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The Reality of God

Part 21

By Rayola Kelley

This article is the last in this series. I realized that when I started it I would only skim the surface as to the holy character, the righteous ways, the immutable nature, and faithful, abiding presence of God. Even though as believers we can know Him, His ways are higher than our ways, proving at times that His ways can be mysterious, while His pure thoughts reach far beyond our corrupt, earthly understanding, and His eternal nature constantly reminds us that we can't fully comprehend Him in our earthly state (*Isaiah 55:8-9*). We may catch glimpses of Him, but we will only understand in part and see an outline, a shadow of Him through the dark mirror of our fleshly tabernacle (*1 Corinthians 13:9, 12*).



It is for this reason that, as believers, we need to understand that the essence of the Christian life is to pursue after, discover, and experience the reality of God. There is no sustaining substance in any other reality, and no pure, lasting truth in anything other than the heavenly inspired revelation of God. There is no light in any other source but Jesus, nor is there any real hope outside of God. If He is not the ultimate reality in each of us, a reality that must be based on His Word, upheld by His Spirit, and confirmed by those who have walked the walk and run the course before us, then we need to know we are not standing on the immovable Rock of heaven but on the shifting sands of

this present world (*Matthew 7:24-27*). Eventually when all is shaken or being shaken, any life that is being established on "sand" will collapse into a ruinous heap (*Hebrew 12:26-27*).

As I prayed about how to end this series, I was recently reminded of how ill-informed some Christians are about God. Instead of confirming their reality of God with His Word, they have opted to cling to the image of God they have erected to their own liking. They have allowed their fickle sentiments to define His love so that they can embrace the profane in their Christian walk with logical excuses. It has allowed them to maintain their silly notions about Him with their prideful attitudes of self-importance, and their fleshly doctrines as a means to dispel any fear of the Lord they might have. Meanwhile, they hide their sin behind a cheap grace that speaks more of the worldly hype of tolerance than of the righteousness of God.

As you contend with these Christians, you sometimes have to ask yourself, "Are they even born again of the Spirit?" The Bible is clear in *1 John 3:6,9-10*, "*Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him...Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loved not his brother.*"

I realize the above statement can cause confusion for some believers. So let me paraphrase it a bit. Whoever abides in God does so by following Jesus, walking in the Spirit, and obeying His Word. Such individuals will clearly avoid displeasing Him, and whoever is truly born of the Spirit cannot, without conviction, continue to walk in sin because it will be contrary to the new life that is now present

within them.

Now this is not to say as Christians we won't fall into sin at different times, fail to do right at other times, and prove to be clueless about the seductive, enticing traps of the enemy; but, what it does reveal is that if a person is truly saved because he or she has been born again with the life of Christ, the holy Son of God, he or she will have a battle in his or her soul over sin. The conscience at this point will nag at the individual about his or her practices and the person's spirit will begin to feel leanness since he or she can't feel the presence of God in his or her life. Eventually desperation will bring such a person back to his or her faithful, High Priest, Jesus, and into agreement with God as sin is confessed and forgiveness sought, knowing that the blood of Jesus' sacrifice will cleanse from all unrighteousness (*1 John 1:7-9*).

The truth is until sin is taken care of, the person will find self in a battle with the Spirit as He tries to bring the individual to true repentance so a right relationship can be once again restored with God. However, the more a person resists the Spirit's overtures of conviction and logically justifies away any sin, the more his or her conscience can become seared and his or her heart hardened against conviction. His or her ears will develop a dullness towards the truth, and the individual's eyes will become closed to the light (*Matthew 13:13-16; 1 Timothy 4:1-3*).

Before the debate starts, I am not advocating for or against "eternal security." What I am doing is referring to the Word's various warnings to those who believe that some type of Christian's association alone gives them the license (or fire insurance) to sin without risking breaking fellowship with God; all the while resisting the Spirit, becoming hard-hearted and stiff-necked, quickly offended when presented with the truth, while trying to hide from the penetrating light.

It is important to point out that Jesus did not come to *save us in our sin* but to *deliver us from the deadly consequences of it*, the profane influence of it on our minds, the deceitful workings of it in our hearts, and its various tempting activities that constantly challenge our walk in this present age. He did not die so we could run back to the old way; rather, He died, was buried, and rose again so that we could become identified with a complete, new life (*Romans 6:1-13*).

We need to quit fitting God's Word into our worldly lifestyles and pet doctrines and begin to line our lives and doctrines up to the examples, teachings, and principles that God has established as the truth in His Scripture. The Bible is clear that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (*Romans 10:17*). We are also told that what is not of faith is sin; therefore, we need to approach the Word to believe it and walk it out for ourselves regardless of whether a matter fits nicely into our religious concepts (*Romans 14:23*). We need to learn to hear what the Spirit is saying to us in all matters pertaining to life and godliness to ensure we become partakers of His promises (*2 Peter 1:3-4*). We need to keep in mind that if we know to do right in a matter and fail to do so, it is also a form of sin (*James 4:17*).

This brings me to another aspect of the reality of God. It is easy to erect an idol in our hearts and minds because we really do not understand who God is and develop erroneous concepts about Him to maintain our idol. If we are not humanizing God, we are discarding His authority and showing disdain toward His Word, while hiding behind some of His other attributes. It is clear that since the holy light of God will ultimately expose our motives, agendas, and points of priorities, we need to cast off the fig leaves of fleshly excuses, throw off any heavy robe of self-righteousness, and exchange the dirty rags of personal works with the life of Jesus. We need to be reflecting His goodness, and not our personal best.

This brings me to the challenge of the Christian life. We need to quit making everything about what we want to see happen as far as our spiritual lives are concerned, what we

think needs to happen in the lives of others, and what we feel strongly about as to our priorities and activities, religious or not, and make it about Jesus, doing His will and fulfilling His plan for our lives. In essence, we need to get serious about becoming His disciples and quit just tacking Him on to our worldly lifestyles, fitting Him into our fleshly pursuits, and assuming He will bless our religious activities. We need to quit conning ourselves and begin the habit of daily denying ourselves of any right to a personal life outside of Christ, and pick up our cross that will cause us to become dead to the influences of the world so that we can follow Jesus into a life of worshipful service (*Luke 9:23-25*). But, before we can do that, we might have to allow Jesus to turn on the light to expose any erroneous attitudes we may have towards Him and be ready to cast aside all foolish, idolatrous notions we have about Him and the Christian walk in true repentance. Remember, David asked the Lord to put a searchlight on his heart and expose any wicked way (*Psalms 139:23-24*).

This means we can no longer hide behind certain attributes of God, while we avoid becoming His followers. For instance, some Christians hide their objectionable practices behind the fanciful notion that God wants them happy; therefore, He will give them a pass, even if their actions are immoral and profane. The Bible is clear that fleshly, worldly happiness is not part of the promises of God; rather, true, lasting happiness is the actual fruit that comes out of having an upright relationship with God (*Psalms 144:15; 146:5-6*). Godly happiness is not a temporary euphoria; rather, it manifests itself in a satisfying, fulfilling life. When you do a study on what ensures such happiness in the Christian life, it is holiness.

It is not unusual for Christians, who still look to the world for happiness and purpose, to fling off moral responsibility to once again justify tasting of the deadly fruits of the lusts of the flesh. Some see it as a source of happiness, but if they are truly born again, their actions will eventually cause them to find themselves in a wrestling match with God.

The Lord does not call us to hap-

piness, but holiness (*2 Corinthians 7:2; Hebrews 12:14*). Holiness means that we have been set apart from the world to serve as walking epistles, living records, and miniature reflectors of something that is not of this world. We are to bring an opposite contrast from the world and a clear distinction from fleshly ways, ever confirming and pointing to a lasting hope that can't be found in this age.

There are those who hide their unholy agreements and Scriptural disobedience behind God's love. They claim since God is love and since He loves them, He will certainly show tolerance towards any half-hearted ways and compromises. It is true God is love, but all of His attributes will uphold His holiness. What people fail to realize is that God's love does not save us. It is true that out of love God provided a way for people to be saved, but He did so because He is holy.

God had to provide salvation in such a way that His holiness would be upheld. Because He is love, He could do nothing less than to provide the way in which man could be restored back into a relationship with Him. His love proved to be sacrificial and selfless in commitment, genuine in action, and effective in its ability to prove His intentions. He made that love available to everyone who will come to the place of the cross and receive His provision of eternal life. However, such godly love was to inspire like love in the believer and was never meant to be used as a pass for Christians to pursue worldly ways and fleshly desires (*1 John 4:19*).

The question is does God's love overlook man in his rebellion when he shows utter contempt for His Word? Love is a two-way street. You can love someone, but if that individual does not love you back in like manner, it will prove to be a form of rejection. The Bible is clear that godly love must be shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit (*Romans 5:5*). In other words, it comes from above and not from the world or from within.

Such godly love will not rejoice in iniquity and act as if wicked practices are proper and acceptable, especially when a soul could be on the line (*1 Corinthians 13:6*). James said it best, "*Brethren, if any of you do err from the*

truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20). It is clear in the last Scripture that only true conversion to the ways of righteousness is what will ultimately hide a multitude of sins. *Jude 21-23* also states that we need to keep ourselves in this love, referring to how we are to show compassion to some who are struggling, but for others we might have to pull them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. It is for this reason the Bible clearly sets up church discipline when it comes to dealing with sin in the camp. (See *Matthew 18:15-18* and *1 Corinthians 5*.)

Godly love is considered a perpetual debt we can only pay back to God by loving others in an honorable way (*Romans 13:8-10*). In fact, possessing this love for others is the only true confirmation that we are disciples of Jesus (*John 13:34-35*). It is for this reason that Jesus rebuked the church of Ephesus in *Revelation 2:1-7* for leaving its first love and in *John 14:15*, He stated that if you love Him, you will obey Him.

Another of God's attributes that many Christians hide behind is His grace. Those in rebellion present God's grace as a safety net that will catch them no matter how reckless and flippant they are concerning their relationship with the Lord. Once again, does God's grace give us a pass to sin, ignore our Scriptural responsibilities, tout worldly ways, and justify fleshly practices?

The Apostle Paul clearly addressed such a foolish attitude in *Romans 6:1-2*, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" God's grace does not give us a pass to sin. In fact, sin cheapens the work of grace, and fleshly works attempt to frustrate it. The Apostle Paul clearly points out in *Romans 5:21* that sin reigns unto death, but grace reigns through righteousness.

What does it mean for God's grace to reign through righteousness? It is simple, righteousness is accounted to those who operate in faith and

walk according to faith (*Romans 4:2-3*). Faith believes God, responds to God in child-like confidence, and is prepared to receive from God in a proper attitude. Active faith recognizes that all comes from God and is a matter of His goodness. It is this understanding that allows grace to flow downward in blessings and flow throughout a person's life as he or she begins to realize and experience the promises of God.

There are many who do not believe God and what He says in His Word about sin and how His grace works. For example, there are those who arrogantly think they are actually deserving of God's blessings. These individuals never recognize any aspect of His grace for they think they have no need of it. There are those who think they can earn God's consideration by their works. These people will frustrate the real purpose of grace in their life and risk missing the real gifts of God that are bestowed on a person at the point of his or her faith, such as eternal life (*Galatians 2:21*). There are those who assume and treat God's grace like a fire insurance that will cover the damages left behind by their reckless living, but grace can only abound where sin once abounded (*Romans 5:20*). In other words, sin in the case of grace abounding in one's life, is a matter of the past and not an activity of the present.

This brings us to a very important point. The Bible talks about finding grace in *Hebrews 4:16*. Is grace hidden from us? As you consider the above attitudes towards grace, we can conclude that it is hidden from some people. The question is how do we find grace? We are told in the same Scripture that the only way we can find grace is to first obtain mercy from God.

According to the *Strong's Concordance*, the word "obtain" in *Hebrews 4:16* means to take, get hold of, to seize, and to receive. The initial approach to God is to seek God's mercy when it comes to sins (offenses against God), transgressions (breaking of the law and covenant), and iniquity (moral deviation in character). The concept of obtaining this mercy is that one actually gets a hold of mercy's claims to deal with sin,

seize its promise of remitting sins, and receive forgiveness from sin. God's mercy is offered to all, but only those who are seeking to be upright before God will lay hold of it. Those who refuse to see that their particular sin (or sins) are an affront to God, see no need to seek His mercy. Since mercy is a form of grace that holds back judgment on a deserving sinner, the person will never find the grace that serves as a river that flows through a believer's life, carrying spiritual blessings, allowing him or her to taste aspects of God's promises and see glimpses of the heavenly.

It is for this reason we are reminded that we have been saved by grace through faith (*Ephesians 2:8-10*). Although God bestows blessings on all of us when it comes to different aspects of life, only those who receive the promises of God through faith understand the real working of God's grace. As blood-bought saints, we need to realize that we do not deserve God's kindness causing a healthy fear and child-like awe in us. We must recognize the need to be sober in our understanding and vigilant about that which is affecting us, ever recognizing that we are in a battle for souls, minds, and hearts. As believers, we must always keep in mind that it is God's work and His battle, and we are mere instruments in His hand, but we must through humility become soft putty in His hands so He can shape and fashion us according to His will.

We are living in precarious times. The Bible has warned us of these times so the events would not catch us off-guard, and that we would be spiritually ready to stand in the great darkness of insanity that is now engulfing the world. However, we must ever strive to come higher in our knowledge, life, and relationship with God to ensure that we do not become part of the great darkness, lost in its wickedness, seduced by its insanity, and taken away by its strong wave of delusion (*2 Thessalonians 2:10-12*). We must line all we do up to the penetrating light of His holiness, discern the intents of our hearts with His Spirit, choose to love Him over all worldly idols of this age, and seek His mercy in our weakness and failures, knowing that we will find His grace. This means choosing God over all other

realities, preferring to love His truth over our own reality, choosing to follow Him away from the present world towards the glory of the next, and ever assimilating His life as a means to subdue the influence of the "old man" in us.

In coming to a close in this series, I want to leave this parting thought. It is time to take God at His Word about who He is and what it means to accept our high calling as Christians. The reality of God is always going to call His followers forward in faith and upward in their calling, continually preparing their eyes to focus on the great promise that the believer's redemption is ever drawing near (Luke 21:28). †

COMMENTS

"I am totally against any Muslim being in a place of authority in this nation. [England] We are British and so should our rulers be also. No Muslim can be trusted, no matter how peaceful they appear to be, once the rabble rousers start their work they will all join in, it happens here already, and even white indigenous people are falling for their doctrine and going off to fight with ISIS, yes women too!!!! We already have sharia law and courts here, we have mosques round every corner, and their determination is to take this world for Islam, not just this country. But all they do is destroy, destroy life, property, you name it, they destroy it." - UK

"We as a church need to keep our feet grounded in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and Pray for discernment which a lot of our churches seem to be lacking! I pray we don't follow just because every church happens to be doing it, instead we need to test everything with the Word of God. He will always lead us in the right direction!" - WA

"It is so important that we know what the scripture says and that we are biblically correct and everything is bathed in prayer. I always sensed that Rick Warren was a little off and also didn't agree the author of "Jesus calling." - WA

"I just read over the newsletter again [March issue] and it was outstanding! Your article was exceptional

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ALWAYS AMAN By Jeannette Haley

"Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations" Deuteronomy 7:9

If you are a dog lover, as we are, then you know how incredibly faithful our four-legged furry friends are to us. The trust and relationship between a dog and his master (even those who are less than kind) is one of life's higher aspects, especially in light of the decline of good character traits in our lawless and immoral world. Sometimes I wonder if perhaps the faithfulness that dogs possess is one of God's ways to cause us to stop and think about our own faithfulness, or lack thereof. Even more importantly, how much do we thank God with all of our hearts for *His faithfulness*?



In the Old Testament the Hebrew word for faithful is *aman*, (aw-man) which means "to build up or support; to foster as a parent or nurse; firm or faithful, to trust or believe, to be permanent or quiet; to be true or certain of long continuance, steadfast, sure, trusty." (*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.*) The faithfulness of God isn't something He possesses; rather, God is faithful, just like God is love, holy, all-knowing, all seeing, everywhere present, unchanging, all-powerful and so forth. God's faithfulness is something that we all-too-often hold lightly, or take for granted. Yet, where would we be without His *aman*?

Deuteronomy 7:9 tells us that "the faithful God" keeps "covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments." As with all of God's promises, there are conditions to be met, which, in this case, is to love him and keep his commandments. King David said in *Psalms 31:23*, "O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the

proud doer." We are all given free will to choose whether we will remain faithful to love and obey Him, or instead trust in ourselves and proudly do it our way.

When you consider all the heroes and martyrs of the faith in both the Old and New Testaments (as well as in Church history up to and including the present) it is their faithfulness that shines forth like a beacon to us who are still on this earthly pilgrimage. If the matter of being *aman* is not settled in our hearts and minds once and for all, then most likely we will end up as weak, double-minded, fainthearted, ineffective, lackluster, nominal Christians instead of the overcomers we are called to be. Jesus said, "*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. . . . No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon*" *Matthew 16:10, 13*. The principle in these verses is clear, and expressed by Joshua when he challenged the Israelites, "*And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*" *Joshua 24:15*.

Concerning nominal Christians, A. W. Tozer said, "There are two kinds of faith: nominal faith and real faith. "Nominal faith accepts what it is told and can quote text after text to prove it. It is amazing how nominal faith, nominal belief, can weave texts into garments, cloaks and curtains for the church. We have so many of these all around the church, and I must admit that for the most part they are beautiful. But they serve no function in our spiritual walk.

"The other kind of faith is what I refer to as real faith. This faith depends upon the character of God and looks nowhere else.

"The Scripture does not say of Abraham that he believed the text and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Abraham believed God. It is not what Abraham believed, but who

Abraham believed that truly counted.

"The man who has real faith, as over against nominal faith, has found the right answer to one important question: What is God like? No question is more important and demands a proper answer.

"What is God like? The men of true faith have found an answer to that question, by revelation and illumination. They know in whom they have believed." (*My Daily Pursuit*, pg. 137.

In *2 Timothy 1:7-13* Paul is not only admonishing Timothy to faithfulness, but is reiterating his own confidence in God's faithfulness with these words: "*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*"

We cannot remain faithful to our high calling if we keep looking back, as did Lot's wife. (*Genesis 19:26*). We cannot faithfully run the race and finish the course unless we forget "those things which are behind...reaching forth unto those things which are before"...pressing "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (*Philippians 3:13b, 14*). We cannot remain faithful if we fail to look "unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (*Hebrews 12:2a*). We cannot remain faithful by looking back at the world, and longing for it in our hearts as did the mixed multitude from Egypt and the Children of Israel (*Numbers 11:4, 5*). We cannot remain faithful without counting the cost (*Luke 14:28*). We will fail to be faithful

if we do not set our affection on things above (*Colossians 3:1-3*). Faithfulness will fail if our heart is not fixed (*Psalms 112:7; 108:1*). We will fail to be faithful if we forsake our calling by loving this present world as did Demas (*2 Timothy 4:10*). Unfaithfulness in our walk makes us unfit for the kingdom of God (*Luke 9:62*) because it takes faith to be faithful, and without faith, one cannot please God. Unbelief in any area of our spiritual life leads to nominal Christianity, which not only weakens what faith we do have, but loosens our resolve to be faithful. Bottom line, our lack of faithfulness displeases the Lord, destroys our testimony, and brings a reproach on the Gospel.

The question is, did Jesus have the latter days "Christian" religious system in mind when He asked, "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth" *Luke 18:8b*? According to *2 Thessalonians 2:3*, there will "come a falling away first, and that man of sin...revealed, the son of perdition." In *1 Timothy 1:19* we are warned, "Holding faith, and a good conscience: which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck." How many pew-warmers are there today in churches across the land who, in their hearts, have let their faith slip, and as a result are living in sin contrary to the Word of God, having "seared their consciences," and are making "shipwreck" of their testimony and spiritual lives? There is no doubt but that we are witnessing the fulfillment of *1 Timothy 4:1, 2* which states, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron". Many of those who have departed from the "faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (*Jude 3b*) have, however, not departed physically from churches they attend, but remain sitting in the same pew, singing songs, enjoying the social functions, and participating in "church activities". Like noxious weeds in a garden, they take root, blend in and become part of the landscape, and are allowed to do so in spite of the clear instructions given in God's

Word!

Concerning apostasy, that is, turning back, the writer of *Hebrews* exhorts us with these words of warning, "*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*" *Hebrews 3:12, 13*. This is a strong warning to Christians that their faithfulness to the living God can indeed be destroyed if they allow the deceitfulness of sin to harden them, resulting in an evil heart of unbelief. Peter likewise warned against apostasy in *2 Peter 3:17*, "*Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness*" *2 Peter 3:17*.

It makes Christians "nervous" whenever the subject of apostasy comes up because, let's face it, we all trip, slip and slide from time to time and fail the Lord. In such times the Holy Spirit will convict us in our hearts, and we will humble ourselves and repent because nothing is more miserable than having our relationship with the Lord broken because of sin. In such cases, we have not denied Him in our heart, nor have we come to a place of total disbelief and rebellion in our heart where we choose to go on living in sin (which is iniquity or moral impurity). Simply put, because we all have free will, whether saved or not, apostasy is when a person makes the decision to forsake Christ after coming to Him, and to continue living in sin, and deliberately turns his or her heart against the Lord and commands Him to leave his or her heart and life. (I knew of such a person who did this after "accepting Christ" who afterward chose to go deeply into the occult, and then committed a ritualistic suicide.)

When I think of all the times I have failed the Lord, great comfort is gained by His inspired Word through Jeremiah the Prophet, "*It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness*" *Lamentations 3:22, 23*. When you consider the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-

suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance—all of these are expressed daily in our lives as we choose to remain faithful to the LORD and His Word. The faithful Apostle Paul wrote, *“Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself”* 2 Timothy 2:10-12.

It’s been my experience that people are usually faithful to what they value, love and highly esteem. However, once there is a shift in their attention, and subsequently their affections, they can easily drift off course and begin to slide into the ditch. Satan, being crafty, subtle, shrewd, cunning, crafty and treacherous knows how to draw our hearts away from the Lover of our souls. Satan knows full well the basic needs and desires of human beings; thus, he knows our weaknesses caused by our fallen disposition. When we have unresolved issues, unconfessed (or unforsaken sin), he sends in the perfect “setup” to dissolve our resolve to remain faithful to the Lord and our calling.

The temptations we all face boil down to who we are going to believe, and who we are going to serve. Within ourselves we have a decision to make. Are we going to serve the fleshly man, or are we going to serve the spiritual man? Are we going to serve the world, the flesh and the devil, or are we going to “come out and be separate” (which is consecration) and present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service? (See Romans 12:1). *“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 12:2.

A person can be faithful to his or her doctrine, creed, religious practices, and church but fail to be faithful to Christ. A person can be faithful to his or her theology, philosophy, ideology, and particular worldview, but be unfaithful to Jesus. A person can be faithful to his or her job, family ties,

close friends, and community, but remain unfaithful to the Lord. In Isaiah 29:13 we read, *“Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men.”* We must be honest with ourselves and ask if we are like the people Ezekiel wrote of when he said, *And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.”* Ezekiel 33:31, 32.

In regard to faithfulness, Oswald Chambers put it well when he wrote, “It is only a faithful person who truly believes that God sovereignly controls his circumstances. We take our circumstances for granted, saying God is in control, but not really believing it. We act as if the things that happen were completely controlled by people. To be faithful in every circumstance means that we have only one loyalty, or object of our faith, the Lord Jesus Christ. God may cause our circumstances to suddenly fall apart, which may bring the realization of our unfaithfulness to Him for not recognizing that He had ordained the situation. We never saw what He was trying to accomplish, and that exact event will never be repeated in our life. This is where the test of our faithfulness comes. If we will just learn to worship God even during the difficult circumstances, He will change them for the better very quickly if He so chooses.

“Being faithful to Jesus Christ is the most difficult thing we try to do today. We will be faithful to our work, to serving others, or to anything else; just don’t ask us to be faithful to Jesus Christ. Many Christians become very impatient when we talk about faithfulness to Jesus. Our Lord is dethroned more deliberately by Christian workers than by the world. We treat God as if He were a machine designed only to bless us, and we think of Jesus as just another one of the work-

ers.

“The goal of faithfulness is not that we will do work for God, but that He will be free to do His work through us. God calls us to His service and places tremendous responsibilities on us. He expects no complaining on our part and offers no explanation on His part. God wants to use us as He used His own Son.”

As we look at the world around us and see the unmistakable signs of His coming, we can relate to David in Psalm 12, verse 1, where he says, *“HELP, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.”* You can hear the despair in David’s voice as he cries out to God for help because the faithfulness of those who were known as godly had failed. And what is the evidence of this? Verse 2 says, *“They speak vanity every one with his neighbor: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.”* These men, who had been considered among the faithful, are now revealing their divided heart by the flattering words coming out of their mouths. To be faithful to God means that you will speak the truth in love, not fearing what man will think or say about you. The truth is a godly person cannot be “politically correct” because that would involve lying and dishonesty. This is so important to the Lord that He says in verses 3, 4 *“The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things: Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?”*

Friends, we must remain faithful in our hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ, faithful to speak the truth, faithful to exalt Him in prayer, worship and our manner of living. Faithful to believe, and firmly stand on the immovable Rock until He comes, for has He not promised, *“be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life”* Revelation 2:10?

Jesus promised, *“He that overcometh the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels”* Revelation 3:5

Our God is always *aman*. What about you? †

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

WILL MY FAMILY BE SAVED?

Q: *Can you explain what Acts 16:30-31 really means? I have been told that if one believes on the Lord Jesus Christ that not only will the person be saved, but their household as well. I have claimed this promise for my unbelieving family for years, but the problem is I remain the only believer. Right now I am confused and frustrated about this part of Scripture.*

A: When I was first saved, I was given this Scripture as an encouragement that now the unbelieving members of my household would be saved as well. It is true that because of my salvation experience, I was able to share the Gospel with my family, but not all received Jesus as Lord and Savior. There was even one who accepted Christ, but went back to the world. At the time, I was reminded of the four soils that represent the four heart conditions found in the parable of the sower and the seed in *Matthew 13:3-23*.

People's heart conditions vary. Some have hard hearts (unreceptive), some hearts are stony (full of self), some are worldly (divided), and some are open to receive the seed of the Gospel. Those who are hard must experience brokenness before they can receive, while those with a stony heart must have their hearts ploughed up by truth before the seeds can take root, and those who are worldly must become lean in their soul and desperate in their spirits before they will be separated from the claim of the world upon them to effectively confront the influence of it in their lives.

It is clear that not everyone will receive the Gospel in the right way when they first hear it. However, that does not mean that such individuals are hopeless. If the seeds of the Word have been cast among families, friends, and acquaintances, we have the promise that they will not return void (*Ecclesiastes 11:1; Isaiah 55:11*). The key is the seed must be cast out on the ground of people's hearts through proclaiming, preaching, and example before they can take root and produce life.

The other part of the equation is

that the hardest people to witness to are family members. Jesus stated that a prophet is not accepted in his own country. The problem is our family remembers us before our conversion and often wants to hold to their same opinions and attitudes towards us. It is for this reason that Jesus speaks of the fact that He does not bring peace to families, but a sword (truth) that will often divide family members (*Luke 4:24; Matthew 10:34-37*). I have personally experienced this division and in such cases I asked the Lord to send in others to cultivate the seeds that have been left behind.

Regardless of unreceptive or angry reactions of family members, I know that saving people is God's work and that the Gospel is the power of God onto salvation (*Romans 1:16*). Meanwhile, I am very thankful for those of my family who were drawn by the Father, heard the glorious invitation of Christ, and upon receiving the gift of eternal life into their hearts were sealed by His Holy Spirit to the eternal inheritance of our redemption.

I have realized that my salvation broke the dark cycle of delusion and oppression in some members of my family, but it is not a sure thing that others will be receptive. After all, they have their own will and form of light that they walk according to. In some cases, some will stay where they are at regardless of being on a sinking ship, while others are convinced that they possess the light and have no need of Jesus.

In order to put *Acts 16:30-31* into perspective, we must ask ourselves if this is a promise of God or a prophetic response from the Apostle Paul. The salvation of our family is a great possibility because of who God is and what He is able to do, but is this text a promise we can cling to and try to hold God to?

People have their free wills. Some refuse to believe and receive the provision of salvation even though it is God's will that all come to repentance. If a person refuses to turn and receive God's gift by faith, Jesus is clear that the individual will perish in their sins (*2 Peter 3:9; Luke 13:3, 5*).

I believe that this Scripture is prophetic. The Apostle Paul was giving a word of knowledge that, not only would this jailer be saved upon believ-

ing, but so would his family. Whether this text is prophetic or not, we must note that it is a passage that can indeed instill great hope in us where unsaved family members are concerned. It serves as a shining example of what God can do once His Gospel makes inroads into people's hearts and lives. We can stand on the fact that God is Almighty and nothing is impossible to Him. We can believe He knows how to save those who are open, challenge those who are hard, stir up those who are selfish, and cause leanness to come to souls that are complacent. We can always believe and pray knowing God is able.

My parting advice is not to give up on God when it comes to unsaved family members. God is never done with any of us until we take our last breath. ✚

"COMMENTS" - Con't. from pg. 4

and instructional on the Holy Spirit! So was Rayola's Q & A and her article on being prepared and discerning the right attitude when approaching the Word by faith and obedience. Your articles beautifully intertwined again. Thanks for your faith building work! " - ID

"The _____ [church] used to be so sound! I do see where the Lord can break through all this stuff if people will actually read the word for themselves and obey the Lord. Some are withdrawing and seeking Him. Keeping our eyes on Him and staying focused and being bold enough to speak up and outward is crucial in these last days. We cannot let the fear of man stop us, but remember the fear of the Lord brings wisdom. _____ [church] has become the modern church and very man pleasing! I too, hate the rock music; it opens the congregation up to another spirit." - WA

"My friend in Abbotsford does not want to hear any more about God. She only picks the scriptures that she likes and thinks me too negative. I mentioned she loves Oprah's teachings and it's all love, love and more love and accepting everything that's out there. Reminds me of the hippie movement decades ago....just keep praying for her." - BC

CALLED TO SUFFERING

By Samuel Rutherford

Scottish Presbyterian pastor,
theologian and author (1600—1661)

If your Lord calls you to suffering, do not be dismayed, for He will provide a deeper portion of Christ in your suffering. The softest pillow will be placed under your head though you must set your bare feet among thorns. Do not be afraid at suffering for Christ, for He has a sweet peace for a sufferer. God has called you to Christ's side, and if the wind is now in His face, you cannot expect to rest on the sheltered side of the hill. You cannot be above your Master who received many an innocent stroke. The greatest temptation out of hell is to live without trials. A pool of standing water will turn stagnant. Faith grows more with the sharp winter storm in its face. Grace withers without adversity.

You cannot sneak quietly into heaven without a cross. Crosses form us into His image. They cut away the pieces of our corruption. Lord cut, carve, wound; Lord do anything to perfect Your image in us and make us fit for glory! We need winnowing before we enter the kingdom of God. O what I owe to the file, hammer, and furnace! Why should I be surprised at the plough that makes such deep furrows in my soul? Whatever direction the wind blows, it will blow us to the Lord. His hand will direct us safely to the heavenly shore to find the weight of eternal glory. As we look back to our pains and suffering, we shall see that suffering is not worthy to be compared to our first night's welcome home in heaven. If we could smell of heaven and our country above, our crosses would not bite us. Lay all your loads by faith on Christ, ease yourself, and let Him bear all. He can, He does, and He will bear you. Whether God comes with a rod or a crown, He comes with Himself. "Have courage, I am your salvation!" Welcome, welcome Jesus!



Obama: King of the World?

By Jan Markell (An excerpt)

Barack Obama doesn't just want to fundamentally transform America. His sights are on the world. **Many stories** are breaking that he aspires to become the General-Secretary of the United Nations. Such talk is no longer Internet rumor. We hear a lot about global government today, and we do not know if this will be represented by the United Nations. Since we are late in the eschatological game, we probably don't have time for another body to rise up and control this world government. Those who defend the notion of a world government claim that it would be a benign federation of nations structurally similar to our federal government. It is touted as the solution to all of society's ills. We can wipe away war, poverty, and all injustice. There would absolutely be no want. They suggest this would perpetuate global peace and prosperity. *The truth is, it would be an Orwellian nightmare.*

In Revelation 13, John sees the "beast," also called the Antichrist, rising out of the sea having seven heads and ten horns. This corresponds with Daniel 7. Some kind of world system will be inaugurated by the beast. Many theologians conclude that this will be a one-world government. It is hard to imagine how such a diverse system of government would willingly subjugate themselves to a single ruler. How would Communism, capitalism, democracy, and Islam all get along? The Antichrist would have the power to make this happen or dissolve all of these systems and blend them into one. He will have Satanic power to do this. When does this world ruler ascend to his throne? Many conclude it will be when the disasters and plagues described in mid-Revelation are playing out in a devastating way....The current U.N. Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon's term is set to end on December 31, 2016. Barack Obama is available on January 21, 2017.

For more information go to:
Olive Tree Ministries, Inc.
<http://www.olivetreeviews.org/>

THE UTILITARIAN CHRIST

By A. W. Tozer

Our Lord forewarned us that false Christs would come. Mostly we think of these as coming from the outside--but we should remember that they may also arise within the church itself. Thus our Lord becomes the Christ of utility--a kind of Aladdin's lamp to do minor miracles in behalf of anyone who summons Him to do his bidding.

Apparently no one stops to consider that if Christ were to step into a prize ring and use His divine power to help one prizefighter to paralyze another--that He would be putting one fighter at a cruel disadvantage and violating every common instinct of fair play. If He were to aid one businessman to the detriment of another, He would be practicing favoritism and revealing a character wholly unlike the Bible picture of the real Christ. All this is too horrible to contemplate.

Theirs is a Christ of carnal convenience--not too far removed from the gods of paganism. The whole purpose of God in redemption is to make us holy and to restore us to the image of Christ. To accomplish this, He disengages us from earthly ambitions and draws us away from the cheap and unworthy prizes that worldly men set their hearts upon. A holy man would not dream of asking God to help him beat an opponent, or win over a competitor. No man in whom the Spirit dwells, could bring himself to ask the Lord to help him knock another man unconscious, for filthy lucre or the plaudits of the vulgar spectators.

To teach that Christ will use His sacred power to further our worldly interests, is to wrong our Lord and injure our own souls. We modern evangelicals need to learn the truths of the sovereignty of God and the lordship of Christ. Christ will not be manipulated by any of Adam's selfish brood! We had better learn these things fast if this generation of young Christians is to be spared the supreme tragedy of following a Christ who is merely a Christ of convenience--and not the true Lord of glory after all!

"It is easy to console ourselves that we are not how we used to be, but the real crux is whether we are where we need to be in our relationship with the Lord."
— Rayola Kelley