

# GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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

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## Discernment 6 FACING SELF By Rayola Kelley

Last month I talked about the necessity of examining the spirit behind us. As stated, there are three spirits in operation in this world: the Holy Spirit, the natural spirit, and the spirit of the world. It is vital we understand how these three spirits operate so that we can honestly discern them to effectively address them to live an overcoming life.

The problem is Christians do not know how to discern between the natural spirit and Satan and sometimes they ignorantly accredit Satan's work to the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit's work to Satan which is operating close to blasphemy (*Matthew 12:25-32*). They repent of the terrible darts of Satan that hit them with unclean, perverted thoughts while trying to take *authority* over toying with sin instead of repenting of it (*Ephesians 6:16; 2 Peter 3:9*). Such actions are often done out of ignorance, but the Bible is clear that we are not to be ignorant of the devices of Satan and we are to stand against the wiles of the devil, knowing that God will not always wink at such ignorance, especially in regard to who He is (*2 Corinthians 2:11; Ephesians 6:11*). *Acts 17:20-31* states, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

We need to cease to be ignorant about the spirit that is in operation in relationship to ourselves, to others, the churches we attend, and the people whom we allow to influence us,



and be prepared to repent when a wrong spirit is motivating us because we are toying with some sin, as well as resist any wrong spirit we encounter with submission to God and using His Word to put Satan on the run (*James 4:6-10*).

It is crucial that we understand how the natural spirit works and how the spirit of the world influences us. When we think of the natural spirit we must note the word "natural." It is the spirit that we naturally operate in when it comes to our appetites, the self-life, and the "old man." Since the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden, man has had a wrong bent in his disposition. *Romans 5:12* describes what man is naturally bent towards, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." The natural spirit is bent towards the world, which is designed to entice personal preferences towards the ways of death, entrap immature notions with vain philosophies towards darkness, and ensnare lustful attractions towards sin.

The truth is until the bent is changed in the natural man, he will be running headlong into defeat and destruction. *Proverbs 25:28* puts it this way, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." *Proverbs 14:12* gives us this warning, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end are the ways of death."

The Apostle Paul addressed the thought process, the ways, and the attitude of the "old man" in this manner in *1 Corinthians 9:24-27*, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible crown. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep

*under my body and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."*

This is the reason why Jesus came to address sin, by taking away its sting of death and shame, and changing the inward bent of the fallen man to line him up with the will and plan of God, so that man will clearly have the freedom to reach his potential as stated in *Romans 8:28*, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

Sadly, man perceives that Jesus died to save him in sin, rather than died to save him from sin. The reason for this logic is because man in his fallen state does not want to give up his sinful ways that feed his carnal appetites, serve his prideful demands, and fit into his logical estimation of matters. It is for this reason that man must be born again where he is given the Spirit of God along with a new heart that is spiritually inclined towards the Lord (*John 3:3, 5; Ezekiel 36:26-27; Hebrews 10:15-16*).

Once a person is born again of the Spirit of God, then he or she can be assured of being translated according to *Colossians 1:13*, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." To be translated into the spiritual kingdom of Jesus means that one can now walk by the light of the life of Jesus that is present in every born again believer. As believers, we are commanded to walk in the light of His truth and according to His life in us (*Ephesians 5:8-11*).

The Apostle Paul confirmed the fact that the life of Christ is in us in *Galatians 2:20*, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." As Christians, we are living the life of

Christ by faith and not our own life. As believers we must be constantly converted to the righteousness of Christ. Granted, we positionally have been placed in the righteousness of the Lord, but we must follow and pursue after His righteousness to change our bent from the natural ways of the flesh to become the spiritual man who clearly bears the likeness of Jesus (*1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Corinthians 15:47-49*).

The Apostle Paul tells us we are baptized into Jesus' death so we can be raised in the likeness of His resurrection (*Romans 6:3-5*). Since we are identified to the cross of Christ in death, we are crucified to the world and the world crucified to us (*Galatians 6:14*). The world stands doomed and rests on sinking sand. It produces nothing but vanity and leaves man empty, frustrated, angry, and disillusioned. The real test as to our attitude towards the world is if we are truly dead to the present world we will no longer be attracted to it nor will we look to it for our life and purpose.

Translation also points to inward transformation of the mind (*Romans 12:2*). We die to this present world so we can put on the life of Jesus. This means letting the mind of Christ be in us so we can take on His attitude about God, truth, and the godly life in order to prove what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God (*Philippians 2:5*). The Apostle Paul summarized it in this way, "*But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof*" (*Romans 13:14*).

This brings us to the crux of human nature, most people think by being good, decent, and moral for the most part that they will be on the "good side" of God and make it to heaven. In other words, man has a hard time accepting the fact that there is nothing good in him and that even his best (good works) is as filthy rags before a holy God and that he is saved by the grace, and unmerited favor of God (*Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:10, 23; 7:18; Ephesians 2:8-9*). In fact, *Romans 3:10-18* brings out at least 15 different indictments against man when it comes to his fallen, sinful nature with its evil attitudes and wicked ways.

What many people do not realize

is that all good deeds done in the flesh will be weighed against the holy Law of God in light of spirit (intent) and the goal of the Law. The main goal of the Law of God was not to justify man, but to reveal that man is a transgressor of the Law, in need of a Savior (*Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:24*). *James 2:10* is clear that if you break the Law of God at one point, you stand guilty of breaking the whole Law. The Law does not judge us on the basis of what we have kept, but what we have broken. For this reason we are told in *Proverbs 16:2*, God weighs the spirits, which means he does not weigh our deeds.

The spirit we are operating in determines the law we are walking in. *Romans 8:2* talks about the law of sin and death and the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. *Galatians 6:8* states, "*For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*" When God weighs our spirit it is to see if the natural man is in operation or whether the spiritual man, Christ Jesus is present and being worked in our lives by the Holy Spirit and worked out of our lives through active faith that results in obedience to His Word. According to *Romans 10:2*, Jesus in us stands at the end of the holy Law of God as righteousness for us and *Romans 8:4* tells us that the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us when we walk after the Spirit and not after our flesh.

The reality is that the natural man identifies us to this earth, but the presence of the Holy Spirit identifies us to the heavenly Man. *First Corinthians 15:47-49* gives us this insight, "*The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earth, such are they also that are earthy; and as the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have born the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.*"

Since we are in a fallen, sinful condition *Hebrews 3:13* tells us that there is a deception to sin. Once again Scripture points out that we are sinners by nature. In other words, committing sin is not what makes us sinners; rather, we sin because we are sinners. Jesus died on the cross to take away sin to ensure for-

givenness, but it takes true repentance, faith, and discipleship to address the fallen disposition in us and change the inward bent that causes us to naturally walk according to our flesh and the world.

Sadly, the great delusion of sin works from two distinct ends, 1) that of being deceived as to how lost we are and 2) what constitutes real repentance. Most of the time we start out thinking there must be something salvageable in us. Every year since my conversion to Christianity, I have become increasingly aware of how lost I really am without Christ. I cannot tell you how many times I had to agree with *Romans 8:17*, "there is no good thing in my flesh." I don't kid myself about my idolatrous motives, I don't whitewash my selfish actions with excuses, or ignore my rotten attitudes because I am holding on to abominable rights of the old man. I simply know that I have been saved from the sins of the old man on the cross, I am being presently saved from the old man's claims on me through sanctification of the Holy Spirit and the washing of His Word upon my soul, and I will be saved from the hold of the old man when my body falls to the ground and I am finally glorified with my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I have made reference to this statement in the past, "It is easy to get a lost person saved, but what is hard is getting decent people lost." A wicked person knows he or she is lost, and an evil person arrogantly has decided to walk in his or her deluded state, while believing he or she is going to win in the end regardless of the darkness of their souls. Clearly, the people who perceive they have just enough decency, morality, and religion to make themselves at least shine in an already very dark world have a hard time believing they are all that bad, that they are like the rest of the sinners who need to be saved because there is nothing good in them, or their good deeds have no real eternal merit to them and that in the end such deeds will be rendered useless on judgment day.

To these individuals such judgment would be considered unfair to their way of thinking, but they do not realize that no person will be judged

on the basis of personal merits but whether that individual has received the only righteousness that will satisfy the holy Law of God: That righteousness being Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:30). If Jesus Christ is not present in the soul through the presence of the Spirit, the balances of heavenly justice will find such individuals wanting and without any means to seek mercy and forgiveness from the great Judge of the Universe. In the end, these individuals will face the ultimate sentencing of spiritual separation from God for an eternity of damnation.

Sadly such people are like the rich man in *Luke 16:19-31*. He had his worldly status, his religious activities, and his deeds, but in the end he tripped over one man and fell headlong into hell. When people fail to receive God's gift of salvation, they too will end up tripping over one man and fall headlong into hell, and that one man is Jesus Christ. People do not end up in hell because their deeds are wicked, they end up in hell because they refuse to believe and receive the record by faith of what God said about the matters of sin, His Son's redemption, and righteousness counted to us because of faith. The great sin of every age is unbelief and the great point of securing God's grace has always been that of faith towards God and His Word (*Ephesians 2:8-10*).

The next great battle over man's soul has to do with repentance. Man either preaches it or ignores it. If man does point to repentance it is often in ways that fail to explain what it entails, leaving others in a fog as to what it means to repent. John the Baptist called his hearers to repentance, but added this statement, "*Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance (Matthew 3:8)*." In *Luke 3:10*, the people asked about what it meant to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. John the Baptist answered their question in *Luke 3:11-14*.

When you consider John the Baptist's answer you will realize that real repentance involves a complete change. To repent you must turn from unprofitable and wicked ways to face God with the intent of changing the mind about a matter to change your actions. Once a person agrees with God about a matter, the attitude will adjust. Once the attitude adjusts in

light of what is right and acceptable to God, conduct will change. Once conduct changes, it will reinforce correct attitudes, changing the natural bent a person has towards sin and the world, resulting in an inward transformation.

The Apostle Paul talked about two types of repentance in *2 Corinthians 7:10*, "*For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.*" There will be sorrow towards sin in some form, but where that sorrow is directed towards determines what its caliber is and whether it hits the real mark of obtaining a pardon from God. Is the sorrow directed at God because the sin was a great affront towards Him, breaking His heart on the cross and requiring Him to shed His blood to secure a pardon for us, or is it directed at self because one is now paying the consequences for his or her foolishness? Sadly, the sorrow of the natural man is self-pity, not godly sorrow.

The problem with the old man is that he has figured out ways to counterfeit true repentance, thereby, deceiving himself that he has come to true repentance when in fact he hasn't. The greatest fruit of true repentance is a change in attitude and conduct because a true heart conversion has occurred.

There are four ways in which man counterfeits true repentance: complying, reforming, performing, and conforming. The complying group simply complies outwardly to the required action while maintaining the same mind towards it. Those who perform will change their outward presentation and count it as repentance without any heart change. Those who reform, simply adjust their image to give the impression that there is change but hold to the same attitudes. Finally we have those who conform. They adjust their ways outwardly in order to control the narrative while holding on to their right to do as they see fit.

Jesus clearly stated, "Repent or perish." It is God's will that none perish but all come to repentance (*Luke 13:3,5; 2 Peter 3:9*). Today every person on earth has either truly repented or he or she is perishing in his or her sins because sins have not been addressed according to the cross of Christ.

Next month I will deal with the actions of the natural man, but meanwhile have you truly repented of your sins and received God's forgiveness or are you perishing in them because of rebellion towards God's authority, resistance of the Holy Spirit's conviction, and unbelief in His Word? †

## FROM CREATION MOMENTS

### A NOT-SO-HARD SAYING OF JESUS

*Matthew 8:22—"But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead."*

Twice in the Gospels, Jesus is asked by a disciple for a leave of absence to bury his father. In each case, Jesus tells the disciple to let the dead bury their own dead.

This has been described as one of Jesus' hard sayings, since it suggests that a son should follow Jesus rather than honor his father. The passage is usually explained as meaning that the spiritually dead - that is, those not following Jesus - should bury the physically dead. This explanation still doesn't explain the apparent advice to break the commandment about honoring our parents.

A better explanation is offered in an article in *Archaeology and Biblical Research*. Archaeologist Gordon Franz explains Jewish burial practices at the time of Jesus. At death, the body would be placed in the family burial cave. After about a year, the body would have decomposed. Then the final act of mourning would take place. The bones were placed in a chest in what was called a secondary burial. According to the rabbis, the decomposition of the flesh was a person's final atonement for sin. Once this atonement was made, the bones could finally be laid to rest.

Franz says it is this secondary burial for which the disciples wanted leave time. Jesus' reference to the dead burying the dead was a reference to the other corpses in the burial cave. He was teaching that the rabbis' teaching about atonement was wrong. Atonement is found only in the saving work of Jesus Christ - the very message that the disciples should have been proclaiming. †

## THE STORY OF THE SKINNY SOUL

By Jeannette Haley

*“And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.”  
– Psalm 106:15*

Once upon a time there were two souls who lived in the same village. The name of the one was Skinny Lean Wanting, and the name of the other was Full Soul Whole. Their village, Blissville, was nestled in a lush, well-watered valley surrounded by towering mountains. There were several churches scattered throughout the valley, and on Sunday mornings people could be seen going to the church of their choice. It is here that we begin our story as we look in on Skinny Lean Wanting after church service one Sunday.

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“Hello, how are you today?” The strong voice behind Wanting caused him to pause and turn. He looked sadly into Whole’s smiling face as he struggled to form just the right words in response. But before he could arrange his jumbled thoughts, Whole added, “I hope you’ll let me buy you lunch down at the River Rapids Restaurant today. They do have good food and great coffee!”

The thought of a free lunch plus someone to keep him company for a couple of hours teased his droopy mouth into a slight upward curl. Whole repressed an impulse to grin in amusement as a picture flashed across his mind of his lazy cat “grinning” in front of the fire on a cold day. The likeness was stunning. Sometimes he wished his mind didn’t pop up with teasing bits of humor this way.

“Yes-s-s,” Wanting rasped. “That’ll be, uh...fine.” He silently stared at Whole. Finally he shuffled his feet nervously and mumbled, “I’ll meet you there.”

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“Welcome to River Rapids.” Snatching up two menus the hostess led the way to a cheerful corner table. Large picture windows offered a sweeping view of the river’s white water as it swept up, over and around boulders that refused to move. Colorful flowering shrubbery, evergreen

trees, and green meadows flowed to the foot of the rugged mountains which rimmed the valley and created the perfect backdrop. Circling high above the treetops two Bald Eagles gracefully glided on unseen air currents. Billowing white clouds resembling mounds of whipped cream created an interesting panorama of changing shapes in the azure sky.

“Praise the Lord for this beautiful day!” exclaimed Whole as he flipped open his menu. “Isn’t God’s creation awesome beyond words?” He raised his eyebrows questioningly as his brown eyes peered at Wanting over the top of his menu. He studied Wanting’s expressionless face.

“Huh?” Wanting was plainly distracted by nothing in particular.

“Coffee?” The waitress’s cheerful voice and bright smile was welcoming as the afternoon sun.

“Hi Suzie. Yes, please,” Whole said, returning her smile.

“How about you, Wanting? Coffee?”

“Uh, okay.” He watched her pour the aromatic liquid into their cups.

“Thanks!” Whole smiled as he pointed at the special of the day. “If you’re ready, I’d like to order the Reuben sandwich with extra sauce, and seasoned fries.”

“Got it! She said, and then turned to Wanting. “Are you ready to order?”

Wanting took a deep breath and scowled at his menu. “Give me a few minutes, okay?” As she turned to walk away from their table, Wanting called after her. “Wait! I think I want the bacon cheeseburger. No wait. Maybe...” He squirmed in the booth. “Um, I think I want the Monte Christo sandwich instead.” She reached for his menu, but before she could retrieve it, he said, “Aw, just bring the bacon cheeseburger with extra fries.” He snapped the menu shut as if trying to make a point of some sort, and shoved it toward Suzie.

“Yes-s-s-s Sir!” Out of the corner of her eye she noted Whole’s expression of silent sympathy for her. “Coming right up!” As she turned, she shot a grin at Whole who was plainly uncomfortable with Wanting’s lack of manners.

Whole turned his attention to the tumultuous river as he thoughtfully sipped his coffee. The pounding water

reminded him of Wanting’s sullen expression and miserable attitude that seemed to assault his emotions the same way the angry water relentlessly smashed against the jagged rocks. Lord, he silently prayed, *Guard my heart and don’t let his misery and self-pity dampen my joy. And, Holy Spirit, give me the words to minister to this lost, empty soul.* He had been praying for weeks about Wanting, knowing that God had put him on his heart.

Wanting sighed as he roughly set his half-full cup of coffee on the table and waved Suzie over to their table. “Could I get a fresher cup of this stuff?” he asked. “It tastes like reheated two-day-old coffee grounds.”

“Of course. Sorry about that” she said as she snatched up his cup. “I’ll be right back.” Wanting squinted at her as she glided to the waitress station, her blonde ponytail swinging gaily as she went.

Whole leaned forward, folded his hands on the table, and gazed into Wanting’s expressionless eyes. “What’s troubling you today? I have to admit, you seem very troubled. Aren’t you happy with the beautiful home you always wanted, that shiny new rig sitting out in the parking lot, your big boat, and great job? God has been very good to you, Wanting. He’s given you everything you’ve asked for.”

Wanting pursed his lips and scowled at Whole, but before he could answer, Suzie was back at their table, expertly pouring fresh steaming coffee into a new mug for the disgruntled patron and then refilled Whole’s cup.

“Thanks, Suzie.” Whole said in an understanding tone before turning his attention back to Wanting. “Tell me, what happened when you got saved?”

Wanting puffed out his thin chest and leaned back against the chair. “Well, that’s easy,” he drawled as his lips twitched with what Whole surmised was a weak attempt to grin. “That happened 29 years ago when I went to the big church that used to be across the valley.”

“You mean Jolly Jerry’s church?”

“Yep! Now there was a man who knew how to keep an audience’s attention!”

“No wonder God closed that church down,” Whole said in a measured tone.

"What do you mean, 'God closed that church down'?" Wanting tersely repeated.

"Wanting," Whole began and then lowered his voice. "Did you hear what you just said about that church?"

"What do you mean by that? I just told you how great it was!" Wanting's thin lips snapped together defiantly.

"First off," Whole said, trying hard not to chuckle at Wanting's snap turtle appearance, "your emphasis is on how Jolly Jerry 'entertained' the 'audience.' Since when are God's servants called into a ministry of 'entertaining' an 'audience' instead of preaching Christ to the congregation? In other words, a real messenger of God is not in the business of tickling the ears of a bunch of spectators!" He felt his face growing hot and reached for his glass of ice water, wishing he could pour it over his head, hoping it would somehow cool off the disgust that threatened to burst forth in a fiery stream of verbal exhortation.

"Well," Wanting said as he watched Suzie moving towards them with their orders, "I um, I know that I accepted Jesus after laughing at one of his hilarious jokes!"

Disgust flashed across Whole's face, but he managed to pleasantly thank Suzie as she set their food on the table. He quickly bowed his head, said a short grace and then bit into a savory fry, chewing it thoughtfully as he collected his thoughts. He watched Wanting busily rearranging the food on his plate. "What about your fruit?" Whole asked.

"What fruit? I didn't order any fruit!" Wanting mumbled.

"No," Whole said as he took a bite of his sandwich, "I don't mean *that* kind of fruit; I mean the fruit of the Spirit." He sipped his coffee nonchalantly, trying to ignore the scowl forming on Wanting's face as he stared glumly at his plate.

"Hey!" Wanting suddenly waived his arm in the air and snapped his fingers at Suzie as she passed by with a heavy tray full of dishes. "Where's my dill pickle?"

Whole quickly shoved a corner of his sandwich into his mouth in an effort to choke back the words that had rushed into his mind, *I'm staring at a big dill pickle, right now!*

"Sorry, but a dill pickle didn't

come with what you ordered," Suzie calmly stated, "But, I'll go get one for you." Before Wanting could respond, she turned on her heel and sped off to the kitchen.

"Well?" Wanting challenged as he stared at Whole who finally swallowed, and then began to casually dip three fries in the sauce.

Whole pretended not to notice Wanting's growing agitation and changed the subject. "Tell me again what happened when you received Christ? I'd like to hear your testimony." He hoped he had sidestepped the unpleasant current that threatened to sweep them off course.

"Oh, that. Well, it was the feeling that came over me. I had never felt that way before, and it was great, so I just *knew*."

"Knew?"

"Yeah, I just knew that I believed."

"Believed? Believed what?" Whole wiped his hands on his napkin and watched in silence as Suzie expertly slid a small dish with two dill pickles in front of Wanting.

Wanting wordlessly raised his eyebrows at her retreating back, as he gingerly plucked a pickle off the plate. He waived it at Whole. "You know. I just believed." He chomped into the pickle, seemingly unaware of Whole's eyes staring intently at him.

"Believed Jesus died on the cross for your sins and rose from the dead three days and three nights later? Is that what you mean?" Whole asked.

"Uh, well, yeah. That!" Wanting finished the pickle, and started working on the rest of his hamburger.

Whole decided he was getting nowhere fast. *Lord*, he silently prayed, *please give me the wisdom to at least be able to hold up a mirror to this miserable soul!* In a flash he thought of the sermon they had just heard that morning. "Wasn't that a great sermon this morning on God sending leanness to a person's soul?"

"Oh, I guess it was okay," Wanting stared unseeingly out the window for a moment. "It didn't do much for me, to be honest with you."

"What would you have changed about it?" Whole asked. He was beginning to feel like a fisherman who kept changing bait in the hope of getting at least one bite.

"Hum-m-m-m," Wanting reflected.

"Well, um...I wouldn't have compared what God did to the Israelites with the church, for one thing."

It was Whole's turn to ask, "What do you mean?" Sobriety and calmness suddenly rose up in him as he felt the Spirit quicken his discernment.

Wanting straightened in his seat, an air of superiority washed over his face before concentrating into an unapologetic smirk. His cold gray eyes were penetrating as he studied Whole's face.

A chill went up Whole's spine. He was sure that the eyes staring into his weren't the real Wanting, and he silently prayed for protection, power and wisdom. "You were going to say...?" he queried.

Wanting dropped his eyes and stared at his half-eaten burger for a moment. "Ahhh, yes, well," he slurred as he stabbed at small bits and pieces of his fries with his fork, "I'm just going to tell you how I would've preached it!"

Whole watched in amazed silence as Wanting suddenly became animated with some unseen force that craved this opportunity to exert itself.

"I would have," Wanting said, pointing and waving his fork at Whole, "made the whole thing positive. I would have preached that God won't send "leanness" to anybody's soul! I just don't agree with that at all!"

Whole fought the urge to pound the table and yell, "But, that is what the Bible says, and Israel left us examples of what to do, and what not to do to please God!" Instead he bit his lip, and listened to Wanting suck in his breath. He knew that another round was coming, and come it did.

"Maybe those Israelites didn't have faith so they weren't faithful, but just look around this valley! There are churches everywhere and people go faithfully every Sunday. I go every Sunday! So surely God wouldn't send leanness to my soul!" His voice was challenging.

Suzie interrupted the moment by refilling their coffee cups. Feeling the tension, she wordlessly turned and hurried to the next table.

"As for loving God," Wanting said as he wrinkled his pointed nose,

"Well, for crying out loud! Doesn't the pastor ever stop to think that nobody would bother to get up, get dressed, get in their vehicle, drive to church, and waste an hour or two sitting there listening to the same old negative stuff every Sunday if they didn't 'love God'?" He paused, waiting for Whole's response. When he got none, he seamlessly moved on to the next point. "Why does the pastor always have to harp on serving God? He used those Israelites as an example of people who loathed serving God. I just don't get that!" He took a sip of coffee, grimaced, set the cup down with a thud, and shoved it to the side. "Yuk," he muttered under his breath.

"Is that all you think of the message today?" Whole meekly asked, ignoring Wanting's disgust.

"Are you kidding me? No it is not! I actually felt like the pastor was aiming it straight at me!" He snatched up his napkin, wiped his fingers, and crumbled it into a ball before smashing it like some unseen enemy on the table. "I am going to talk to him about the 'thankfulness and thanksgiving' part at least. Did you notice that he was staring straight at me when he talked about the failure of ancient Israel to be thankful? What in the blank does that have to do with me? I've had my share of troubles, God knows, and maybe I've got, like you said, 'everything I wanted' but there are problems and things that aren't perfect with it all, plus there are just flat out some things that I am NOT thankful for, nor ever will be! Period!"

"I see," Whole said as he finished the last bit of his sandwich. "Um, um good!" He smacked his lips together, took a long drink of water, and then grinned at Wanting. "Anything else about the sermon that bothered you? You've hit every point except for praise."

"Yeah, well-I-I-I-I-I..." Wanting drawled. "Some people just don't care to sing real loud, clap, and jump up and down waving their hands in the air."

"Whoa, Wanting! Wait just a minute! Who ever said that is the only way to praise the Lord? Some folks 'lift holy hands' in prayer and praise, just like the Bible says. There's nothing wrong with that you know. Besides," Whole paused for a moment, then

said, "You just got through waving your arm in the air and snapping your fingers over a pickle, and in public to boot! Don't you think the Lord God Almighty deserves our praise and attention more than a pickle?"

Wanting snorted. "Yeah, it might be okay for others, but it isn't for everybody, especially me right now. I have to feel like praising God before I can get all excited about it."

Wanting turned to stare at Suzie who had quietly approached their table, and was politely waiting for him to finish his sentence before asking if they were ready for dessert. She tipped her head, and looked questioningly at Wanting. "We have fresh, homemade cherry pie today," she said, "and I happen to know that you love cherry pie."

For the first time since coming into the River Rapids Restaurant, Wanting's lips curled into his "cat smile." "If it's still warm, yes, a big piece with vanilla ice cream!"

"You've got it!" She turned to Whole. "And, what will it be for you? We also have peach, blueberry and apple. All fresh baked and ready to go!"

Whole couldn't resist such temptation although he was trying to cut down on sweets. In the back of his mind he figured he deserved a reward for having to put up with Wanting's dour attitude, plus if Suzie could exhibit such grace and patience, so could he, so help him God. "I'll have the blueberry today, Suzie, with vanilla ice cream. Thank you so-o-o-o much!"

She nodded, and hurried to get their orders. Whole's eyes followed her as he heard her softly humming "Amazing Grace" to herself.

"Ahem!" Wanting cleared his throat as if trying to remind Whole that he was momentarily "left all alone" across the table from him.

"Sorry, old chap" Whole said cheerfully as he turned to face Wanting. "She was humming one of my favorite hymns...."

A shadow seemed to pass over Wanting's countenance, but he seemed to lighten up when Suzie returned with their desserts. Whole made a mental note that not once since they had entered the restaurant had Wanting ever said "please" or

"thank you" and surmised that he probably wasn't a big tipper either.

"So," Whole said through a mouthful of blueberries, "getting back to when we first got here, and I asked you if you were unhappy, I gather it's right to conclude according to what you've been telling me, that the answer is 'yes' you are unhappy. Am I right?"

Wanting stopped chewing long enough to slur, "Right."

Once they were finished, Whole picked up the tab as promised, left a generous gratuity for Suzie and walked Wanting out to his shiny new pickup. "What a beaut this is," he breathed in admiration. "This baby has all the bells and whistles."

"Sure does," Wanting said as he climbed in, shut the door, and opened the window. "It's got the works." He turned the key in the ignition, and the engine roared to life.

"Forgive me, Wanting," Whole said, "but I just have one more question for you before you go."

"Inquisitive fella, aren't you!" Wanting snorted. "So, sock it to me. What's your question?"

"Be honest with me, Wanting," Whole said as he cupped his hands over the door rim of the open window. He looked into Wanting's sad, empty eyes. "Please tell me, friend, knowing all that you've been taught about what the Bible says, and all the sermons you've heard through the years, and based on how you are doing spiritually right now, and your personal relationship with Jesus, if you died tonight, where would you go?"

Wanting locked eyes with Whole's; then, without a moment's hesitation, he flatly stated, "Hell." ☩

*"Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing."*

-- Psalms 107:17-22

## CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT

By Skip Moen

*Let a woman learn in silence, in all subjection. But I do not allow a woman to teach, nor to exercise authority over a man, but to be in silence. 1 Timothy 2:11-12.*

**A Woman** – The universal law of real estate is simple: location, location, location. There is a comparable universal law in biblical exegesis: context, context, context. Lift a verse from its context and you can make it say anything you want. It's the equivalent of buying land without seeing it.

So, when we approach the second of Paul's most controversial verses, we need to fill in a lot of context before we start making universal pronouncements. The context is what is happening to Timothy in Ephesus. This is a *personal* letter of advice and counsel. It addresses issues in Timothy's ministry. It is not like the general letters Paul wrote to churches. In this letter, Paul tries to help Timothy deal with disruptions to his work. This means that if we are going to understand what Paul says and why he says it, we must first understand what is happening in Timothy's life. From everything that we can gather (since we only have half of the conversation), we discover that Timothy was dealing with several heretical teachings that were cropping up in his congregation.

First, Paul tells Timothy to combat those who propose "endless genealogies and myths" as a way of spiritual enlightenment. He instructs Timothy to stick with the pure gospel. We should notice that in this emphasis Paul states, "The Law is good." Stick with the basics. Remain faithful to God's revealed instructions. Don't get carried away in speculations. Remember the teaching of Torah.

Next, Paul recounts his own woeful past, emphasizing that the gospel of grace which saved him is completely adequate as a means of salvation for all who adopt it. The Messiah Yeshua brings grace beyond measure, just as God's Word proclaims. The mark of a believer is

faith and good conscience. Those who depart from this foundation are shipwrecked. Paul has addressed the theological heresies. He points to grace, the Word and the heart. Without these, nothing else matters.

Now Paul turns his attention to practical matters. The first is prayer. Pray for everyone, he says to Timothy. Why? Because God desires all to be redeemed through the *one and only* mediator, Yeshua. How is this to be done? In proper order, with circumpect behavior, showing honor to God. This becomes the basis for Paul's commentary on activities in the church. He exhorts men to pray earnestly everywhere they have opportunity. He exhorts women to do the same, dressed in appropriate attire. What does he mean? He means that neither men nor women should call attention to themselves but rather act and dress in such a way that honor God. Notice the word, "likewise" in verse 9. Paul wants men to pray without anger or doubt. Then he says he wants women to do "likewise." The Greek word means "in the same manner." What does this mean? The only similarity here is the demonstration of attitude in prayer. This implies that women are to *pray with a similar outward demonstration*, adorning themselves to fit that attitude. And this implies that they are *speaking* prayers just as the men are. Paul's emphasis is not on what they wear. It is on who they bring to the spotlight. Men must be careful not to let anger or doubt take center stage. Women must be careful not to let pride and appearance take center stage. But *both* men and women are called to pray.

Now we come to the next problem of order in the church. Only this time Paul uses the *singular* Greek word *gune*, not the plural *gunaikas*. This leaves us with two interpretations. In English, this could mean "a woman" is a singular class noun, that is, a reference to all people in the class "woman." But it could also mean a particular woman. In other words, Paul may be saying, "Let this woman," a particular woman whose name is withheld, not be allowed to teach. Since Timothy knew exactly who Paul meant, Paul does not need to spell it out. A woman in the congregation was teaching heretical

views. She is to be forbidden to do so. It is significant that Paul shifts from the plural in verse 9 to the singular in verse 11. If he wanted to speak about *all* women, why wouldn't he simply continue to say "Women must learn in silence," or "Women are not permitted to teach." Once again we see that the *clear* meaning of the text isn't quite as clear as we have been taught.

Finally, we need to look at another passage addressed to Timothy. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul says, "And what you heard from me through many witnesses, commit these things to faithful people, such as will be competent also to teach others." Here is the same context. Paul wants only certain people to teach the gospel. We might have expected Paul to say, "faithful *men*" if he is going to be consistent with that interpretation of his advice in his first letter. But that is not what Paul says. He uses the Greek word *anthropos*, a word for all Men, that is, the class of everyone who is human – both men and women, instead of the Greek word *aner* which means only males. *Anthropos* is the same Greek word used in the translation of "Let us make man in our own image," and no one claims that God only created males.

What a tragedy it is that the influence of the Greek early church fathers and the general opinion of the Roman Catholic church for a thousand years led us to read these verses without looking deeper into the text. Maybe we need to back-up. Things aren't always what they seem. If you don't believe me, I have 40 acres for sale in Arizona. †

## HAPPY THANKSGIVING

*"Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."* –  
*Psalms 31:19-20*



## RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

**Q:** "I've read Mark 8:22-25 and was wondering why Jesus had to touch the man's eyes twice to bring about complete healing?"

**A:** Everyone has their own take on this miracle. Clearly, there are two different types of blindness, physical and spiritual. It has been pointed out that in the Old Testament there is no record of a blind person being miraculously healed. The first recorded miracle of the healing of the physically blinded happened in Jesus' ministry. It is clear that Jesus came to give sight to the blind, but the real important sight that the Lord came to give had to do with spiritual blindness (Luke 4:18).

The Apostle Paul talked about how the god of this age has blinded people to the real Gospel, and that the Lord came to take the veil away from our eyes so we can see the glorious light of the Gospel (2 Corinthians 3:14; 4:3-4). Another interesting aspect about blindness is that even when we as believers have the veil taken from our eyes through salvation, we still see spiritually through a glass darkly because we are in a physical body (1 Corinthians 13:12).

My take on this particular incident is that Jesus was addressing both types of blindness. Let us consider the different details about this incident. The blind man came to Jesus seeking a touch from Him. According to this request the man was simply seeking some type of touch from the Lord and did not specifically ask for healing in relationship to his blindness. Granted, the Lord knew he was blind, but the Lord often asked those seeking Him, "What would ye have me do for you" (Mark 10:36)?

This blind man was clear about receiving a touch from Him, and the Lord led the man out of town, and what did He do? He touched him by spitting on his eyes and then putting His hands on him. The description of this event has always made me stop and ponder Jesus' handling of it. It is fascinating to think the Lord's DNA, which was in his spit, first touched this man's eyes. The DNA would definitely record Jesus' link to humanity and His distinct lineage, but how would deity be coded into His human DNA?

Here comes some interesting comparisons. Jesus' humanity first touched this man's eyes and then He put His hands upon his eyes and asked him what he saw. When the blind man looked up he saw something, he saw men as trees, walking. The Bible relates to men as being like trees (Psalm 1:3; 37:35; 52:8).

As Christians we need to keep in mind that we are limited as to what we see as far as spiritual matters. We see only in part because we are sometimes blinded by a physical world and hindered by our limited light of understanding. In our physical bodies we do not clearly see spiritual matters. We are initially touched by man's understanding, but it is limited and cannot bring a completion to a matter.

The next thing Jesus did was put His hands again upon the man's eyes. The spit represented humanity but the hands represented the touch of deity. Jesus came as man, but His humanity veiled His deity. Clearly man encounters the humanity of Christ first, but it is the touch of deity on a matter that will always secure a complete healing. After Jesus' second touch, the man could see with clarity. We know that humanity may have the medical means to bring about healing to some eye problems but will prove limited in other cases, but is completely incapable of bringing about healing to spiritual blindness. Spiritual eyesight only comes by way of a matter being unveiled to our spirit by Deity, the Holy Spirit.

Once again this is my take on the matter. I have learned years ago recorded Biblical events will affect people differently, because it will be based on where they are in their walk and spiritual growth. However, I hope this gives you an edifying take on this event. †



## DID YOU KNOW?

Jesus' Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20, Mk. 16:15) to preach the Gospel and make disciples throughout the world was given to the entire church, both male and female. Luke 24:33-53 shows that the Commission and opening of their minds to understand the Scriptures were given to the whole company of believers, not only the Eleven. It was for the purpose of evangelism that Jesus sent His Holy Spirit to empower the whole company of believers who were waiting as directed in the upper room at Jerusalem. The book of Acts testifies that at Pentecost, God's power was given both to men and to women for the purpose of bringing unbelievers to salvation (Acts 1:14-15, 2:1-4 and 14-21). At a later time, Acts 4:31 tells us that "the Holy Spirit fell on them all, and they all spoke the Word of God with boldness." This was not limited to just men. After Pentecost, the saints gathered, preached and healed publicly in Solomon's Portico, an area behind the eastern side of the Jerusalem Temple that was open to Gentiles and women (Acts 5:12-14).

As we have seen from our study of prophets, Biblical prophecy is not limited to foretelling future events, but consists mainly of proclaiming the praises of God and calling people to repentance and faith in Him. This is what the Spirit-filled men and women did together that first Pentecost, and that is what Spirit-filled Christians, both men and women, should be doing still.

St. Paul names several women as his "fellow-workers" in the Gospel (Romans 16:3,9,12). *The Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich Greek Lexicon* defines this word (*sunergos*) as "those who helped (Paul) in spreading the Gospel." (p. 795) Paul used this term not only for Timothy (Romans 16:21), Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25), Clement (Phil. 4:3), Philemon (1), Mark and Luke (Philemon 24), but also for Priscilla (Romans 16:3), Euodia and Synthyche (Phil. 4:2-3). Other women Paul commends for their "labor in the Lord" are Mary, Persis, Tryphena and Tryphosa (Romans 16:6 and 12).

From: *Women Evangelists in the Early Church*, by Kathryn Riss