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

KNOWLEDGE OR REVELATION?

Discipleship Series 6

By Rayola Kelley

Have you ever considered the different levels of knowledge that people might possess about a subject? In fact, if you consider knowledge, you will realize that knowledge has about four stages people can operate in. A good example of how these different stages work can be found with Jeannette, Krista and me in relationship to the computer.

When it comes to the computer, I have a love-hate relationship with mine. I know the computer as far as using a certain program, but my knowledge of it is quite limited. Jeannette's knowledge of the computer goes beyond my limited understanding of it. For example, she works with the Internet and on a monthly basis puts together our newsletter. In fact, she was learning how to use the computer in her 50's. I was impressed with the fact that she was willing to go into unknown technological territories that I would never dare to explore without major supervision.

Then there is Krista. Krista is our problem solver when it comes to the computer. She has managed to spare Jeannette and me from many emotional meltdowns when it has come to these technological wonders. Her ability to tread into problem areas of the computer has gained the awe and respect of both of us. She has done maintenance and repairs on our computers, as well as worked with various programs. She is the one who waded through the challenging process of learning how to do our website.

When Krista hits the end of her knowledge, or resolve, to solve a computer problem, we have a reliable computer technician ready to

come in and save the day. This man is incredible. He not only knows how to put a computer together, but he understands the integral workings of those confusing, and sometimes touchy programs. Instead of showing any type of fear towards this blinking one-eyed monster, he swoops in and conquers it with incredible ease.

Knowledge is indeed a combination of many flowing rivers of facts, ideas, truths, or principles. These different rivers can occasionally merge into what we can refer to as understanding, but nevertheless, they each present their own challenges about issues and subjects confronting our lives. The level of knowledge we gain about a matter will determine how deep we tread into the waters of these rivers in regard to the subject.

For example, when it comes to the computer, I just want to get by. Granted, I have gone from getting my big toe wet to getting both feet wet, but I am not comfortable to wade any deeper into what I call the whirlpools of technology that surrounds the computer. As for Jeannette, she has waded deeper into the river. I would say she is knee deep as she slowly tests each new step in her attempt to explore new horizons. We both know of certain functions of the computer, but we probably will not wade any further into what appears an overwhelming river of information that eventually blurs into mass confusion for us. For Krista, she knows *about* the computer because she is willing to get in over her head in this river. The result is that she has managed to gain greater knowledge as she finds herself experiencing new depths in this area. For our technician, he *knows* the computer. He not only swims the raging river with ease, and skillfully floats the areas where there are dangerous whitewater rapids, but at times he even occasionally appears to walk on water.

When we consider the four levels of knowledge in which people can operate in regard to a matter, we must

acknowledge that such levels are based on experience. Experience in the Bible is associated with tribulation (*Romans 5:3-4*). In other words, if you are not willing to wade away from the comfort zones of what you know to experience the uncertainty of the frightening depths of the unknown in regard to something, you will never come to the *knowledge* or understanding of a matter. In summation, you must risk drowning in such a river before you can come to a place where you will actually *know* something as a truth or a reality.

To me, drowning in the river of technology is not my forte. In other words, it is not what I value or desire to know; therefore, it has never been my main emphasis. I would rather spend my energy elsewhere, while trusting those who are more equipped in this area to handle the details and challenges of the computer world.

The Bible also speaks of these four areas of knowledge when it comes to God. Some people know of God, but they remain fools about who He is. They do not care to tread away from their comfort zones of bigoted, limited opinions that they have developed towards Him. Granted, they may possess some type of theology towards Him or have some doctrine about the religious life associated to Him, but such knowledge is controlled according to their ignorance about God. Their lives of unbelief reveal that they do not really believe the God of the Bible exists in His state of holiness and majesty (*Psalms 53:1*).

There are those who have some knowledge of God due to religious experiences. Occasionally, this type of person will take his or her limited knowledge and become zealous in it. However, the Apostle Paul made this statement about such an individual in *Romans 10:2-3*: "For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Clearly, these individuals are taking

their limited knowledge of God and trying to establish some type of righteous life before Him. However, such a life would be based on fleshly understanding and attempts, and not according to their faith in Christ, who serves as the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes (*Romans 10:4*).

The third type of knowledge in regard to Christ involves those who are striving to come to the knowledge of Jesus. In other words, these are the people who are willing to go into the depths of the unknown to explore the possibilities of the example, character, and work of Jesus Christ. They are not just content to know of Him, they want to know *about* Him in a greater ways. The Apostle Peter talks about such a person in his second epistle.

The Apostle Peter sets up the environment that must be present to come to the true knowledge of Jesus in chapter 1 of his second epistle. He tells us that it is through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus, our Lord that grace and peace will be multiplied to us. He informs us that according to the divine power of Christ, and through the knowledge of Him, we have been given all of the necessary elements that pertain to godliness and life, especially since we have escaped the corruption of the world. The qualities that ensure that we are not barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ are: faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity (love).

Notice how knowledge is sandwiched between virtue (character) and temperance (self-control) in the qualities named by Peter. If character is absent in knowledge, a person will fail to handle it properly. Knowledge applied in a proper way becomes wisdom. Therefore, knowledge that is void of character or wisdom will have no discipline or temperance to learn the lessons of life. Learning lessons points to experiencing a matter first hand, which reminds us that tribulation works patience in us, and patience allows us to experience the source behind the hope of life (*Romans 5:3-4*).

This brings us to the subject of knowing God. In order to know God,

you must personally experience Him. Clearly, experience is not a matter of having a general awareness of Him, you must actually personally encounter Him. You may have information about Him, but information has no life to it. You may have facts about Him, but they can lack dimension. You may have ideas about Him, but they are often limited to personal conclusions or religious experiences. You may possess certain truths about God, but without the Spirit to connect these truths, they will not take on any real depth that has the capacity to bring transformation and change. You may understand the principles of God, but if you fail to walk them out, they can become points of spiritual darkness and judgment.

The difference between knowing of or about God and knowing Him is *revelation*. Revelation points to an unveiling or uncovering of a matter. Scripture speaks of a mystery that has been veiled in the Old Testament by carnal ordinances until the time of reformation would allow it to be revealed (*Hebrews 9:9-10*). Granted, there was a figure present when it came to these practices that cast a shadow, but the outline was obscured from the physical eyes and proved to be in the far distance to those who could spiritually see this shadow (*Colossians 2:14-17*).

Twenty centuries ago this mystery was unveiled in a person by the name of Jesus Christ. However, the mystery was still veiled by His humanity. People could physically see, hear, touch, and encounter Jesus, but for many they still could not recognize who He was. His identity remained veiled to many individuals in the following generations to the present one. Although the fullness of deity was present in bodily form, it still remained veiled. His ministry as the Anointed One became a point of great contention, and His work as Savior became a point of mocking and unbelief.

How is Christ unveiled to the believer? The Apostle Paul answers this question in *Colossians 3:3-4*: "*How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery (as I wrote afore in few words, By which, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the*

Spirit." It is the Holy Spirit who unveils the reality of Christ. He is the one who leads us into all truth about Jesus. It is through revelation that the Holy Spirit brings reality to the Person of Jesus. Instead of being a concept, belief, idea, or theology, He actually becomes living when the Holy Spirit connects scriptural knowledge about Jesus to the reality of the depths of His infinite, righteous character, the heights of His incredible redemption and ways, and the width of His unwavering commitment that brought Him into complete submission to the will and plan of the Father.

Without the revelation of the Spirit of God, the Written Word remains a point of knowledge that proves to be lifeless and powerless to impact our lives. The Apostle Paul makes reference to this in *2 Corinthians 3:6*: "*Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.*"

Knowledge alone gives us a limited understanding of Jesus on an intellectual level. However, such understanding becomes stagnant because it never really develops past what it understands or manages to get into the spirit to bring forth life. Revelation brings us to a greater understanding about Jesus. Such understanding is not limited by some intellectual conclusion, but is open ended to explore greater aspects about His character, example and work. Knowledge involves processing facts into information, but revelation begins with faith that allows the Holy Spirit to unveil Christ in greater ways. In fact, real faith begins at the point of darkness where a person has come to the end of personal understanding about a matter, but still chooses to believe and trust the character of God through such darkness. It is at the point of such faith, that the light of revelation often breaks through the darkness to unveil greater depths and truths about the Lord, making Him real and personal.

The challenge with revelation is that it serves as a great test. When the unveiling of Christ occurs, a person must make a determination to apply it or walk it out. If an individual fails to properly apply or walk out the revelation, it will turn into the darkness of un-

SATAN'S MOST POWERFUL TOOL

By Jeannette Haley

Anyone who has ever suffered the betrayal of a sacred trust knows the tumultuous after-effects. Depending on the degree, or levity, of the betrayal, a wronged individual may suffer through the initial stages of shock and disbelief, which progress downward to different levels of emotional trauma that can culminate in the final stage of deep depression and even thoughts of suicide.

Have you ever been there? I have. It was back in the early 80's, and I remember it well. My near-perfect little world was suddenly turned upside-down. No one, including myself, could've foreseen the bomb of betrayal that was about to explode in my face on what started out as a regular, normal day.

My handsome husband and I lived in a new house, in a nice town in western Washington. He held down a good-paying job, and I was able to pursue my career as an artist, and painting teacher. I enjoyed cooking and entertaining friends. But, the most important aspect of my life was the church we both attended because it was considered one of the best teaching churches on the entire West Coast. Teaching and making disciples of Christians, in most American churches nowadays, is almost as extinct as the dinosaurs.

Uppermost on my "list" of priorities was to know Jesus, worship Him, learn of Him and serve Him. Having a good marriage and becoming a successful artist followed suit. However, as many a married Christian can testify, you can't change the heart of your spouse, or control their free will. If a spouse chooses to give in to his or her selfishness, the results are always destructive.

So, on that ordinary day, sitting with my husband at the kitchen table, I was as unsuspecting, and unprepared, for the bomb that was about to be dropped on me as those who met their fate at the hands of the Japanese in Pearl Harbor. My "perfect" little world shattered into a million pieces as the matter-of-fact confession of adultery slammed me into a

state of shock.

It goes without saying that in times such this a person's faith is tested beyond measure. I clung to the Lord, and His Word, like a drowning person clings to the side of a capsized boat. For about two weeks I struggled to work through my reeling emotions. And, then, just when I was ever so slightly beginning to move away from the precipice of destruction towards a place of healing and strength, I heard the voice. I will never forget it.

It came unexpectedly one night when I was alone in my kitchen. As I was mechanically walking across the kitchen towards the refrigerator, my mundane thoughts were suddenly interrupted by the sweetest, most celestial voice I had ever heard. This voice may not have been audible to the physical ear, but it most certainly was audible in my mind. I knew that this voice was beyond the realm of any human voice, including my own, and that it originated, and came, directly from the unseen world. He said, "I can kill you."

For a moment I was so taken aback by this experience that I simply froze in my tracks. The unseen presence waited for my reaction. My mind was racing as the syrupy camouflage of these four little words gave way to *truth*. Yes, Satan could kill me, but *only if I let him push me to suicide*. His half-truth infuriated me, and I commanded him to go, in the Name of Jesus, which he did in an instant. After that incident, the Lord began to heal my broken heart.

Because Satan is a liar, and the father of lies (John 8:44), he is proficient at twisting God's Word into half truths in order to deceive, and destroy, those who are either ignorant or weak in their knowledge of the truth. For example, we read in Genesis 3 the conversation that Satan initiated with Eve. Keep in mind, Eve was in a state of innocence. She had no experience with subtlety, deception, lying, or evil.

We see that the first ploy Satan used was inference. Through this device, he inferred that God was not trustworthy and truthful. Having planted this seed of doubt in her mind, verses 4 and 5 reveal his next move: "*And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your*

eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Thus we see Satan's use of half-truths in operation. Neither Adam nor Eve died physically *at the moment when they ate the forbidden fruit*, but they did die spiritually because the Spirit of God departed from them. Did Adam and Eve become "gods" (or as God?) No, they did not; however, they opened themselves up to experience evil, and the ruination of it, from that time forward.

Moving ahead to *Matthew chapter 4*, we read of the incredible encounter Jesus had with Satan in the wilderness. Jesus was tempted in every way we are—with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Keep in mind, Satan used Scriptures, taken out of context, as the bait. Jesus could have turned the stones into bread, He could have cast Himself off of the pinnacle of the temple, and He could have fallen down and worshipped the devil. As we know, in every instance he overcame by quoting the Word of God.

Rayola explains: "The Scriptures Satan quoted to Jesus would actually have become half-truths. Whenever a Scripture is directed at man for the purpose of proving that Satan's twisted presentations are valid, it becomes a point of agreement. There is no truth in half-truths because they put the burden on man to set the record straight in his own power or strength. Satan has to get people to agree with him about a matter before he can gain inroads into an issue. He always puts the burden on man to defend, prove and validate what has already been established as truth in the courts of heaven. If Jesus had complied to Satan's temptation, He would have not only come into agreement with him, but He would have been dealing with him from an earthly perspective rather than a heavenly one which states that when doubt is being put on God's character or Word, let God be true, and all else considered a lie."

We know that Satan is the one who has "*blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them,*" (1 Corinthians 4:4) but, what about the post-modern church? Are

there specific lies, or half truths, that we can illuminate that disclose Satan's deception among the undiscerning within today's "churchianity"? The answer to that question is a resounding yes! In fact, volumes could be written on the deception in the Church.

Satan has no need to audibly voice his lies and half-truths into the ears of the unsuspecting because he has, at his disposal, a veritable army of false apostles, and deceitful workers, who have transformed themselves into the apostles of Christ. (See *2 Corinthians 11:13*.) Why is it that whenever someone stands up and claims to be the mouthpiece of God, or some "great, anointed prophet of the Lord," that people knock each other down chasing after them? The gullibility of undiscerning Christians is not only an embarrassment, but it is downright dangerous! How many lost souls have been totally turned off in disgust at the hype (and oftentimes hysteria) ignorant crowds of professing Christians display? The Apostle Paul went on to write: *"And no marvel: for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works"* *2 Corinthians 11:14, 15*.

God, through the Apostle Peter, warned us that *"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 [damnable] 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..."* *2 Peter 2:1-3*.

These "damnable heresies," or teachings that will damn the soul if believed, crept into the early Church and have been with us ever since in varying shades and degrees. At this point, it can't be emphasized enough that all believers, and every Christian leader, needs to educate themselves about the history of the true Church which has, through the centuries, continually separated herself out from such corruption. E. W. Broadbent's excellent book, "The Pilgrim Church," is a detailed historical account of the

incredible journey, through suffering, defamation, cruel torture, and martyrdom, of the true Church. You can order it through The Berean Call, toll free: 800-937-6638.

Let's examine some of the lies and half-truths that many unsuspecting people are basing their eternal security upon, beginning with the issue of salvation. Most of us have heard the time-worn cliché given at the end of evangelistic crusades, or in churches. And, most likely, most of us have responded to it, at least once. It goes something like this: "Won't you come now to the altar and accept Jesus into your heart? All you have to do is repeat the sinner's prayer, and ask Him into your heart, and you'll be saved." I realize that this is a shortened version, but I'm sure you've heard altar calls along this line, even though the Bible never mentions "accept" Jesus, neither does it give people an "easy-believism" formula for salvation.

The late Paris Reidhead, a man who fully understood the truth that salvation is a Person, not a doctrine, wrote: "Tracing the various word forms of 'salvation' through the New Testament, we find the verb has four tenses: (the perfect tense), I have been saved from the *pleasure* of sin, which is repentance; (the past tense), I was saved from the *penalty* of sin, which is justification; (the present tense), I am being saved from the *power* of sin which is sanctification and; (the future tense), I shall be saved from the *presence* of sin which is glorification.

"To explain the broadness of salvation, Paul says, '... for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed' (Romans 13:11). Again, he says, 'For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life' (Romans 5:10).

"In God's mind, our salvation was accomplished by Jesus Christ at Calvary. *Potentially*, salvation became ours at the point of repentance. *Experientially*, it is ours when we see ourselves in union with Christ. *Effectively*, this salvation will be ours through the endless ages of eternity. This hardly gives us a view of salvation that can be reduced to a formula, or a prayer

uttered at one moment in time. We have before us a view of the heights of heaven—and of ourselves transformed into new creations!" [Excerpt taken from "Finding the Reality of God" by Paris W. Reidhead]

When we buy into a "cheap grace," "easy-believism" gospel, we have bought one of Satan's greatest lies. Paul warned of those who preached "another Jesus," "another Spirit" and "another gospel" than that which they had preached. Jesus said, *"Ye must be born again"* *John 3:7b*. John Wesley concluded: "The new birth is that great change which God works in the soul, when He brings it into life and raises it from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. The new birth is the change wrought in the soul by the almighty Spirit of God, when that soul is created anew in Christ Jesus. The Spirit renews the soul of man after the image of God and adds to it righteousness and true holiness."

Wesley also wrote: "So desperately wicked and so deceitful are the hearts of men that they flatter themselves by living in their sins until they come to their last breath. Thousands really believe they have found a way to live. But it is a broad way and will lead them to destruction."

Some believe that once you receive Christ, you are now eternally secure regardless of how rotten your attitudes may be, or how wicked and godless your life may be. Maj. W. Ian Thomas's succinct and truthful words remind us: "The claim that you are in Christ Jesus, and under no condemnation because you have been redeemed, is only valid if it is vindicated by a walk that indicates your new relationship to God.

"I know of no gospel in the Bible that offers you salvation from the condemnation of your sin, that does not at the same time demand a radical change of walk! A walk under entirely new management, revolutionized according to an entirely new principle of life . . ." ["The Saving Life of Christ" pg. 43] Scripture makes it clear that we are to *"work out our salvation with fear and trembling."* We are to work out the life of Christ within us through obedience. Paul put it this way: *"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I*

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(*Knowledge, Con't.*)

belief. However, if a person assimilates the revelation into their lives, he or she will become more enlightened concerning God and His ways.

The writer of *Hebrews* gives us this insight about being spiritually enlightened in *Hebrews 6:4-5*. He actually identifies four aspects about this particular stage of understanding. He said that those enlightened have tasted of the heavenly gift. To taste something is to experience the flavor, texture and smell. As for the heavenly gift, it points to experiencing, or living, the life of Christ in us, which is eternal, complete and satisfying.

The next aspect of the enlightened state is that a person has also been made a partaker of the Holy Spirit. To partake of the Holy Spirit implies that one has participated with the Spirit to clearly establish this gift of life as they walk it out by faith. Such participation also points to experience.

The next aspect of this state of insight is that the person has tasted of the good Word of God. In other words, a person has partaken of or assimilated the milk (doctrine) and meat (righteousness) of the Word to ensure maturity. Once again, such a person is experiencing the washing of the Word to bring forth cleansing, the sharpness of it to penetrate and expose the inner man, the hammer of it to tear down that which is unacceptable, and the fire of it to purge that which is deemed unholy.

Finally, a person who has been enlightened has also tasted the power of the age or world to come. In other words, such people have experienced the promises of God, as they have kept their focus on their real destination of that which is heavenly and eternal. Notice how those who are enlightened have experienced God in different ways.

The question is do you simply possess knowledge of spiritual truths or have you been enlightened by the life of such truths through revelation? Do you know of Jesus or are you striving to come to the knowledge or understanding of Him as far as His Person, work and glory? Have you settled for your present comfortable,

controllable conclusions, or beliefs about Him, or are you striving to always come higher in Him to explore Him in His glory in order to reach down into His depths to discover His immutable character and ways? In summation, has the living Son of God been revealed to you?

(*Satan's Tool—Con't.*)

live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" Galatians 2:20.

Romans 12:1-2 tells believers what we must do: "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies as 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." Jesus paid the price to purchase, or redeem us. We are not our own. If we are truly His, then we no longer have the right to live as we please, think as we please, do as we please, and believe as we please. Yet, Satan makes sure that we are exposed to the watered-down gospel that is humanistic to the core. He'll subtly insinuate that God loves you, so of course He wants you to be happy. He wants you to be blessed with health and wealth. He wants you to enjoy life on your terms. Never mind that the entire Bible from Genesis through Revelation is about Jesus Christ; Satan will, through his many mouthpieces who pervert and twist God's Word, make it all about you.

Satan's half-truths and lies push people into darkness, bondage and despair. His clever devices convince well-meaning, but misinformed people that going to, or joining, some church or denomination will guarantee them entrance into heaven. He deceives the unsuspecting into believing that God loves them no matter what they think, what their attitudes are, or how they live. He seduces people into believing that Jesus came to save them *in* their sin, rather than *from* their sin. He encourages the weak to lean upon the arm of flesh, instead of Christ. He lures the ignorant away from devoted study and meditation upon the Word of God

by drawing them into a substitute diet of entertaining novels, self-help books, and godless psychology. He tempts well-meaning believers to obey God in their own strength, conforming outwardly rather than allowing the Spirit of God to work the very life of Jesus in them, thus causing them to become self-righteous and legalistic. And, if all of that fails, he will twist Scripture with his lies and half-truths to push people into extremes of religiosity, causes and personal agendas that result in dissension and division among the brethren.

Revelation 12 tells us that "the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan," has deceived the nations. Keep that in mind if you think that he cannot deceive you. Jesus warned that the deceiver will deceive many. (See *Matthew 24:11, 24.*) The question is has the enemy of your soul deceived you with his lies and half-truths? Ask the Lord to show you if you've been deceived in any way, and, if you have, ask the Lord to reveal the truth to you, for the truth shall make you free!

QUOTABLES

"God is not looking for brilliant men, is not depending upon eloquent men, is not shut up to the use of talented men in sending His gospel out in the world. God is looking for broken men who have judged themselves in the light of the cross of Christ. When He wants anything done, He takes up men who have come to the end of themselves, whose confidence is not in themselves, but in God." - H.A. Ironside

"Being broken is both God's work and ours. He brings His pressure to bear, but we have to make the choice...All day long the choice will be before us in a thousand ways."
- Roy Hession.

"O God, may we never grow used to hearing the thud of Christless feet on the road to hell." - W. P. Nicholson, born 1876 in Northern Ireland.

"The evangelization of the world depends on a revival of prayer. Deeper than the need for men is the need for the forgotten secret of prevailing, world-changing prayer."

- Andrew Murray, (9 May 1828—18 January 1917) was a South African writer, educationist and Christian pastor, was a champion of the South African Revival of 1860.

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

SUFFERING AND THE CHRISTIAN

Q: *I have a question about suffering. What is the difference between a Christian suffering and an unsaved person suffering?*

A: Suffering is one subject that is confusing for many Christians. There is a false impression that has taken root in Christendom that if a Christian suffers for a prolonged or inconvenient time, as far as those around him or her are concerned, such a person must have some type of sin in his or her life. The reason for this philosophy varies, but for many people they want to believe that they can avoid or control suffering in their lives. In fact, some believe that if they live a certain way, they can be an exception when it comes to suffering, rather than the rule that seems to prevail in people's lives.

However, any person born into the human race will experience some type of suffering. One of the main reasons for suffering finds its origins in the Garden of Eden. Man was promised paradise, but because of sin, a curse was pronounced that clearly changed the quality of man's life (*Genesis 3:16-19*). It was through this curse that death made its entrance. Man would not only struggle, toil and pour out his sweat to survive, but in the end he would find himself returning to dust from which he came to taste the vanity of his life in the grave of death.

It is important to point out Jesus became a curse for us on the cross, but the cross addressed the vanity of man's life in light of eternity (*Galatians 3:10*). In other words, man can obtain spiritual well-being and life in Christ, but His act of redemption did not do away with the sorrow that is prevailing in this world due to the darkness of sin that freely reigns in the hearts of men. The Apostle Paul confirmed this by stating that all creation was made subject to vanity, and that the whole creation groans and travails in pain (*Romans 8:20, 22*).

There are four types of suffering. They are physical, mental, emotional,

and spiritual suffering. Physical suffering points to such things as sickness, which can end in physical death. Mental anguish occurs due to some type of loss, such as the death of a loved one, the lost of material possessions or status. Such anguish can lead to total despair. Emotional suffering occurs because of such feelings as failure, rejection and loneliness, ending in a pit of depression. Spiritual suffering is the result of sin. People find themselves spiritually vexed because of the devastating wake that sin leaves as it perverts, defiles and destroys lives and relationships. Such suffering often ends in some type of separation.

This brings us to the difference that exists between the suffering that takes place in Christians' lives and those who are unsaved. The differences come down to two fronts: the reason that suffering is occurring, and the affects it has on the person. For example, the saved may be experiencing suffering for the sake of righteousness. The Bible tells us that those who live godly in this present life will suffer persecution. The Apostle Paul also talks about the reproach that is suffered by those who trust in the living God. He gives the promise that those who suffer for the sake of righteousness will be glorified with Jesus, and will also reign with Him (*Romans 8:17; 1 Timothy 4:10; 2 Timothy 2:12*).

As for the unsaved, sometimes they suffer because they taste the consequences for sinful living. The Apostle Peter brings out a valuable contrast in *1 Peter 4:12-19*. He tells believers that they will be tested in their faith, but to rejoice because they are partakers of Christ's suffering. He goes on to explain if Christians find that they are made a reproach for Christ's sake, to not be ashamed but be happy. Such rejoicing will result in Christ's glory as it is unveiled in their lives. But, he also exhorts Christians to avoid suffering because they are in some type of sin. Peter reminded them that judgment will begin in the house of God and that since the righteous are scarcely saved, what will happen to those who disobey the Gospel? He ends on this note: *"Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the*

keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

Peter clearly tells us that Christians do suffer according to the will of God. Such suffering tests and refines faith; serves as a point of identification with Christ, and can become a means in which Christians can also enter into the sufferings with others in order to bring consolation to them (*2 Corinthians 1:3-8*). However, suffering is also a result of sin. And, those who fail to address their sins in this present life, according to God's provision of Jesus Christ, will find themselves in a perpetual state of suffering, torment and consuming despair in the lake of fire (*Revelation 20:11-15*).

LETTERS & EMAILS

"Most of our churches are in real trouble. The spirit of deception having been loosed upon the earth is very strong. The only way to insure we won't be deceived is to study the Word diligently with the aid of the Greek and Hebrew Dictionaries. Too many lean on books and teachers to lead us, when we need to be eating the Word of God directly. Our walk in God and Salvation is too dear to entrust to others. We will be swept into error if we are not diligent in studying the Word for our selves. I am not saying we don't need Godly teachers and Pastors, I am saying we need to study what they teach for ourselves and go deeper." - AR

"This nation and most of the God rejecting and disobedient church goings are cursed. Deuteronomy 28:15- to the end of the chapter. Repent and turn and ask God's mercy to help overcome and be cleansed in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ." - NM

"One I love is 'The fear of the Lord is clean converting the soul.' And a healthy fear of the Lord will keep us in the evil day.' Yes, how thankful I have been for that kind of fear of the Lord in some specific times in my life where I know I would have sinned gravely had I not had a very real and healthy fear of the LORD." - WA

"I am especially enjoying this series [Rayola's daily devotions]. Thanks." - ID