

GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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

LEGALISM OR GRACE? Discipleship Series 11 By Rayola Kelley

For the last couple of months I have dealt with the concept of intent. The example used to bring home the point of duty or intent was the wrong emphasis that some people put on certain issues such as the Sabbath. However, if godly love is missing at any point, any act of devotion or service will become a legalistic duty that is often used as the standard to harshly judge the Christianity of others. This is why the Apostle Paul admonished Christians not to come under the yoke of the bondage of legalism.

When you consider the struggle that the new members of the pilgrim Church had concerning what role the Law was to play in their lives, you wonder how that struggle continues to remain alive when we, as believers, have been brought under a new covenant. Our responsibilities have been clearly outlined in Scripture. For example, in *Acts 15* when the leaders of the new Church were posed with the question of Gentile believers being circumcised to keep the Law of Moses, Peter admitted that their fathers were unable to bear the yoke of the Law. Therefore, it was not right to put such a yoke on the Gentiles. Therefore, this judgment was passed down by James, the elder at the Church of Jerusalem: *"Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, who from among the Gentiles are turned to God; but what we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols (idolatry) and from fornication (moral deviation), and from things strangled (unholy participation), and from blood (life is in the blood and established the new covenant ordained by God)" (Acts 15:19-*



20). (Parentheses added.) Note, the commandments towards God, along with proper conduct (towards the world and others), and a right attitude towards the significance of the blood are brought out, but there is no mention for the Gentiles to keep such ordinances of the Law such as the Sabbath.

The Apostle Paul was adamant that believers would not be brought under the bondage of the yoke of the Law that was too great for the people of Israel to bear (*Galatians 5:1*). The reason the Law was too great is that no one could keep it. People would fail to maintain some aspect of it, whether it was the intent of the Law or the actual rules of it. Keep in mind, that even in our courts, if the wrong intent can be proven, the person is considered guilty of breaking the Law, whether he or she has physically committed a crime.

We see this in the case of the Pharisees. Although outwardly they kept the Sabbath, inwardly they were defying the living God with an indifferent heart and profane worship. Even though they advocated that people keep the Law, they were simply making converts to their self-righteous way of doing, and not to the God of Israel. Clearly, the intent was missing from these people's lives. Regardless of how religious and ritualistic they were, God could see their hearts. For this reason, Jesus called these people hypocrites and said of them that they were nothing more than white tombs that held nothing but lifeless bones (religion and works). Ultimately, they would receive a greater damnation for their self-serving emphasis regarding the Law (*Matthew 15:8-9; 23:14, 27-28*).

The Apostle Paul explained in *Romans 7* that being under the Law can be compared to being married to an overbearing partner. No matter what you do or how hard you try, you cannot please such a partner who constantly reminds you, or rides you, about your inability to please their

rigid standards. The fact that you cannot please such a harsh companion will bring you to an utter state of despair and hopelessness. After all, you are burdened down with the perfection and demands of this mate as long as you live.

The Law was not given so people could somehow please God; rather, the Law was given to reveal that we are have indeed transgressed it, making us guilty of breaking the whole Law of God (*Romans 3:20; James 2:8-10*). To break a Law of God identifies us as one who has sinned against God or offended Him. We all know that we have sinned or transgressed the Law of God, bringing us under a death sentence (*Romans 3:23; 6:23*). This is why the Apostle Paul stated that the righteousness of God, which was apart from the Law, was manifested in His Son and would be imputed to those who believed (*Romans 3:21-22*).

The Apostle Paul talked about how the Law addressed sins along with its sentence of death, but he clearly pointed out it could not save a person. In other words, the Law had no ability to pardon, remit or take away sins. However, God in His loving faithfulness would not leave man in such a state. He would provide an advocate who would actually take our place by satisfying the judgment of death passed upon all men. This meant that Jesus would have to die in our place to suffice the righteous, holy demands of the Law.

When people think of Jesus as their advocate, they think of Him as a defense attorney, but this is a limited perception. Jesus in His righteousness could never defend us in our sin because we stand guilty and deserving of death. The only thing Jesus could do was become our advocate. Instead of simply pleading or interceding on our behalf, He actually took our place on the cross. Since He took our place on the cross, He serves as our defense or place of justification in the courts of heaven. The Apostle John put it in this way: *"And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for*

the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

The question we must ask is what about the people who lived before Christ paid the price of redemption for us? If keeping the Law could not take away their sins, or justify them in their fallen state, how did they please God? There is only one way anyone could ever please God. It is clearly outlined in Scripture.

Before Moses and the Law, there was a man named Abraham. Before the covenant of the Law was the Abrahamic covenant. This perpetual agreement clearly pointed to the blessings that God wanted to bring forth through the promises that He made to this great patriarch, specifically that all nations would be blessed through this man (*Galatians 3:15-18*). In addition, I might add that before the institution of such practices as the Sabbath, Abraham had shown us the way we could please God.

Clearly, this man Abraham was never subject to the Law; therefore, he never kept any established practice. Yet, God not only counted him as being righteous, but He considered him His friend. Many of the practices of the Law served as shadows that pointed to something that was more excellent or superior to the covenant of the Law (*Colossians 2:14-17*). Since the Law with all of its precepts, ordinances and judgments did not identify Abraham to Jehovah God, what did establish this man in his relationship with God? Most of us know the answer to this question. It was faith.

Hebrews 11:6 states: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." The Bible is clear as to what truly pleases God. In fact, we are told that what is not of faith is sin (*Romans 14:23*). In fact, what is not of faith translates into omitting that which is right. James therefore, reiterates that to those who know to do good, but fail to do so, it is sin (*James 4:17*). The writer of *Hebrews* also states that the children of Israel could not enter into rest (Promised Land) because of unbelief (*Hebrews 3:19*).

The Apostle Paul dealt with the issue of the Law and faith in his epistles to the *Romans* and the *Galatians*. The apostle made this statement in *Romans 4:13-14*: "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of none effect."

Once again, we are reminded that the Law was not made for the righteous, but for the lawless, disobedient, ungodly, profane sinner (*1 Timothy 1:9*). It could not sanctify or justify. It was void of promises because it could only work wrath upon the offenders. It could not deliver a person from its judgments that clearly deemed all flesh as being under a death sentence (*Romans 3:19-20*). Under the Law, man had no hope of deliverance and experiencing God's promises.

It is for this reason God counted the faith of those who truly believed Him as righteousness (*Romans 4:2-3, 20-22*). *Romans 1:17* tells us that God's righteousness is revealed from faith to faith to those who walk by such confidence. Note, God counts or imputes righteousness to His people at the point of sincere faith. As a result, man is justified, sanctified, and able to inherit the promises of God through his faith (*Acts 26:18; Romans 3:28; Hebrews 6:12*).

What is sincere faith? Simply put it is unfeigned confidence and trust in the character of God. It chooses to believe His Word as being truth. It clings to His faithful character when tested by fires, and waits patiently for His deliverance. Its natural response is that of obedience towards what it knows to be true and right before God.

Since God can count or reckon faith as righteousness to those who believe, He can also show such people favor at the point of their faith. This is why we are told that faith serves as an access for God's grace to operate. Most people think God's grace allows them access to do as they please. However, such a concept is erroneous. Grace can only operate where sin once abounded. As the apostle declared, God's favor can only reign through righteousness. Moreover, righteousness, which is considered a gift, can only be imputed to people when faith is

in operation. This is why we have been saved by God's grace through faith (*Romans 5:1-2, 20-21; Ephesians 2:8-9*).

This brings us back to the issue of the Law. We know that we have a responsibility to God and others, but such obligation brings us to love and not obedience to the Law. We are told that we must fulfill (not simply obey) the Law. In other words, we must fulfill the complete intent of the Law towards God and others (*Romans 13:8-10*). The intent of the Law involves honoring or preferring the well-being of others to our own self-serving agendas.

Sadly, there are Christians that are bringing themselves once again under the yoke of the Law (*Galatians 5:1*). Whether it is keeping the Sabbath or some other ordinance of the Law, they see themselves as obeying God. However, they are not pleasing God; rather, they are frustrating His work of grace. The reason for this is that keeping the Law is not a matter of faith, but of legalism that often translates into self-righteousness (*Galatians 2:21; 3:12*).

Faith is not walking according to what we can do in our religious life, but walking according to the character and word of the unseen God. If you consider that one of the principle doctrines of Christ is faith towards God, you can begin to understand the implications of putting some type of hope in the Law as far as pleasing God or making ourselves acceptable (*Hebrews 6:1-2*). Clearly, showing such confidence or emphasis on the Law has nothing to do with having faith towards God. It is all about outward works that might impress others, but is void of the Holy Spirit (*Galatians 3:1-14*).

Hence, enters the contrast between legalism and grace. You cannot be under the Law of God and know His grace. You cannot depend on the Law to make you acceptable before God, while claiming faith at the same time. In addition, you cannot have a mixture of trying to keep certain ordinances of the Law while trying to lay claim to grace. The Law does not require faith, only obedience, and faith cannot please the unfeeling Law, but God will honor unfeigned faith by counting it as righteousness and using it as a means to show His favor.

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CHOOSE YE THIS DAY

By Jeannette Haley

Life is full of choices, from the moment we wake up in the morning to the moment we fall asleep at night. Moment by moment, we are making choices. Choices are what make up the substance of our daily lives. God gave us the freedom, and responsibility, of free will. We love the freedom to choose, but we can also resent the heavy burden of choice when it comes to what is in line with God and His will for our lives. After all, the instant we make the wrong decision, we become accountable for the inevitable disastrous outcome. We can cast the blame on circumstances, others, the devil or even God, but the truth is we not only reap what we sow, but, unless we truly repent, we will be judged according to the choices we make in this life.

Our ability to make conscious decisions is proof that we are more than merely “evolved” cells. Concerning this subject, Dave Hunt explains it well in his book, “Seeking and finding God, In Search of the True Faith.” He wrote, “There is no way that chemical reactions and electrical impulses among the brain’s cells can explain a sense of right and wrong, the beauty of a sunset, or the rational and moral choices we continually make. No material of any kind, either in the brain or outside of it, has any qualities to explain our ability to understand ideas such as truth, justice, holiness, mercy, and grace. These concepts are totally nonphysical. They do not originate within the brain, nor are they a conditioned response to anything anywhere in the entire physical universe.

“Indeed, the brain does not conceive creative ideas or originate thoughts. If thoughts originated in the brain, we would be prisoners of our brains, wondering what our brain would think of next and compelled to do whatever the brain decided. On the contrary, every person is convinced that he or she makes rational choices by weighing alternatives, not because the brain gets an impulse to make the body act in a certain way. While we are prone to react impulsively to the stimuli of physical temptations that breed desires, we are not forced to do so. The moral struggles we all experi-

ence to resist temptation are proof that we are not stimulus-response mechanisms ruled by impulses but that we do make genuine choices, though our choices are not always rational or morally right.

“Without a doubt, there is a ‘ghost in the machine’—something nonphysical inhabiting the body. There must be a human spirit, which thinks these nonphysical thoughts, holds these concepts that have no source in the physical universe, and makes rational and moral choices—or irrational and immoral ones. The brain is like a computer, which the spirit (the thinking, choosing person within) uses to operate the body in order to function in this physical universe of space, time, and matter—and to interact with other souls and spirits who also occupy similar bodies.” (Pages 10, 11)

At the end of Joshua’s long career of leading the children of Israel, he assembled all the tribes together. After relating to them God’s benefits, he challenged them to *“fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD”* Joshua 24:14, 15.

Joshua was setting down an ultimatum for these people. They had to make a choice, one way or the other. There was no middle road, no “gray areas,” no “politically correct” or “progressive thinking” escape routes. In light of all that God had done for them, they were brought up to the “snubbing post” of truth; that is, to fear and serve the LORD with all sincerity and in truth. This is square “A” of getting the right perspective, and starting “on the right foot.” Anything less than putting God first, in every aspect of our lives, will cause us to be out of step from that which is true, right, and beneficial—God. *“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God”* Micah 6:8. [Emphasis added.]

The two ways in which we are to serve God are in sincerity and in truth. Sincerity in this Scripture comes from the Hebrew word *tamiym* which means entire, integrity, truth, without blemish, complete, full, perfect, sincerely sound, without spot, undefiled, uprightly and whole. As you can see, there is much more to this one word, “sincerity”, than just “giving it our best shot” whenever we feel like it. It obviously involves much more than being “sincere” about showing up at a church once or twice a week, jumping up and down for 45 minutes while giving lip service to God, putting on our pious mask, and giving a good impression to others. The meaning of this particular word requires full consecration on our part to God, serving Him with our whole heart, from the right spirit because He is *LORD* of our lives wherever we are, all the time, not just on Sunday.

When Joshua used the word “truth,” (*emeth*) he meant stability, certainty, trustworthiness, assuredly, establishment, faithful, right, sure, truly, verity. Thus, we are reminded of Jesus’ words to the Samaritan woman in John 4:24: *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”* Nothing less is acceptable to God because He is *holy*. Therefore, He will not accept profane “offerings” we throw at Him (much like tossing a bone to a dog) in order to keep Him off our back: Nor will He accept our perverted, pagan, worldly “worship” that we delude ourselves into thinking is all about Him, when in reality it’s all about entertaining us to make ourselves feel good. Rest assured it is sin, and a stench to God. You can pin the name “Jesus” on to your rock n’ roll so-called “worship,” but it has nothing to do with the Jesus of the Bible, and everything to do with the wrong spirit of Satan and this world. It is pagan, it is sensuous, and it is worldly, wicked and wrong! If you are dancing to the devil’s tune, you need to repent, and truly begin to worship God in the Spirit of holiness.

Take heed to what God told idolatrous Israel, (which is also for our example): *“Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I can not*

away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood" *Isaiah 1:13-15*. We need to sober up and take note. God has not changed. He is still God. He is still holy. He will not, cannot, and is not tolerating iniquity (moral deviation), sin (falling short of God's glory), and transgression (breaking His laws and rebellion) any longer. God's judgment is beginning to fall, and it *will* begin in the "house of God." Jesus is returning for a prepared, pure Church, not a half-hearted, harlot church that is more in love with the pleasures of this passing world than with the Jesus of the Bible, not the "mushy modern" Jesus which is so popular today.

Concerning receiving "a love for the truth" (2 Thess. 2:10) God says: "To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it" *Jeremiah 6:10*. What an apt description of our day! The Word of God has been twisted, perverted, watered down, "reinterpreted," and regurgitated until the truth, and the Spirit behind it (anointing) has all but vanished. People are no different today than they were in Jeremiah's day. They do not delight in the pure Word of God. It is too hard on their fragile self-esteem. They want something "easier to understand," something more appealing to the flesh, something that "fits in" with contemporary living (rather than exposing and challenging our contemporary lifestyles). They do not want to study to show themselves "approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" 2 Timothy 2:15. Instead, they want their ears tickled by various teachers. They want "something new" regardless of the spirit behind it.

One good example of this insatiable quest for "something new" is the incredible popularity among professing "Christians" and churches of the best-selling book, "The Shack" which is blasphemous fictional darkness,

which has been transformed in the minds of many as coming from God. Is Jesus going to nod and smile and wink at such wickedness? You had better believe He is not! "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not" 2 Peter 2:1-3. [Emphasis added.]

Have you ever thought about the two references Joshua made to the children of Israel in *Joshua 24:14, 15 to the gods on the other side of the flood?* How did the Israelites know about the gods their fathers served before Noah's flood? Archaeologists and biblical historians believe that Noah's son, Ham, brought the knowledge of these gods with him, and passed on their knowledge to his descendants. In an article written by Bryce Self entitled *Nimrod, Mars and the Marduk Connection*, he wrote: "According to tradition, Nimrod set out to establish himself an empire and began by conquering the cities which had become established in Mesopotamia. Among these were Babel, Erech, Akkad, and Calneh in Sumeria, and in Assyria the cities of Rehoboth, Calah, and Resen. Besides conquering these seven cities he also founded Ninevah. The Bible is specific in stating that he was the first man after the flood to become an emperor. He seems to have been impelled and empowered by super-human force and his onslaught was irresistible. Genesis 10 describes Nimrod as a "mighty hunter before the LORD." The term is not complimentary, but implies ruthlessness and a lust for power.

"After establishing his kingdom in the Tigris/Euphrates region Nimrod consolidated his power by establishing a state religion. He constructed a religion that included deification and worship of the emperor (himself), worship of Satan and his demons, and star-worship (corrupted from a pure

antediluvian astronomy). A key unifying factor in his religion was to be an astronomical/astrological observatory built upon the pinnacle of a pyramid, or tower, at Babel. It has been suggested that Nimrod spent some time in Egypt before moving up to Mesopotamia and that while in Egypt he studied the Egyptian mystery religion perpetuated there from before the flood by the wife of Ham, whom tradition takes to be a descendant of Cain.

"The building of this pyramid (or ziggurat) was interrupted by God himself in order to prevent Nimrod from extending his sway over all of the inhabited earth, according to Genesis. God halted the work by confusing their language so they could no longer cooperate easily with one another, nor indeed easily inhabit the same region together. As a consequence the human race was dispersed, and as men scattered they carried with them remnants of primeval revelation from God, and Satan/hero worship which Nimrod had invented as well. This system of muddled half-truths is known today to Bible scholars as the "Babylonian Mystery Religion." From a biblical point of view this religious system is described as the well-spring for all subsequent false religion and endless mythological systems, (For example see Isa. 47 and Rev. 17 and 18)."

Thus, Joshua stood before the children of Israel, calling upon them to make up their minds whether they were going to serve the Lord or the pagan gods that, along with gross perversion and continual evil imaginations, brought down the wrath of God, resulting in the destructive forces of a worldwide flood. This example alone of God dealing with man's rebellion and idolatry should pull us up short, giving us a much-needed reality check. Why? Because the days we are living in are comparable to the days prior to the flood. Jesus said, "*But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be*" *Matthew 24:37-39*.

answer is simple: From heretical teachers, preachers and false prophets in the church, and that includes all the garbage people listen to and watch on so-called “Christian” television, and read in so-called “Christian” books written by charlatans and false workers who are the enemies of God, upon whom the wrath of God shall fall. In that day, there will be no place to hide. If you have deceived yourself with this ungodly, unbiblical excuse for living in rebellion, idolatry and sin against the Almighty, you need to repent and seek God’s standard of holiness for your life. Time is short.

Paul wrote in *Romans 2:4-6*, “. . . despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds.” Who can say that God’s “goodness and forbearance and longsuffering” has not been evident in America, and in every one of our lives thus far? However, God’s goodness is given to cause people to repent! His goodness is not extended to us so that we can continue to partake of the world, live for the flesh, and give way to the devil while “tossing God a bone” by going to church or dropping a dollar bill in the offering plate. God is not mocked. He knows our hearts.

Is your heart “hard and impenitent”—a heart that will bring you under the wrath of God in His righteous judgment? God is sending out a clear warning to the church in America. His goodness, forbearance and longsuffering towards those who are playing the religious game, while idolizing and worshipping their “money god,” are ending. God is shaking the churches of this land, tearing down the false gods that have been set up within them just as surely as Jesus cast out the money-changers in the temple. The false god of man’s religious traditions, along with his faith in “faith,” worship of the “worship,” exaltation of the church, the pastor (or any other leader) is all pride and idolatry. Watering down the Word of God with perverted so-called “versions,” redefining the truths laid out in God’s Word through blasphemous novels and writing, prophesying lies in the name of

The Law is holy, but it also proves to be unyielding to our plight, while faith allows God to show us a more excellent way of grace through His covenant. The excellent way of grace is what ensures us of the salvation that was freely offered by God through His Son, Jesus Christ.

The question is what side of the fence are you on? Have you brought yourself under the Law so you do not have to trust God with the matters of your life, or have you brought yourself under His grace by way of having child-like faith towards the one true God of heaven? †

It is interesting to consider “eating” and “drinking” in this particular verse when you look up the meaning of those words in the Greek. Eating means corrosion, to wear, gnaw or crunch, and drinking in this verse means to imbibe. To me it paints a picture of careless and thoughtless people (utterly clueless) going about their self-satisfying, self-indulgent, worldly lives without a thought about *eternity and the judgment to come*. We also need to take note of the word Jesus used for “giving” in marriage. It is “skolios” which means warped, winding, perverse, crooked, forward, untoward, which strongly suggests that He was not referring to godly marriage between one man and one woman, but rather to the exact opposite. After all, God in the very beginning of the human race instituted marriage between a man and a woman, and he blessed it. Obviously, the gross perversion and wickedness that we witness in the world today aptly fits the description Jesus gave of the end of the age, prior to His return.

In Paul’s letter to the Romans, Chapter 1, verses 18-32, we read a fitting description of both the pre-flood and the post-flood eras, including the days in which we live. It makes for an interesting study; one that should serve as a warning to us as well, for God has not changed. Yet, in spite of this fact, post-modern “Christians” go about flip-pantly excusing themselves of their *choices of pagan practices* with the soul-damning excuse that we are living in “New Testament” times of “grace,” which that means that since Jesus died for our sins, we can say, do, think, be, partake of, practice or live any way we want. Did Jesus die on the cross so that we can dress like the world, mark (tattoo and pierce) our bodies in heathen fashion, and eat and drink what we want (disregarding the temple of our bodies)? Did Jesus die so that we could choose to indulge in sinful practices such as drugs (sorcery), sex (fornication), drunkenness (excess), witchcraft (magic, Harry Potter, New Age practices, etc.), idolatry (demon worship) and carnality (rock music), and, in general, look, sound, act, live and think just like the world? Where did this heretical belief come from? The

RAYOLA’S Q & A CORNER

TONGUES

Q: “What is your position on the popular acceptance of speaking in tongues, as the Assembly of God church teaches?”

A: The issue of tongues in the Church has been controversial. It is not that the gift of tongues is wrong, for the Bible is clear that as believers we are not to forbid the speaking of tongues (1 Corinthians 14:39). However, the type of emphasis that is put on tongues is what creates the debate and confuses the real purpose for tongues to be in operation.

We must consider the whole counsel of God to understand the place the gift of tongues should have in the Church Body. One of the beliefs is that if you do not have tongues, you have not been baptized with the Holy Spirit. Granted, tongues can be evident of this baptism, but it is not the only manifestation of this spiritual baptism. After all, the gifts of the Spirit are evident when the Spirit is manifesting Himself or making Himself apparent to do a work in God’s people’s lives, according to the plan of the Father, for the purpose of edification of the whole body (1 Corinthians 12:5-11). For example, when the Holy Spirit comes down on people, they have also been known to prophesied such as King Saul did and some of the people in Acts (1 Samuel 10:5-7; 19:18-24; Acts 19:6).

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the Lord, using His holy name in vain to seduce people into a false reality is all an abomination. God is no longer going to tolerate it in His church.

The Lord will have no other gods before Him. Idolatry, simply defined, means anything that is more important in your life than the Lord is. It is what you pursue or live for, what you talk about, what you desire. It is the object of your affections, and delight. We need to heed this warning from God: *“Therefore prophesy thou against them all these words, and say unto them, The LORD shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the LORD hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground”* Jeremiah 25:30-33.

Will you be able to stand when God rises to shake the earth? What is your life built upon, sinking sand or the Rock that shall never be moved? Are you lingering in this valley? *“Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision”* Joel 3:13, 14.

Whom do you choose to serve this day, the Lord of all creation, the One who died and raised again, who shall come to judge the quick and the dead; or, do you choose to serve the false gods that abound in this present world? The choice is yours. †



“Tongues” Con’t. from Pg. 5

The main emphasis that we should have in regard to the baptism of the Spirit is not just gifts that can be counterfeited by the kingdom of darkness, but a life that has or is being changed to express the glory of Christ, as well as being empowered by the Holy Spirit to be a living, effective witness for the kingdom of God (Acts 1:4-8). Signs, such as the different manifestations (gifts) of the Holy Spirit, will follow the message of salvation, as a means to confirm the message (Mark 16:15-18). Therefore, to put the emphasis on the manifestation of tongues, rather than the purpose for the baptism of the Holy Spirit to empower us to be walking epistles that can be read of men, is to pervert the will, purpose and work of this spiritual baptism from above.

The gift of tongues must be followed by interpretation to edify the Body. The purpose for tongues is so that the Spirit can reveal mysteries of God through revelation, knowledge, prophesying, or doctrine (1 Corinthians 14:2-6). Unknown tongues are God's way of getting His people's attention that He is about to speak and they need to listen to what He has to say through the Holy Spirit.

There is also a debate about prayer language, where an unknown tongue foreign to our understanding is used by the Spirit to pray according to the heart and mind of God (1 Corinthians 14:14-15). Prayer language will edify the person praying, but it will not edify the Body. However, the gift of tongues and interpretation edifies the whole Body.

The Holy Spirit does not give one specific gift to verify His presence or movement upon, in and through a person. He does not give gifts for the purpose of ensuring others that one has been baptized from above. Rather, He gives gifts as He will to the Church for edification. To put emphasis on tongues as being the only sign that the person has been baptized by the Holy Spirit is wrong according to my Scriptural understanding of how the Spirit moves, and His purpose behind making Himself apparent to God's people.

I do hope this answers your question, but if it does not, please feel

free to clarify your concerns or struggles regarding this issue.

God bless as you search for His truth about all matters pertaining to His kingdom and work.

Letters



“This [the emergent church] is definitely something that has seriously weakened the Church and what amazes me is how little of an alarm is raised about the watering down of the Gospel among the mainstream denominations. The Gospel message - Christ's death, burial, and resurrection - is what got my attention back when I was eight years old and it stuck with me until I finally repented in 1999 at 33 years old and turned to God for His salvation. Without the real Gospel, no one will get truly born again but they'll instead be accepting a false "Christ" and will still be dead in their trespasses, lost in this "new" movement that will never convict them of their fallen condition. No wonder we're seeing more and more people proclaim that they have no "religion" - the Gospel message is disappearing from this country.” - WV

“All of the books [Rayola's] are so helpful and informative—now if we the sheep will apply the many truths we receive, we will be more mature and fruitful. I believe that time is short and it does this old warrior's heart good to see God's people continuing on as if He will tarry another 2,000 years. I know your rewards will be great and crowns many—what a day that will be and I will be celebrating with you as you throw them at the feet of King of kings.” - MT

“A comment about the book, The Place of Covenant. What an excellent book! We found the truths contained in its pages were insightful and enlightening. We felt that this place of covenant was truly explained in a way all could understand and benefit from, especially in the area of closer relationship with Him. Thanks for always listening to Holy Spirit, Rayola, and for sharing the things He is faithful to teach you.” - MT