

GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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

PO Box 571 - Priest River, ID 83856 * www.gentleshepherd.com * February 2014

The Odyssey Part 13 **LIFE HAPPENS** By Rayola Kelley

Through the years I have had to confront many different challenges. For example, there was the infamous challenge of finances. There is nothing that can test and expose your point of reliance like finances. In such times I found that my faith was misdirected and what small faith I had was being consumed in the fires of the present testing.

I remember in one situation feeling somewhat abandoned and inept to do anything about my financial situation. I was operating on the fringes of self-pity, because I had tried so hard to apply faith to each challenge. I really wanted to get it right and be a person of faith, but I proved to be a constant failure in all of my attempts. This was when the Lord showed me that faith is a personal choice. He did this by giving me a picture of the plush valleys of Sodom and Gomorrah and one of Daniel's three companions walking in the fiery ovens of Babylon. He then instructed me to choose one of them. Needless to say, I chose the fiery ovens of Babylon because I knew Jesus was walking in the oven with Daniel's three companions, while God put the fire of judgment to Sodom and Gomorrah. I also learned that genuine faith expresses itself in obedience to God and His Word.

Another challenge life brings you is when your physical body is being touched in such a way that it turns out to be a long night of testing. In fact,



you feel that it will prove to be eternal, never ending and always wearing your resolve down until you feel yourself ready to give up, and let go of the life you have, but for some reason, you don't have what it takes to even let go. Nothing makes sense, and all you can do is cling to the example of Job as the blanket of depression wraps itself around you and insipid self-pity plagues you. You have no real strength to fight, and what energy you do have goes into trying to survive the ordeal. You do everything to hold on, but then you realize you have no means to hold on, so you conclude that God must be holding onto you because life continues to pulsate through you without rhyme or reason.

I remember one time hitting such a low in my life because of my physical condition. I knew death was working in me. I felt that every day life was ebbing away. I sat there, resigned to accept the inevitable. I was ready to walk through the valley of death. It was then that the Lord showed me the valley of death did not always mean physical death, but death to aspects of the old man. The real purpose of the valley is to prepare His people for that which is greater. In my case it was for the purpose of bringing forth a greater ministry of consolation, and for my life to serve as a testimony of God's abiding and faithful hand being on His people during such times.

Then there is injustice. You know what I mean! You encounter false accusations, wrong-doings, and slander. Instead of having the freedom to meet your foe and set the record straight you must keep quiet. The reason is because those involved already have their take on it, and due to the emotional aspect of the situation, the Biblical standards of truth, righteousness, and justice are clearly being replaced by some type of fleshly passion that will override reason. Therefore, you must quietly take abuse, while truth is ignored, righteousness is subdued,

and justice is reduced to a stifling oppression. As for me, during such times I have to let go of the anger, fear, or injustice I feel and remember that God, who is the righteous Judge, will settle all matters in a just way, and if any revenge is called for, He will be the one who carries it out.

The next type of challenge comes in the form of loss. The Bible tells us that Satan comes in as a thief, to rob, kill, and destroy. In some cases you are trying to hold on to what you think is right, only for it to be destroyed in some wilderness of testing. In other instances, you are trying to establish what is right, and you find yourself robbed from securing the completion or victory of your goal. In fact, it is often left in a heap of ashes, forcing you to start all over again. While fighting total despair you look at the whole matter and wonder if the Christian life and way is worth it. I used to ask the Lord, "Why is it so hard to serve You?" The answer was always the same, "I guaranteed my followers that they would have tribulation in this world, but they were not to fear for I have overcome it" (John 16:33).

When it comes to the matters of zeal and enthusiasm for the matters of God, you find such passion being hindered. It is like a deluge of water being thrown on the fire of your passion from every direction, which brings your devotion to the brink of total extinction. You wrestle with what seems to be the senselessness of it all, only for your strength to be robbed and your resolve practically murdered by the onslaught of challenges. You do everything to hold on to what you have been entrusted with from heaven above without any results. You realize that what is being tested by the fires are your character and your testimony, and both are either being purified or destroyed in the heat and flames. You sit in confusion and realize that you have nothing to offer

God, for it has all been consumed in the fire on some noxious altar of the world.

In the past my ultimate attitude towards such an experience was, I might as well sit in the middle of the road and let the truck of self-pity run over me so that I could excuse my miserable state, justify my insane reasoning, and condone my obnoxious ways. After all, it seems everything I was doing to ensure a right outcome was all a waste of time and energy. I would ask the Lord in my utter despair, "What do you expect from me? I am only your handmaiden!"

On one occasion when I was waiting for the "truck" to run over me to fling me down into the pit of depression, the Lord was gracious enough to give me a well-known Scripture, "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45).

It was then that I realized God may have children, but He does not have favorites. In other words, as His children we are not immune from the happenings of life. Life is life, and whether we are children of God or children of Satan, life is going to bring what it may our way. The difference between the children of God and the children of Satan comes down to the trust issue that in spite of the challenges we are confronted with, we can know and take comfort in the fact that God directs the footsteps of His children through the trials and challenges of life. In fact, He has a glorious purpose in mind when we are being challenged by the matters of life. It is at this point that we need to recognize our real test. It will always come down to how we handle the lessons and challenges of life. We can handle these challenges in submission to the Spirit and in obedience to His Word or we can handle them like the children of the unbelieving world, or the children of the rebellious flesh, or the disobedient children of Satan.

It was from this premise that many of my attitudes about life and my walk with the Lord began to change. Before this simple truth was revelation to my spirit, I found myself going around the same mountain, feeling the same despair, and hope-

lessness about the matters of life, and experiencing what appeared to be vanity, a waste of time and energy in all my attempts to do right and serve the Lord.

I had to realize that life happens to everyone. Life is our teacher who tests us in the schoolroom of the world. It brings good and bad, it can leave sadness and happiness in its wake, and inspire greatness, while presenting overwhelming obstacles that can easily produce defeat. At times life brings gentle winds that carry us along, but many times we encounter lifeless, dead air that stifles any progress, while other times raging winds will blow across our bow, threatening to shipwreck us. There are times we will be lifted up by life, other times abased, humbled, and broken by it.

Life marches according to an unseen hand. It will not wait for us, but we will often find ourselves caught up with its pulse. Sometimes we feel that the pulse of life moves slowly, but other times we feel as if we are caught up with its tidal waves, and like Jonah flung out on the shoreline, weathered by trials, tested by an unseen hand, and left vulnerable for the vultures. Sadly, like Jonah we foolishly seek a booth to sit under and sulk, while waiting for God to condescend to our way of thinking.

The key about life is that it moves, it interacts, and it reacts. There is nothing that remains the same about it. It carries a bit of mystery because you do not know what it will bring your way, as well as carries anxiety because you do not know how you will handle its various tests. It brings much frustration because you cannot control it. It can produce resentment because you know that it has a way of testing your very person, often revealing the harsh reality that you fall short of the mark that God intends for you.

I must admit I have experienced all the murmuring types of attitudes towards life. I have raged against it, became obnoxious towards it, sulky, resentful, and downright mean-spirited. I have tried to bargain with God to change the circumstances, cleverly reason with Him why He should change the terrain, and when He failed to respond, I would accuse Him silently in my mind for not caring. This is where I played the blame game. It was all His

fault that I was handling it the way I was because He did not see fit to change my circumstances. As I look back at my foolish, selfish, spoiled attitudes and attempts, I realize even more how long-suffering God is with His people.

I later discovered that at the end of every great test is an opportunity for God to part the waters for me. It took awhile for me to realize that deliverance was at the end of my strength, reasoning, and personal attempts. It was only when I was at the end of myself that God could intervene on my part and show Himself mighty. It was when there was no other solution but God, no other way but genuine faith, and no other resource but to trust what the Bible said, that I finally witnessed God being God.

We make it hard on ourselves. In our human frailty, we would rather be mad at God than trust Him to show us that His way is better. We want to tell God how to do it according to our small box of understanding, rather than believe He knows what He is doing. We think we know what is best for us, when in reality the best consists of a fairytale reality that may be self-serving, but is unrealistic.

The reality is we do not like to be tested because our flesh will cry foul and our pride will become touchy, unreasonable, and stiff-necked. We do not want to deny self, nor do we want to apply the cross so that we can follow Christ in righteous ways. Rather, we demand our rights to life on our terms. In essence, we do not want to walk the hard, narrow way of Christianity. We would prefer to believe God is unfair than to face the reality that life happens, even to Christians. We want to ride high on self-serving notions as we claim rights as God's favorites, which in our mind will make us immune from the ups and downs of life.

We hide behind wishful thinking when we convince ourselves that if He loves us, He will spare us of the various disciplines that life brings. And, when we experience those aspects of life that we think God should spare us from, we become disappointed, angry, and bitter towards Him. We harden our heart towards Him, thinking that we will show Him a

thing or two. We strike out to make Him pay in some way, but in the end the only one who pays will be us.

The cost of our stiff-necked ways will be broken relationships beginning with God. Usually our foul attitude will affect other relationships as well, which causes separation from them. We avoid facing the fruits of our own attitude by excusing ourselves as to why we had a right to insist on our own way in the first place; and, when we start paying consequences for the bitter cup we have poured, and stirred for ourselves, we begin to justify ourselves in our own eyes, while searing our conscience against any conviction from heaven.

Life happens and it will happen to each of us. Based on the attitude we adopt towards it, it will determine the type of cross it becomes to each of us. Some bear a heavy cross because they bear it alone, while others bear a torturous cross because they have refused the discipline it brings. And for some, the cross proves to be greater liberty to discover what it means to soar in His Spirit.

As we embark on a New Year, perhaps it would serve us well to examine our attitudes towards life. Our attitude towards life will often determine our attitude towards God. Clearly, life will happen to each of us. Life brings its own elements with it that set up circumstances that can serve as vise grips against our person. It can bring tremendous heat and fire along with great winds, as well as stormy waters. However, we need to remember that God will use such times to form in us the life of His Son. He has the means to hammer out hardness, chisel away the excess, cut away the profane, construct the impossible, form the incredible, and bring forth the extraordinary.

The Apostle Paul summarized it in this way, *"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ"* (Philippians 1:6) †



A FOOL FOR CHRIST, AND A DONKEY FOR JESUS

Jeannette Haley

It all begins when a person concludes that he or she wants to be "in the ministry." This decision can be based on a number of things, whether noble or ignoble, depending on one's personal agenda. A desire to "be in the ministry" can spring from a moment of spiritual ecstasy, sympathy for the plight of the lost, pressure from Christian family or friends, expectation from church affiliation, or possibly from strong emotional response to any number of situations or things. While these may serve as a point of awakening that stirs a person up to want to fling him or herself into religious exploits, such an awakening can also rapidly dissipate into an emotional fog that fades into obscurity if the cost is not counted, the price (of experience, and self-denial) is not paid, or when life itself flattens the zealot like a pancake left on a railroad track when the midnight special roars through.

It is no secret that some decide to go into ministry for strictly mercenary reasons in order to benefit themselves either financially, or politically, or perhaps to gain position, and power, in high places. Such is the case with certain men throughout church history who chose to become a clergyman for the security of a position in society with financial benefits. Take, for example, Robert Mueller, who set out to make a secure living for himself in such a position, but God had other plans for Mueller, and after he was truly converted to Christ he became the great man of faith who proved not only to England, but to the entire world that God answers prayers of faith. Mueller had many accomplishments, but he is best known for the five large orphanages he built, and the 10,024 orphans he cared for.

Reading biographies (such as that of the life of George Mueller, and others) the testimonies of missionaries, as well as documented accounts of Christian martyrs, and other faithful workers for the Lord who have gone on before us is encouraging, faith-building, challenging, and inspiring. *"Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin*

which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" Hebrews 12:1, 2. (Emphasis added.) The lives and testimonies of these overcomers in Christ can be a powerful means to bring sobriety into our hearts which causes us to become "fixed" (rooted and grounded); thereby, forever abolishing foolish fantasies, and illusions of what true ministry really is.

The Bible makes it crystal clear that the Christian life is not about being "saved to sit." We are all called to daily follow Christ, and that entails much more than the nominal "once saved, always saved" person who has never been properly discipled thinks. Thoughtfully consider Luke 9:23-26,

"And he [Jesus] said to them all, if any man [that is, any person] will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels." (Emphasis added.)

Following Christ is a command for every Christian, not just for a select few, but this doesn't necessarily mean that every soul that is committed to Christ has a calling to serve as a pastor, apostle, prophet, teacher, or evangelist. (See Ephesians 4:11, 12.) However, every born again believer is part of the Body of Christ, or a member of the universal Church, and is called to be the salt and the light in this dark world, following Jesus daily as the Spirit leads. Romans 12:1, 2 is for every Christian, not just for those who are called into full-time, ministerial service. *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, 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."

Having said that, let us go on to the subject of "being in the ministry." So often people have an unrealistic idea of what "*the ministry*" is. There seems to be an aura of "mystique" about it, or the idea that it is "glamorous"—especially so in the minds of the young, the inexperienced, the religious novices, and the naive. I think back to a time when I was young, inexperienced, immature, and full of zeal for the Lord. After reading a little book about the ministry of Kathryn Kuhlman, I decided that I wanted to be just like her, standing up on the platform under the lights, preaching fiery sermons, experiencing the power of God coming down, and scores of people being healed. God in His wisdom didn't make me into another Kathryn Kuhlman, of course, but in His grace and mercy He did give me a taste of preaching, healing, deliverances, the gifts of the Spirit, and the power of God for a rather "action-packed," exciting season that eventually "spread and leveled out" much like a breaking wave on the beach. Through it all I learned that true ministry, or *service*, is a high calling that carries with it a huge responsibility, which is not to be taken lightly. *James 3:1* warns, "*My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.*" That "greater damnation" is a warning to those who would lead God's sheep astray by teaching error or heresy by adding to, or taking away from the Word of God. (See *2 Corinthians 11:2-4; 12-15; 1 Timothy 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 4:3, 4; Titus 1:11; 2 Peter 2:1-3.*)

I also learned that while serving the Lord may have its short-lived glorious high points, and exciting moments, most true ministry is a behind-the-scenes effort, which generally stretches from days, weeks, and months into years of the most basically mundane, and often thankless work. In *Matthew 25:21* Jesus lays out a fundamental principle for God's servants, "*His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*" The Lord tests us to reveal where our hearts really are, and whom we are

really trying to serve. If it is not for God's glory, and for Him alone, our work, sacrifices, and offerings will go unrewarded no matter how impressive they appear to be.

Through the years we have met many people with very high opinions of themselves concerning "*the ministry*." Many years ago a compassionate friend introduced us to an older, unsaved couple who were quite desperate for help. They owned a Marina on Puget Sound, and had always been private, self-sufficient people. However, the husband had taken to his bed in weakness and despair when his wife was diagnosed with diabetes, and subsequent kidney failure due to an overdose of insulin. She needed transportation to and from her dialyses appointments, and their home was in terrible disarray. At the time, we could provide help once a week with household chores, and transportation for the wife to her dialyses. We began to consider finding help from other Christians we knew who were eager to be in ministry. A certain widowed woman who had the time, and means, came to mind. We approached her with this opportunity to be a witness to the wife by providing transportation for her, thinking she would jump at the chance to serve the Lord. You can imagine our shock and dismay when she snapped, "*That is not what I am called to do!*" As far as we know, her high opinion of herself, and her "*calling*," left her right where she was.

To be in any type of ministry, we must always keep in mind that God resists the proud, the Holy Spirit will not empower, and anoint the proud, and lost sheep will avoid the proud, viewing them as self-serving hypocrites. "*Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time*" *2 Peter 5:5, 6.*

We learn from the greatest Prophet, John the Baptist, another important principle in the Kingdom of God. It is called digression. John said, "*He must increase, but I must decrease*" *John 3:30.* The Lord Jesus Christ must be exalted and glorified in

and through any Christian worker regardless of the particular calling or area of service he or she works in. Any minister, or leader in the church who becomes puffed up in his or her position, lording it over others while demanding them to conform to his or her dictates, or who causes people to tippy toe around a touchy disposition, has no business leading the flock of God in any capacity. Jesus told Peter once, "*feed my lambs*" and twice, "*feed my sheep.*" (See *John 21:15-18.*) A true minister, in obedience to the great commission to make disciples, will faithfully feed the unadulterated Word of God to the Lord's sheep so that they will fall more in love with Jesus, establishing a firm foundation, that they may be "*Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving*" *Colossians 2:7.*

God always prepares His workers beforehand for any service, which generally involves getting into the trenches with lost, and hurting people. This is where you will find many, if not most, of His servants, quietly laying down their lives for the Gospel, faithfully making disciples in the harvest fields of humanity either through direct, personal involvement, or through financial support, and prayer.

We all start out with our own ideas of what "*the ministry*" is all about, usually acquired from generations of established ideas, practices and traditions of men. Like the young George Muller, prideful wannabe ministers think they have it all figured out how to best go about being a "somebody" in "*the ministry*." They assume with TV personalities, and mega church millionaires in abundance to mimic what they deem to be "successful ministry", just how hard can it be? Another route to becoming a "somebody" in "*the ministry*" is to write a far-out book that grabs people's attention. It has to be a book that is easy reading, and not something that requires a person to actually have to engage his or her brain. Thinking can be hard work sometimes, plus thinking just might (God forbid) wake a person up to the difference between truth and error, right Spirit or wrong spirit. Therefore,

in order to make a big splash in the “Christian pool” it is better to write a literary “high dive” of off-the-wall, unscriptural, heretical sensational nonsense such as, *The Shack*, or *Jesus Calling*, even if it is outright heresy or even blasphemous. But, not to worry—you’ll be an overnight sensation, and better yet, rich and famous. Never mind that unless you truly repent, and become converted to righteousness, you’ll face the wrath of God and end up in hell. (“Greater damnation,” remember?)

In order to be a very popular and successful, but also a very hypocritical, false, and phony “Christian” prophet, teacher, preacher, evangelist, author, or worship leader, who makes it to the summit of what I call “Christian Rock Candy Mountain,” a person needs to possess, or be possessed by, certain spirits that oppose all that consists of Spirit and truth. Discerning believers will be quick to discern, either in the person of the false worker, or in his or her fair speeches, writings, music, or other religious works the presence of any of the following: pride, religious spirits, mocking spirits, familiar spirits, lying spirits, beguiling spirits, self-pity spirits, unclean (perverted) spirits, a spirit of lust, a spirit of anger, or a spirit of fear, or any other form of perversion that exalts itself against the knowledge of the Holy. We have encountered all of these spirits through the years, not so much in the world, but in churches. Some of the open doors for such spirits are pride, sin (such as fornication, pornography, adultery), unbelief, and rebellion, idolatry, unforgiveness, dabbling in the supernatural, and occult, the wrong laying on of hands, sorcery (drugs), and so forth.

Contrary to the dearly held idea of zealous novices, real ministry is not a paid vacation for life aboard the good ship lollipop bound for fantasy island where all the “little people” worship and adore them. Real Christianity, and real ministry means giving up your right to yourself (your personal agendas). It means hard work, it means unfeigned love and commitment to God’s sheep. This is summed up, in part, by the Apostle Paul, who declared, “For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are

made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ’s sake...And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day” 1 Corinthians 4:9, 10a, 12, 13. To the Hebrews, “But call to remembrance the former days, in which after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used” Hebrews 10:32, 33. Psalms 119:141 exclaims, “I am small and despised: yet do not I forget thy precepts.” The question is, how many who have “a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge” Romans 10:2b, are truly willing to be a “fool for Christ?”

Another pitfall a zealous believer can easily fall into is the “Who does God call” trap. Once upon a time, (back in my “Kathryn Kuhlman” days) I spent over three years reading, and studying, a particularly large, fully “packed” with information, annotated, study Bible. It was a genuine biblical knowledge “full meal deal” so I was under the impression that my spiritual muscles were rather impressive. One day while reading in *1 Corinthians, chapter 1* about our calling, certain Scriptures hit me square between the eyes. “*But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence*” verses 24-29. The part that about caused me to pass out was “not many wise men.” Lacking understanding of what I was reading, (pride does that, you know) and thinking that God was going to use

me for sure now that I had spent all that time “learning” and becoming “wise,” but here I was, reading God doesn’t use many “wise,” but the foolish, weak, base, and despised. It was as if somebody took a big hat pin and popped my balloon, leaving me deflated and depressed. How could God ever use me since I prided myself as being oh-so-wise?

I chuckle at it now, and thankfully, the truth is, God has used me through the years, not according to my ideas or plans, but according to His plan, and will, for I definitely qualified (and still do) as foolish, weak, base, and yes, sometimes despised. Praise the Lord for His longsuffering, goodness, mercy, and grace “*That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord*” 1 Corinthians 1:29-31. As Christians, we would do well to remember (whether we are in ministry or not) that God does not see people as we see them. God is no respecter of persons, which means those things that we find attractive in people, things we deem as worthy, or useful, or productive, or beneficial, or admirable, and so forth, is not necessarily the way the Lord sees them, for He looks on the heart. The outward appearance can be very deceptive as can a flattering tongue, a person’s social or economic standing, education, experience, talents, or ability to influence. While the Lord can use anything, or anyone to accomplish His purposes for His glory, as Christian workers we are not to overlook the weaker vessels, the despised, the base and the foolish. It is easy to ignore people, both young or old, who seem to linger around the “fringes,” waiting for a friendly smile, a hug, a word of encouragement, an invitation to participate in something, or who need prayer. We need to ask the Lord to help us see through His eyes, and feel with His heart.

Back in the early 80’s I attended one of the best teaching churches on the West Coast. This church also opened its doors to Spirit-filled evangelists who left a lasting impression on the people. I will never forget one

powerful evangelist from John Day, Oregon, Zelma Kirkpatrick, who was perhaps in her late fifties or early sixties at the time. There was a young woman in attendance who had begun showing up at the church on several occasions. It was obvious to most of us that she was promoting and pushing her agenda to be a "big somebody" in "the ministry" in any way she could. Even the pastor, who could be skeptical of religious "eager beavers," was beginning to fall for her blarney. Thank God He protects His sheep! After Zelma delivered her message, she opened it up for people to come forward for prayer ministry. The first person to pop up and scramble to the front was the young woman. I knew that she was laying out her desire to be a great one in "the ministry," and then watched with appreciation as the wise evangelist put her hands on the woman's shoulders, looked her in the eyes, and gently advised her along the line of servant hood, "If you want to be great in God's kingdom," she said, "then what you need to do is look around you, and when you see a sister over here, or over there who needs help, you go and offer to enter in with them and help them." It was no surprise when the young woman suddenly stiffened, whirled around, and stomped back down the aisle. As she passed by, the Holy Spirit spoke to me and said, "You will never see her again." And, I didn't. Jesus said, "*But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted*" Matthew 23:11, 12.

Truly, if our LORD got down on his knees and washed the disciples' feet, and taught them that the servant is not greater than his master, then what makes us think that somehow we are an exception, and deserve to be served rather than serve? The woman who broke the alabaster box with the precious ointment of spikenard and poured it on Jesus' head was greatly scorned by some who saw it, yet it was an act of humble, sacrificial service to the Lord of lords, and Jesus commended her. Think of the seven men of good reputation who were full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom as recorded in Acts 6. You would think that such men, and a

wonderful man like Stephen, who was "a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost" and "full of faith and power, [and who] did great wonders and miracles among the people" should be placed in one of the highest positions, or offices in the church. Isn't that the way we think? Yet, where was he asked to serve? According to *Acts 6*, he was appointed to serve tables for the widows. Yet, so powerful was his witness of the risen Christ that he suffered slander, false accusation, stoning and death. Stephen bears the title of the first Christian martyr. Let's face it—if for one nanosecond any of us thought God would fill us so full of the Holy Ghost, faith and power that we could do great wonders and miracles, don't you think we'd jump at the chance? But, how many who desire to be "great in God's kingdom" would walk away when appointed to lowly table service, slander and death? Jesus taught, "*And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted*" Matthew 23:12.

Leave it to an innocent child to sum things up in a profound way. When we had our fellowship in Nampa, two little incidents we'll never forget is when Stevie, about three years of age at the time, was overheard telling the other little kids that Jesus is the only way to heaven; and, another Sunday, after learning about Balaam's ass, he announced, "I want to be a donkey for Jesus." Oh! that those aspiring to be a "somebody" in "the ministry" could have such a humble and open heart. After all, what does it spiritually profit anyone if, after a picture-perfect church is packed out, the worship team is perfectly "professional," the perfect programs and church activities fill the calendar, the perfect sermons are ear tingling, but nevertheless, the move, and anointing of the Holy Spirit, and the presence of Jesus are missing? To put it another way, how will the man-centered, rather than Christ-centered, nominal Christian churches in this day and age give an answer to Jesus for their failure to obey Him in making disciples, and worshipping Him in Spirit and in truth? Better by far it is to be a faithful servant who has learned, "*I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I 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.

In conclusion, if you truly want to serve the Lord, the question is, are you willing to humble yourself and become a fool for Christ—or a donkey for Jesus? †

COMMENTS

"Rayola, this [Gnosticism] was such a superb article! You stated: What are you pursuing today? Is it 'revelation knowledge' or the revelation of the Person of Jesus? Truthfully, if you are not pursuing to know Christ intimately, you are chasing after a substitute that will not only fail you, but could also bring judgment upon you. As I read these three sentences, I found myself once again thanking God for deliverance from the Health/Wealth gospel [which is NO gospel at all!]. They are very big on using that phrase 'revelation knowledge' and they give the impression to their hearers that they are going to find out something NEW in Scripture. What self-delusion. All they really need to do is turn the phrase around and seek "knowledge of the already given revelation" of our Lord and King! Gnosticism is strictly from a Greek mindset, and that's why it's important that we view the Scriptures from the viewpoint of those to whom they were written; the Hebrew people. I daresay you'll rarely find anyone who teaches from an Hebraic perspective EVER emphasizing what we can get out of our own minds. Nope. They will encourage you to get to know the mind of God Himself. Sorry for stepping up on my cyber-pulpit here . . . I was just very encouraged and animated when I read that great article. May 2014 bring the manifold blessings and mercies of Almighty God upon GSM in a mighty way, that you will be blessed beyond comprehension." - FL

"No one seems to be preaching hell fire and brimstone any more. No wonder the churches are going to hell in a hand basket." - BC

"I want to thank you for your knowledge which you have given me to help me with my walk with Christ. Most of all your friendship." - ID

"COMMENTS" Con't. Pg. 7 Column 3

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

CAN JESUS APPEAR TO PEOPLE TODAY?

Q: This may be a silly question, but I was wondering if the experiences that I heard about, or have read about Muslims seeing Jesus are real. I would like to think they are, but I don't know how such matters work. I was hoping you could bring some type of understanding to me.

A: Your question is not silly. There is debate about whether such experiences are real or not. I can understand why some are skeptical about such incidents. However, when it comes to experiences, I must first of all keep that which is associated with spiritual matters in the right perspective. The first thing I must not do is judge them from my own understanding to avoid becoming a Thomas; rather, I must properly discern them (*1 Corinthians 2:13-15*).

I mentioned Thomas because he was told by the other disciples that Jesus had appeared to them (*John 20:24-29*). Because Thomas was in a despairing place he told them unless he personally witnessed it for himself, he would not believe it.

Thomas is a very interesting individual. As a Jew the Law instructs that within the mouths of two or three witnesses something is confirmed as being so (*Deuteronomy 17:6*; *Matthew 18:16*; *2 Corinthians 13:1*). However, for Thomas it did not matter how many witnesses there were or how credible they were. Since it was not his personal experience he refused to believe it.

Sadly, we have the same scenario with the resurrection of Jesus. There were five hundred witnesses to His resurrection, but look at how many people refuse to believe the record that was left behind (*1 Corinthians 15:4-6*). The tragedy of it all is that if people refuse to believe in their heart that Jesus rose from the grave, they will be lost forever.

This brings me to the important point of discernment. *1 Corinthians 2:10-11* tells us how God reveals a matter, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep

things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." If Muslims are seeing Jesus, it is because the Spirit of God is revealing Him to their spirit. In essence, they are not seeing Jesus in a literal/physical sense, but in a spiritual one. The thing we must remember is that all things are possible with God. He can reveal Himself in whatever way He pleases, and His way will prove to be higher and more excellent than our way. And, because it entails the spiritual realm we must discern it from a spiritual perspective and not judge it from our own intellectual understanding or reasoning.

The way I discern a matter is first of all, is there an agreement as to what these people perceive about Jesus? The stories that I have heard or read about concerning Muslims seeing Jesus have a lot of similarities to them. There is no way that there can be such agreement between these people unless there is a spiritual nature to it. Therefore, it is up to us to test the spirit behind the stories (*1 John 4:1*).

If the right Spirit is behind this revelation, then these people's understanding of Jesus will line up to Scripture. The responsibility of the Holy Spirit is to lead people into all truth about Jesus, and the truth of Jesus has been clearly established in Scriptures. What I have read as to their testimonies so far seems to line up to Scripture.

Another important test is the fruit test. Jesus tells us we will know people by their fruits (*Matthew 7:16, 20*). What kind of fruits follow these people's revelation of Jesus? In the testimonies I am aware of, repentance, salvation, changed lives, and consecration for service to Jesus follows them.

This brings me to the final test. It is the test that has been used to confirm the disciples' faith towards Jesus. It goes like this, "If what the disciples encountered with Jesus is not true, why would they hold to it, especially when being persecuted and put to death? To die for a lie would be insane." We forget that for Muslims to be converted to Jesus means being considered an apostate, resulting in possible persecution, torture, and death. In many cases their families also suffer

horrible atrocities. Why would a Muslim risk everything if seeing Jesus was not real and life changing to him or her? He or she would be insane to die for a lie or a trick of the mind.

In the end days we are told that there will be signs and wonders. The Apostle Paul warned us that in the end days in *2 Thessalonians 2* there will be great lying signs and wonders. However, there are also going to be signs and wonders in relationship to God and His people. In fact, we are told by knowing our God, we can be strong, and do exploits (*Daniel 11:32b*)

This brings us to another important point, and that is, is it important whether I believe these experiences are true or not? To me if people agree or disagree with these experiences is not what I consider an "essential doctrine." In summation, it is not going to determine their salvation. However, what it might affect is their openness to be encouraged and blessed by God's intervention and work. It is like Jesus told Thomas, it was better for him to believe the witness of others than demand that he had to see it with his own eyes before he would believe. We must apply faith to all truths and works of God even if it does not always make sense to us. By doing so, we can also be assured of receiving the blessings that would come with such faith. †

"Comments" Con't from Pg. 6

"Thank you for your faithfulness over these many years. You've all truly been wonderful examples of what a real Christian is! We are so very thankful for you!" - WA

"I've received many neat things from you over the years. Most of all the 'excellent messages' each month. I relish each one." - ID

"I believe as we are walking through these last of the last days, He will be showing us more of Himself, His presence, His nature and His revelation knowledge. It is crucial to stay connected to the Body asking moment by moment for His discernment and the gift of discerning of spirits. And the main thing remember, He has not given us a spirit of fear, but power, LOVE, and a sound, disciplined mind." - WA

YOU ARE INVITED TO VISIT OUR NEW WEBSITE!

<http://gentleshepherd.com/>

(You may have to refresh your browser to view the new Site.)

We are so thankful to Krista Dinatale, and her techie friend, Patrick for the awesome job they have done. More material will be added, and no doubt some "tweaking," but we are thrilled to have this much-improved, beautiful Site.

We are also republishing all of the books previously printed by Ketch Publishing under our own publishing Company, Hidden Manna Publications. Therefore, please direct orders for those particular books directly to Gentle Shepherd Ministries. Thank you.

QUOTING Rayola Kelley

"It doesn't matter how you feel about somebody, you still must be willing to serve that person for the sake of your Lord. That is our reasonable service and what ministry is all about."

"The normal for God is moving among His people and doing the extraordinary, but what we see is people content with the ordinary. What we are content with is not seeing God move at all in our midst. We play church and it is enough."

"When we try to defend that which is wrong, we will oppress that which is right. When we hold on to that which is wrong, we oppress the move and work of the Holy Spirit."

"You cannot put a 'but' in wrong and ever expect it to come out right."

"In ministry you have to call sin sin and bring it down to a personal level."

"What is missing in our churches is the majesty of God. He's been replaced with an indulgent daddy pacifying spoiled children who are pampered and coddled and never grow up."

THE BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

By R. A. Torrey (1856—1928)

In 1 Corinthians 12 we have the fullest discussion of the baptism with the Holy Spirit found in any passage in the Bible. This is the classic passage on the whole subject. The results there recorded are gifts for service. The baptism with the Holy Spirit is not primarily intended to make believers happy but to make them useful. It is not intended merely for the ecstasy of the individual believer; it is intended primarily for his efficiency in service. I do not say that the baptism with the Holy Spirit will not make the believer happy, for part of the fruit of the Spirit is "joy." If one is baptized with the Holy Spirit, joy must inevitably result. I have never known one to be baptized with the Holy Spirit into whose life there did not come, sooner or later, a new joy, a higher and purer and fuller joy than he had ever known before.

But this is not the prime purpose of the baptism nor the most important and prominent result. Great emphasis needs to be laid upon this point, for there are many Christians who, in seeking the baptism with the Spirit, are seeking personal ecstasy and rapture. They go to conventions and conferences for the deepening of the Christian life and come back and tell what a wonderful blessing they have received, referring to some new ecstasy that has come into their hearts. However, when you watch them, it is difficult to see that they are any more useful to their pastors or their churches than they were before and one is compelled to think that whatever they have received, they have not received the real baptism with the Holy Spirit.

Ecstasies and raptures are all right in their places. When they come, thank God for them—I know something about them—but in a world such as we live in today, where sin and self-righteousness and unbelief are so triumphant, where there is such an awful tide of men, women, and young people sweeping on toward eternal perdition, I would rather go through my whole life and never have one touch of ecstasy but have power to witness for Christ. †

A CROWN OF THORNS

A great hymn by
Ira Stanphill ©1952 New Spring

1. There was no crown for Him of silver or of gold

There was no diadem for Him to hold.
But blood adorned His brow,
And proud its stain He bore,
And sinners gave to Him the crown He wore.

CHORUS

A rugged cross became His throne
His kingdom was in hearts alone
He wrote His love in crimson red
And wore the thorns upon His head.

2. He did not reign upon a throne of ivory

But died upon the cross of Calvary.
For sinners there He counted all He owned but loss
And He surveyed His kingdom from a cross.

3. No purple robe He wore,
His bleeding wounds to hide
But stripes upon His back He wore with pride.

And from the wounds there flowed a crimson, cleansing stream
That was a cover for the soul unclean.



RECOMMENDED READING

BOOKS BY A. W. TOZER:

The Knowledge of the Holy
The Pursuit of God

The Purpose of Man: Designed to Worship

Keys to the Deeper Life

Tragedy in the Church, the Missing Gifts

Christ the Eternal Son
Man the Dwelling Place of God