scary times are ahead around the corner. Sober up, be wise, full of discernment and by all means - GET A HEARING TEST!!! Meaning, we need more than ever to hear the Lord's voice. He sustains us, comforts us, protects us, leads us but we if cannot hear, we will perish." - AK

"Most Christians won't even ADMIT that a Believer CAN HAVE any sort of demonization going on in their life!!!!" - FL

"Really and truly, it is a short life. God in His infinite wisdom knows exactly what we need on a daily basis. With each passing day there is something new and more outrageous that is happening, and all I can do is shake my head and wonder where common sense has gone. Some new thing the government is doing that undermines our liberties and threatens us all and what we do. All I can do \*really\* is pray and believe God to meet our need as He promised, and He will do it." - AR

"I know I shouldn't be, but it never ceases to amaze me when there is such an overload of IGNORANT in the pulpit!! Pulpit Pimps .... all of 'em!! May God give you gals encouragement, and the wherewithal to STAND in the face of the ignominy! It's [a certain church] Ichabod!!!" - FL

"There are lots of them [churches] here like that. That's why I don't even go anymore. There is NOWHERE TO GO. They are either so dead, you can't wake them. Or they DON'T WANT TO BE WOKEN. Or, they are so into the NEW GARBAGE...You don't want to get involved there. They are too much into PARTYING. And you can't get them back to the Truth. It's bad out there. Really bad." - OH

"You know, I've got tell you

something. Last night My son invited me to join his church for volleyball. Like last time (back in March) the teams were home life groups (that's what they call themselves). We again were by ourselves because of the times they work, they're not able to be a part of a home group, so \_\_\_\_\_ made his own group with some friends that don't go to church including me. I felt, noticed again the closed off feeling from the members of the church including the pastor. No one reaches out to start up a conversation or even make you feel welcomed. I think the church is getting cold(well, its been that way for years). We always tried to instill in our children to be friendly and invite unsaved/unchurched people to events or whatever they do, but more and more times this is how the mainstream churches behave and receive people. What is disheartening (but for me encouragement for his discernment), is that \_\_\_\_\_saw and felt the same thing. He was actually mad and upset. He told me he would never invite his friends (age group 19-24) again because of how they were treated. I'm glad he recognized this but again its sad that this is the state of the church. We were complacent, now its become apathetic. What will it take for churches like that to burst the bubble they live in?" [GSM: *Persecution!*] - AK

[Commenting on "Jellyfish Christianity" by J.C. Ryle] "Yes, and not only Jellyfish, but fleshly! I have just received a teaching on Ps. 56 advocating we should do as David did. But we have not to use our flesh to fight the enemy, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. How many people warfare in prayer against the enemy? People ask me to pray, and afterwards ask for teaching on how to pray like that!!! THERE IS NO PROPER TEACHING TODAY!!" - UK

*"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" —1 Peter 4:17, 18*