

GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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

PO Box 3572 * Oldtown, ID 83822 * www.gentleshepherd.com * December 2016

RUNNING THE RACE

Part 6

Developing the Right Attitude By Rayola Kelley

As we approach the Christmas season, some of us are going to be awed by the decorations, many will be overwhelmed by the commercialism, and most will be struggling to remain on message as to the real reason for the season.

To me I am quite pleased that this particular article would hit this time of year, especially as each article is never really planned until the previous one is finished. For the past five newsletters, I have been considering what it really means to run the race in the Christian life. I have addressed the various aspects of running this race, from the course to the purpose behind it, recognizing it as a marathon, outlining the hindrances, and seeking the real prize of heaven.

In this article, I am going to deal with the attitude that must be developed in the Christian runner to truly run the race through this world and actually finish the course. Every great athlete will tell you that unless one develops a right attitude in relationship to a steadfast commitment and sticks to putting every bit of their energy, strength, mental faculties, and heart in disciplining and fine tuning their abilities and enlarging their capabilities, the competition will be short-lived, as well as clearly defined by defeat.

Jesus outlined the disciplined life of those who wanted to follow Him. It involved a call to deny or disown self and death to the "old" man, so as His disciples, we could indeed follow Him into a new, sanctified life. As stated in the past, the concept of discipleship comes out of the word "discipline." Everything about the Christian call to pursue righteousness is in regard to disciplining our steps, thoughts, and ways, as well as bringing our calling

to perfection. This all brings us back to attitude.

When we talk about attitude, we are not talking about some moody temperament that can change with circumstances, but a heart attitude. Attitude always determines how we approach something. Through the years I have watched people approach matters, including the kingdom of God, with various attitudes. I have even given such attitudes names. For instance there are the *flash-in-the-pan* people. These are people who show great zeal toward the latest fads, but are easily bored or distracted by the world around them, causing all excitement towards a particular fad to quickly die (*Ephesians 4:14*). There are the *wait-and-see* individuals. These individuals stand back to see if something is going to benefit them in some way before they will commit themselves to anything (*John 6:26-27*). Then there are those who serve as a type of *cheerleader* but lack substance in their message and walk (*Acts 8:9-24*). These people are the motivational speakers who run around and cheer others to greatness by appealing to their emotions. The problem is that when the emotions wane, so does the commitment of the individuals that were swinging high from the branches of emotional hype, thus causing a real emotional downer to occur that must be stirred up again by some type of sensationalism. Finally, there are the *stern, pious* persons that consider all matters from their take on truth and ideology. These individuals prove rigid in their understanding, immovable in their conclusions, and judgmental in their ways. The problem is such people often prove to lack love for truth, are stiff-necked about what they think they know, and are deficient in any real spiritual discernment because



much of their emphasis proves to be dead-letter (*Matthew 15:6-9; Romans 7:6; 2 Corinthians 3:6*).

Sadly, in much of the visible Church, Christianity has been reduced to a subculture rather than a way of life. The reason for this is that much of the world's attitude and practices have come into the church. In a way, the church has been rendered into a politically correct position where both the pastors and congregations avoid mentioning truths of God's Word that would offend those who adhere to a worldly attitude. It has become more about numbers that give an appearance of worldly success rather than about souls that would add to the kingdom of God. It is more about methods than the move of the Spirit.

As I have considered people's relationship to the world, I have observed four types of people: there are the *victims* of the world who have been taken captive in some way, the *associates* of the world who use its various systems to get ahead regardless of who or what they use, the *pleasure-seekers* who are looking for some fun, and the *tourists* who are simply passing through while observing the sights.

The number "four" is significant. It has to do with the function of the world. We know there are four seasons, four directions, four elements: fire, water, air and earth, four divisions of mankind, four Gospels, and in *1 Corinthians 15:39* we are reminded that, "All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of *men*, another flesh of *beasts*, another of *fishes*, and another of *birds*." (Emphasis added.)

We can see four contrary responses to the Gospel in the book of *Acts*. There was the *indifferent* Gallio who was only interested in the legal aspects of the government, the *procrastinator* Felix who feared the Gospel but failed to respond, the *intellectual* Festus who rationalized it away, and

the *unpersuaded* Agrippa who would not give up his sin. These contrary responses can be compared to those who were open and receptive to the Gospel such as Lydia, Justus, and Crispus (*Acts 16:13-15; 18:7-8, 12-16; 24:11-26; 25:13-27*).

We can also see four different responses to the birth of Jesus. There was the *humble Mary* who submitted herself to the will of God, the *insignificant, fearful shepherds* who witnessed the glory of God parting the sky as the angels declared the coming of the Holy One, the *egotistical Herod* who would not share his throne with the true King of Israel, and the *seeking wise men* (*Matthew 2:1-18; Luke 1:27-38; 2:8-29*).

When it comes to Jesus calling people to follow Him, there are four reactions to His calling that are represented by animals that reveal four decisive dispositions. There is the *wolf* who preys on vulnerable and weak sheep who stray from the Shepherd, the *swine* who prefer their pigpens of the world to following Jesus, the *goats* who have endless excuses as to why they wander away from the true Shepherd to partake of the garbage of the world, and the hungry *sheep* who recognize their need for a Shepherd and have learned to recognize His voice so they can follow Him to still waters and green pastures (*Psalms 23:1-4; Matthew 7:6, 15; 10:16; 25:32-46; John 10:1-16*). The inner disposition of man represents not only the heart attitude but the type of ground that is present when it comes to the Gospel and God's Word.

This is confirmed by the famous parable of the "Sower and the Seed" in *Matthew 13:1-23*. How the seed of the Gospel affects or penetrates the ground of our heart comes down to the attitude we have taken on. If the heart is *hard* towards God's convicting truths, it cannot receive the seed of the Gospel, if it is *full of the rocks of self* the seed will never take root, and if the heart possesses a *worldly attitude* it will choke out the message. The heart must be *open* to receive the seed of the Gospel and the word of truth. It must be desirous and pure to seek the heart of God in all matters.

I used the parable of the "Sower and the Seed" to wake up four teenagers in a Sunday school class Jean-

nette and I were teaching to show how the way to heaven is indeed narrow (*Matthew 7:13-14*). It was a small church and three of the teenagers were the pastor's grandchildren and the other one was the son of a close friend of the pastor. Like some of our youth that have grown up in Christian homes, they were somewhat complacent towards the matters of God. There was no evidence of any personal understanding of God outside of their religious upbringing. They had the attitude that association with the shirrtail of the pastor was enough and they had no real worries.

As a teaching team, Jeannette and I wanted to bring some reality into their lives that would somewhat wake them up to the seriousness of them making sure they had their own relationship with the Lord. I posed a simple question to them after making reference to the parable of the "Sower and the Seed." "When we consider the implication of this parable in light of it representing the condition of 100 percent of the people who now live, and if you evenly distribute these four heart conditions among the masses, there would only be one quarter or 25 percent of the world that would have the right heart condition to receive all that the Lord has for them compared to 75 percent who lack the proper heart, and since there are only four of you in this class, which one of you is assured of finishing the course because of having a right heart condition?" Needless to say, facial expressions changed as these four young people looked at each other and considered the question.

Granted, all four of them could have had a right heart condition. No doubt the emphasis of the leadership of the church would greatly affect the heart conditions of those present, and we know that the odds change in relationship to the number of people that are involved, giving wiggle room for a higher probability as to how many people could fall into the fourth category, but the question remains how many sitting in churches are assuming they fit in the fourth category and are missing the real mark?

I can honestly say I have possessed three of the heart conditions mentioned in the "Sower and the Seed" in my Christian walk. There

were three things that clearly told on me as to what heart condition was motivating me. The first indication was the *fruits* coming out of my life, via my attitudes towards others (*Matthew 7:20*). When my heart attitude was wrong, I was very judgmental towards those who did not agree with me, superior towards those who did not measure up to what I considered to be acceptable, and arrogant and stubborn about what I believed to be right in spite of the fact I lacked the right spirit and godly love. The Bible is clear that people will know we are Jesus' disciples because we have love for one another (*John 13:35*).

The second indication came down to whether there was any real joy present in my life (*Galatians 5:21-22*). When my heart condition was wrong, I had no joy in regard to my salvation (*Psalms 51:12*). There was leanness in my spirit, frustration in my soul, pricking of my conscience, and hypocrisy in my walk. It was clear that a battle raged in my spirit as my flesh warred against the spirit within me (*Galatians 5:17*). This brought me down to the other fruit that was lacking. The reason a person is void of genuine joy is because real peace that comes from reconciliation with God is absent.

This brings me to the third indication: my walk. When my heart condition was wrong, I walked in defeat. There was no real victory to be found in my life. I tried hard to straighten myself up, only to become miserable in my ineptness to change my inward condition. I had to face the fact that there were not only bad inclinations in my ways, but terrible tendencies to excuse away the real core of my problem, the self-life reigning, making me worldly in my attitude and carnal in my ways.

It was when I honestly examined and faced the fruits coming out of my life that God was able to change my heart attitude. Notice, when it comes to changing the inward disposition, only God can bring about such a change. This may surprise some people, but real change only begins when true brokenness has first occurred.

As stated in past articles, brokenness happened in stages for me. I was first broken over sins in my life, second I was broken by the destruc-

tive activities of sin around me, and finally I was broken over the sin that reigned in me. The problem with brokenness is that no man can break himself, only God can break the heart of a person to the point that He can actually heal it in order to recreate a new heart attitude.

When it comes to true brokenness I would like to direct your attention towards *Leviticus 11:32-33* in light of *2 Corinthians 4:7*. In the latter Scripture it says this, “*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*” We are clay vessels that are only made valuable by the treasure we contain, which is Jesus Christ.

Let us now consider the Scriptures in *Leviticus*. In this chapter, the Lord is dealing with what He deems to be clean and unclean. We must contemplate the principle laid out in *Haggai 2:11-14* that the holy cannot make the unholy clean by touching it and the unholy when touching the holy will defile it. It is for this reason that the priests were given specific instructions in *Leviticus 11:32-33* about what they were to do with vessels that were touched by that which was considered unclean, “*And upon whatsoever any of them, when they are dead, doth fall, it shall be unclean; whether it be any vessel of wood, or raiment, or skin, or sack, whatsoever vessel it be wherein any work is done, it must be put into water, and it shall be unclean until the even; so it shall be cleansed. And every earthen vessel, whereinto any of them falleth, whatsoever is in it shall be unclean; and ye shall break it.*” (Emphasis added.)

It is amazing that all vessels but the earthen vessels could be cleansed when defiled, but the earthen vessel had to be broken. This is a powerful example for us to consider. When sin reigns, whether through influences, activities, or disposition, it defiles the vessel with indelible marks, odors, or other unacceptable associations. God cannot use such a vessel. The only way He can make it useable is to break it and then remake it. It is for this reason such scriptures as *Psalms 34:18*, “*The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit,*” and *Psalms 51:17*, “*The sacrifices of*

God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise,” often resonate with those who are truly broken by their sin and seek forgiveness and restoration.

It is clear that a right heart attitude comes out of true brokenness and repentance. However, there is only one who can break us and that is God. It is only as we see how God looks at a matter that our attitude can be shaken up or broken enough to come into agreement with Him. It is only when we recognize our true need for God to intervene in our present state, that we become open to His take on a matter and broken over the separation between Him and us that will cause us to desperately seek Him.

This brings us back to the result of a broken heart. It actually will translate into a seeking heart. Remember the wise men in Matthew who sought the new King of the Jews? These men spent at least two years searching for Jesus. They were not half-hearted in their search. It was clear that they would not be deterred from their search or settle for good intentions. Although they may have been the last to find the new King, they nevertheless accomplished their mission.

As Christians, it is easy to be deterred from our real mission—to always find Jesus in all matters. We can always settle for less by settling for Biblical knowledge, doctrine, good works, and pious ways, but a seeking heart will always desire to see beyond mere religious attempts and truly find Jesus. In fact, a seeking heart that fails to find Jesus is a heart that not only becomes desperate, but eventually broken.

As we come to this time of celebration, we need to consider if we are like the wise men, truly seeking with our whole heart the real gift of God, Jesus Christ, who is the only hope of glory that we can possess as clay vessels. It is clear that the right attitude of the heart must be that of a seeking heart which will manifest itself in a restless heart when it comes to pursuing the Lord. Next month I will deal more with this subject, but we at Gentle Shepherd Ministries want to take this time to wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas and a wondrous New Year. ✚

THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD

By A. W. Tozer

And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.—Luke 1:35

The birth of our Lord in Bethlehem brought into our world the best that God could offer. The wonder of the Incarnation has puzzled men since that day. How can God, being who He is, be born of the Virgin Mary?

In Jesus Christ, God became man, not by the degradation of His Godhead, but by the lifting up of His manhood into God. Christ is divine and is God, and He was with the Father before the world came to be. When Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, His deity did not become humanity. His deity was joined to His humanity because God is eternal and uncreated and can never become created. That which is not God cannot become God; and that which is God cannot become that which is not God.

God can come and dwell immidentally within His creatures. The birth of Christ was the gateway for our new birth. Christ put on humanity in order that we can put on His deity and become the sons of God. That obscure little town of Bethlehem was the gateway into the new birth. Because He came as He did, I can come to Him and be received as His child.

*O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.*

Phillips Brooks (1835-1893)



**A TIME TO WEEP,
A TIME TO LAUGH
Part 3**

By Jeannette Haley

"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." – Isaiah 12:3

The whole world witnessed a miracle on November 8 with the election of Donald J. Trump as President-elect of the United States of America. In our minds, this was no less than the mighty hand of God who, in answer to repentance and prayer, swept aside the evil agendas of ungodly globalists, while mercifully sparing our nation from the lawless, oppressive, "politically correct," communist agenda that was set to destroy everything our Founding Fathers established in the Constitution by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

Shock waves from this unexpected, mighty miracle had a two-fold effect: The laughter of the liberal left suddenly turned to weeping, and the weeping of those who cherish righteousness, right thinking and freedom turned to laughter. In *Psalms 37* we read of the happy state of the godly, and the short-lived prosperity of the wicked. *"Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shall thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass" vs. 1-7.* Jesus said, *"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" Matthew 5:5.*

Even though this powerful intervention from heaven has turned our mourning into dancing, deep down we also know that this is not "the end" but rather just the beginning. We have been trudging as a nation through the harrowing wilderness of darkness, deceit and lies, only to finally emerge into

the sunlit meadow of a new day. However, another mountain to conquer looms before us; we dare not let down our guard, become complacent nor give in to the temptation to lie down and slumber in the warmth of new promises. We dare not allow pride to enter into our hearts, or buy the lie that as Christian Americans we are somehow exempt from God's righteous judgments upon our iniquities and sins. We dare not return to our former state of apathy, worldliness and nominal Christianity, and we must strive to not only stand against the persistent attacks of the enemy, but gain ground in the great harvest field around us for the glory of God. If we do not return to God as a nation, we will not survive as a nation.

God has given us a short respite from the battle, and a reprieve from judgment. He has given us a time for honest soul searching, a time of deep reflection on the ways and will of God Almighty, a time to seek the face of the LORD, a time to prepare for prophesied events and judgments yet to come. It is incumbent upon each of us who are called by His name to not turn back to the same ole, same ole business as usual. God has given us a mandate as His people to follow hard after Him, to sink our roots deeper in Christ in order to come higher and do great exploits for God. Time is short. This is not a time to sink back on our laurels and ride the wave of temporary victory, even though it has rocked the world. It's time to renew our commitment to Christ, put on the armor of God, endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and guard against becoming entangled with the affairs of this life. (See *2 Timothy 2:3, 4*)

This recent victory over the bondage of Marxism's "political correctness" is a God-given opportunity that carries with it the weighty responsibility for each member of the Body of Christ to reevaluate his or her place in the Church that Jesus is building. This Church is not broken up and divided into fragments because Jesus is the Head of it. Jesus cannot be divided into different denominations, sects, groups, or movements. There is ONE Body with ONE Head. *"He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the*

dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything" Colossians 1:18. "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" Ephesians 1:22, 23. "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" Ephesians 4:15. If the connection between you and Christ is blurred, or weakened because you have allowed your particular church, denomination, creed, pastor, celebrity leaders, or religious practices to come between you and the Head, then your personal walk with Christ will be hindered, your love for Him diminished, your discernment dulled, your hunger for the Word absent, your spiritual gifts subdued, your strength in spiritual warfare weakened, your gifts and calling all but forgotten, and your testimony and witness will be dead letter. As Christians, we must be vigilant in guarding and protecting our personal relationship to Jesus as our Head! Anything less can morph into idolatry and make us easy prey for Satan's devices.

When Jesus is truly our Head, He is everything to us. Even in the worst of times, His joy is our strength, and we can often discover "a time to laugh" in the face of overwhelming odds. To the Israelites in *Nehemiah 8:10* God told the people, *"Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength."* He is our true and lasting joy—not the fake "joy" that the world offers through worldly entertainment found in sports, theme parks, music festivals, comedy, sensational movies, death-defying stunts, etc. all of which multitudes of people look to in their search for happiness. As we all know, such things are temporary—the thrills, the silliness, the "adrenaline rush," the laughter vanish like morning mist giving way to summer heat. It's all meaningless vanity that leaves the soul hauntingly empty and depressed. I think of the first stanza of the old hymn, *I Would Be Like Jesus*. "Earthly pleasures vainly call me, I would be like Jesus; Nothing worldly shall enthrall me, I would be like Jesus."

If Jesus is Your Shepherd, you shall not want—anything! Joy included. *“Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” Psalm 16:11.* But we have to get into His presence! How do we come into His presence? Who among us is like Moses and Joshua who entered into the presence of the Lord, and communed with Him? Are you? Is your heart open and humble like that of young Joshua who longed to be in God’s presence so much so that he *“departed not out of the tabernacle” Exodus 33:11b*, even after Moses had returned to the camp after speaking with the LORD face to face? It is a conscious decision, an act of the will to seek the Lord, *“Now set your mind and heart to seek the Lord your God” 1 Chronicles 22:19.* Seek Him in the Word, seek Him in prayer. Sense His presence in your times of worship and praise. Pour out your heart before Him. *“Draw nigh to God, and He shall draw nigh to you” James 4:8a.* Seek His will for your life regardless of your age or gender for God says, *“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy” Acts 2:17, 18.*

When is it a time for laughter? You cannot program it, plan it, or control it. You cannot mark a day on your calendar as a time for laughter. Instead, you have to experience the spontaneity of it in the moving stream of life. Laughter is a response, not a timed event. Have you ever sat and watched a comedian who, try as he or she might, was anything but funny? You end up with your gut feeling as if you had swallowed a huge hunk of salami, whole.

True laughter springs from lightheartedness firmly anchored in a state of well-being, secure in the love of God, rejoicing in His faithfulness. When the soul rests in Christ, when His Spirit dwells within, when you rest on His promises, then laughter bubbles forth like springs of living water. Jesus tells us, *“These things I have*

spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” John 16:33. Note that Jesus never said He would spare His people from tribulation, but rather gave us the reason to be of good cheer. Ours is an eternal inheritance that no man can take away, no government can outlaw, no atheist can touch, and no devil can steal.

Of all the joys that one can list concerning this life, to me the greatest is when a sinner comes to Christ, and is truly born again. Jesus tells us, *“Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” Luke 15:10.* Have you ever experienced that heavenly joy by leading a lost soul to Christ? There is no joy like it in the entire world. But, that privilege usually comes with a price. *“He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” Psalm 126:6.* [Underlining added.] Jesus sends us into the harvest field, bearing the precious seed of His Word. Led forth by his Spirit, we find ourselves weeping for the multitudes of lost souls, appalled at the lack of understanding, grieved at the enemy’s work of “catching away that which was sown in the heart,” disappointed when those with “no root in themselves” become offended and turn away, saddened when the deceitfulness of riches and cares of this world choke out the Word.

Most likely there will be strained or broken relationships with those friends, or family, or both who are scornful of your life in Christ. As Christians, must endure mocking, slander, and persecution. The Apostle Paul summed it up well when he wrote to the church at Corinth, concerning his ministry, *“Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned. By the word of truth, by the*

power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, By honour and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers and yet true; As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things” 2 Corinthians 6:3-10. All of these trials and tribulations may well contribute to a “time to weep,” but then, there follows victory, “a time to laugh.” Consider what Paul wrote in chapter 7 of 2 Corinthians verse 4, *“Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.”*

Surely Robert Moffat, and his wife Mary, “sowed in tears, but reaped in joy.” Robert Moffat (1795-1883) was a Scottish pioneer missionary to South Africa who arrived in Cape Town in 1817. He opened mission stations in the interior, translated the Bible into the language of the Bechuanas, and wrote two missionary books on South Africa: *Missionary Labours and Scenes in South Africa and Rivers of Water in a Dry Place.* His oldest daughter Mary, married David Livingstone. From another source we read of this great missionary who worked for years in Bechuanaland, South Africa without seeing a single convert. When some friends in England wrote asking what they might send him as a present, he requested a communion set. Since there were no other believers there, they were surprised, but complied with his wishes. When the set arrived several months later, more than a dozen natives had been won to Christ and were served their first Lord’s Supper. Such is the beauty and courage of faith. (*Sources Unknown*).

As we once again approach the time to celebrate the birth of Christ, let us rejoice in Him with all our hearts, for He not only came at the appointed time, but He will return in power and glory at the appointed time. He is faithful and true, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the everlasting Father, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord God Almighty. Rejoice!

“Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice” Philippians 4:4. “And there were in the same country

shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds" Luke 2:8-18.

As God's redeemed we have reason to rejoice always, to laugh, to praise the Lord in spite of the fact that "the whole world lieth in wickedness" because "... we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" 1 John 5:19b, 20. Amen! †



And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.— Isaiah 6:3

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

Q: "What is a mystic?"

A: According to my understanding and study of this subject, there have been three types of people labeled mystics, but before I point out the differences between them, I must first give a definition of the practice of "mysticism." Mysticism implies the unveiling of hidden mysteries and according to my Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary it is, 1) "the experience of mystical union or direct communion with ultimate reality reported by mystics," 2) "the belief that direct knowledge of God, spiritual truth, or ultimate reality that will be attained through subjective experience (as intuition or insight)," 3) "vague speculation: a belief without sound basis or a theory postulating the possibility of direct and intuitive acquisition of ineffable knowledge or power."

From these definitions comes my understanding of what we might call a "mystic." However, due to the spiritual implications of this word, it has proven to be quite controversial among Christians. The idea of using both words together, "Christian Mystic" actually seems like a contradiction in terms to some, but we must remember that since God is life, He is to be experienced and His truths are of a spiritual nature and that there is a certain mysterious (mystic) dimension to them that must be revealed to us by the Spirit of God. This unveiling is often referred to as "revelation." However, there is only one "revelation" that needs to be unveiled to us, and that is the revelation of Jesus Christ. Any revelation outside of who Christ is, what He has done for us, and the life He wants to establish in us through His Spirit is a counterfeit.

Because the idea of "mystic" is controversial, there are usually three reactions among Christians to any hint of mysticism: 1) It is often rendered as superstitious because many do not know how to discern it, 2) people show total skepticism towards it and reject it altogether without bothering to test the spirit behind it, and 3) the "person" and the "revelation" are tested according to the Word of God and the spirit is properly discerned as

to the source and inspiration behind the experience or the spiritual insight.

The concerns that Christians have towards mysticism is well founded. If you take the first definition, you will find that those who deal in the occult, New Age, and metaphysical methods often fall into this category. If you understand Hinduism, its main goal is to link (yoke) people with their idols (demons) through such practices as yoga, while those operating in the metaphysical realms are trying to tap into power to bring about such things as healing, the Gnostics attempt to tap into experiences to gain intellectual insights, and those in the occult are trying to come into union with Satan to experience his power and gain insight into the demonic world.

This brings me to the group that falls into the third category, which is those who establish, or belong to a cult. When you study the origins of various cults and those who follow them, you learn that such people have been seduced by some deceptive spiritual experience or by a charismatic leader that has been empowered by a seductive, religious spirit. The experience or the leader is so powerful that it seems more real than the Word of God and the present reality that surrounds them. They actually have a false sense of infallibility about what they believe, while being clearly blinded to the fact that they are being established on a faulty foundation that will collapse when tested.

This brings me to whether there are bona-fide mystics whom we would consider to be "straight arrows" in the Christian realm that are actually receiving revelation from the Lord which is pertinent to present reality. There are three names that come to mind when the word "mystic" is used, Madame Guyon, William Law, and A.W. Tozer. I have read all three of these authors. Admittedly, Madame Guyon makes me uncomfortable because it seems she spiritualizes things a bit too much, but to other grounded Christians that I respect, they see her as an inspiration considering what she endured in prison for years because she would not renounce her faith. The question is can I negate her experiences and what she understands because I am not comfortable with them, knowing that Scripturally I

cannot really find anything wrong with them? Instead of criticizing her, I simply choose not to read her books.

William Law was respected by well-known religious leaders of his day. Even one of the most trusted discernment ministries today, "The Berean Call," promotes one of his books, *"The Power of the Spirit."* However, later in his life, he was labeled a mystic by the same religious leaders who had praised him earlier for his wisdom and spiritual insights because he seemed to go beyond the acceptable doctrinal boundaries, causing these leaders to distance themselves from him. I have read his books and there are a couple of parts in them that I have stumbled over, but he appears Scriptural. Do I throw out everything he wrote because some of it appears to be almost too mystical for me? Again, people can either choose to not read these people's books, or discern what they are reading to see if it is in line with spirit and truth.

Finally, we have A.W. Tozer. He is sometimes referred to as the 20th century Prophet. Tozer was also labeled a "mystic" by some religious leaders, which brings us down to what constitutes a "Christian Mystic?" Tozer is the one who gave me some very important insights about what might be referred to as "Christian mysticism." If you read and study Tozer's books, he connected the spiritual principles with the present realities of God's people, bringing dimension and clarity to subjects confronting the church. Instead of hiding behind and purporting doctrine that seemed more like an indifferent or lifeless burden to the hearers, he brought life to Scriptural principles, touching the spirit of people, challenging their mind, answering questions, and speaking to their struggles. For example, Tozer took on such subjects as worship, the Holy Spirit, the attributes of God, and how entertainment was affecting the church and brought these subjects out of the mere doctrinal realm into the personal realm of the hearer. It is clear that he did not stick with the presentation of the accepted doctrine of his day, but stepped outside of it by connecting the truth and principle of God's Word with the spiritual intent that addressed present challenges in

an understandable way to both hearers and readers.

Tozer's books never spoke to my intellect, but my spirit. That is also true for me when it comes to Oswald Chambers. These men were never "in your face" types of individuals, but they spoke truth in such a way that you knew that there was something very spiritual and heavenly about what they were saying, yet it was practical, realistic, and brought a certain awe to your spirit.

Tozer helped me realize that the true "Christian mystics" of the past would also address the challenges of their day, challenges that I would not necessarily understand or relate to. His words spoke to the hearts of the people and brought either discomfort to the soul or awe to the spirit; but, the hearers could not remain untouched.

My advice is that Christians cease to judge spiritual matters based on labels, and begin to learn how to properly discern not only the material being presented, but the person presenting it. After all, we are instructed to discern and test the spirits, never to intellectually judge them based on personal feelings or understanding.

I hope this explanation of this subject answers your question. †

QUOTABLE

"Prayer is never an acceptable substitute for obedience. The sovereign Lord accepts no offering from His creatures that is not accompanied by obedience. To pray for revival while ignoring or actually flouting the plain precept laid down in the Scriptures is to waste a lot of words and get nothing for our trouble." - A. W. Tozer

"I love those that thunder out the Word. ... The Christian world is in a deep sleep. Nothing but a loud shout can awake them out of it." - George Whitefield

"There is only one way to obtain more from God - God has to get more from us." - Finney

"If they had a social gospel in the days of the prodigal son, somebody would have given him a bed and a sandwich and he never would have gone home." - Vamce Havner

"We have to pray with our eyes on God, not on the difficulties."

- Oswald Chambers

COMMENTS

"Once again, excellent newsletter in writing the truth. [November issue.] Rayola's last two articles on pride really spoke to my heart. How easily pride can hide behind the disguises of thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to. Pride can be a huge blind spot. We need to call pride what it is, a sin that can set us up to fall into temptation and blind us to the traps it sets before us. It is a snare and will give us a false sense of self-sufficiency and infallibility in something as we are leaning on self and not humbling ourselves before God. The first thing we must do is desire the real prize of heaven, which Rayola explained is carrying out His will on earth. The second step we must do is disciplining ourselves, denying self and picking up our cross daily. I have been enjoying Jeanette's last two articles on weeping with those who weep and rejoicing with those who rejoice. Allowing the Lord to have your whole heart, being filled with the Holy Spirit and fully surrendered to the heart of God. Also, desiring the pure Word of God and seeking to know God, His ways, and His will through His Word. I'm looking forward to next month's Part 3 article and when Rayola explains the other characteristics that must be developed in our character to overcome the influence of pride on our lives. - ID

"What a prophetic title of topics in your November NL!!! Rayola addressed "Running The Race" and Jeannette addressed "A Time To Weep; A Time To Laugh." Ironic, or God-ordained? I thought these were quite appropriate as America headed into a national election for a new President of America.

"Trump ran the race to the max! Is he a perfect man? Obviously not. Then again, who among us can make such a claim? He doesn't have to be perfect to be the Leader, and President-Elect, of our country; faith demands that we all bow our knee to the decision made by God! If God were not on Trump's side, there is no doubt that he would not have been elected. After all, God could have just as easily let the opposing party win

(Continued, page 8, column 1)

(COMMENTS, Con't. from pg. 7)

the Office, but for our judgment, rather than for our blessing! NOTHING happens unless God puts His hand of blessing upon the situation or person, or withholds His hand from the same. Those are our two scenarios; God promotes, or God puts down. (Psalm 75:7 - But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.) Either way, we, as Believers must place our complete and unquestionable trust/faith in God alone, not just the "instrument" He is using.

"And now, the time has come for laughing, rather than weeping! We laugh because of the exhilaration we feel in the new regime about to take Office. The weeping has endured for many nights, but joy/laughter comes in the morning. (Ps 30:5 For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. This last phrase means that joy comes seedily and in due season.) The morning of November 9th, as a matter of fact. For this "shock" to most of the world, we should continually be exalting the Name of The Most High God - *El Elyon*, while continuing in fervent prayer for our new President-Elect, for his family, for his entourage and all involved with this new regime. Needless to say, the same is to be applied to our new V.P. Mike Pence.

"I've read at several sites that Donald Trump has made a profession of faith in our Lord. For that, I say Hallelujah! We, as Believers MUST allow him to grow in grace, and not expect him to show forth the fruit of someone who has followed the gospel path for 30+ years. Will he make mistakes? I'm sure he will, on a personal level. It is our requirement from God to cover this brother with the love of God, and continually make intercession on his behalf, as he tackles this monumental task at hand, as the 45th President of the U.S.A. May God give us a caring heart in partnering with GOD, to bring this accomplishment to fruition." - FL

"Surely the Lord will rapture us out of this mess soon. I believe we are seeing the definite dividing of the sheep from the goats - right before our eyes in these very last days." - TX

CAN THIS BE CHRISTMAS?

What meaneth all this fuss and worry
Whence go these crowds to run and scurry?
Why all the lights—the Christmas tree,
And the silly "fat man"? Tell me, Please!



Why, don't you know? This is the day
When everybody should be gay,
For this is Christmas!

So this is Christmas, do you say?
But where is Christ this Christmas Day?
Has He been lost among the throng?
His voice drowned out by empty song?



No, He's not here—you'll find Him where
Some humble soul now kneels in prayer;
There you'll find CHRIST—not Christmas.



But see the many fickle thousands
Who gather on this Christmas Day,
Whose hearts have never yet been opened
Or said to Him, "Come in to stay."



In countless homes the candles burning,
In countless hearts expectant yearning
For gifts and presents, food and fun,
And laughter till the day is done.



But not a tear or grief or sorrow
For Him so poor He had to borrow
a crib, a colt, a boat, a bed
Where He could lay His weary head.

I'm sick of all this empty celebration,
Of feasting, drinking, recreation;
I'll go instead to Calvary.



And there I'll kneel with those who know
The meaning of that manger low,
And find the CHRIST—not Christmas.

I leap by faith across the years
To that great day when He appears
The second time to rule and reign,
To end all sorrow, death and pain.



In endless bliss we then shall dwell
With Him who saved our souls from hell,
And worship HIM—not Christmas!

—Unknown

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this." - Isaiah 9:6, 7