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SPIRITUAL SURVIVAL Part 14 THE ENCLOSED GARDEN By Rayola Kelley

As darkness enfolds much of the age we live in, we must be serious about surviving it. In the natural realm survival can prove to be a 24-7 activity for much of creation, including man. However, survival in the Christian realm does not require such activity. Survival in the spiritual realm points to knowing your place in Christ. Christ is our fortress in which we hide. He is the Rock of our foundation, He is the straight cornerstone that cannot be moved from the eternal truths of heaven, He is our hope, life, and promise. He is our all in all. Everything we have need of to spiritually survive can be found in Him, every desire marked by eternity will be realized in the Lord, and every promise will be fulfilled in Him.



This brings us to an important question. If we are in Him, why is it that so many Christians are being swallowed up by the spirit of the world as they are increasingly caught up with the currents and tides of the present age? The answer is obvious, the old man is still ruling in different areas of their lives.

The fallen disposition, or old man in us must be mortified daily or we will find ourselves being slowly dragged into the destructive currents of this present age. We must constantly establish ourselves on the Rock of Christ to avoid being swept into these dangerous waters by the present tides of deception, corruption, and lust.

The question is how can we po-

lice ourselves? After all, the Bible is clear that in our eyes, our ways are clean and right to us, but they lead to death (*Proverbs 14:12; 16:2, 25*). We see our standing as straight, our walk as correct or justifiable, our lifestyle as necessary and practical, and our presentation of ourselves as clever and wise. However, *Romans 12:3* states we think more highly of ourselves than we should. The reality of the old man in us is that it is pure, unadulterated selfishness. Pride sits on the arrogant throne of selfishness and what is considered straight is bent towards destruction, what is deemed correct is counterclockwise, what is being measured as necessary is perverted and corrupt, and what is being counted as clever is deluded foolishness.

This brings us to policing ourselves. We must learn how to discern the activities of our soul and the bent of our spirit. It is important to realize that if our soul is not grounded on the Rock of Jesus, settled in His will, and aligned with His truths, we will find the bent of what will prove to be an undisciplined spirit succumbing to the winds of this world. Our inner man will be swept away by every "wind" that blows through our lives which may catch our fancy, entice our lusts, or promise us the illusive carrot of worldly happiness and satisfaction.

When you consider the soul and spirit, you must realize they comprise an enclosed garden. This garden cannot be seen, but eventually what is taking place in it will manifest itself in our disposition, attitudes, and conduct. It never ceases to amaze me that there are Christians whose dispositions have clearly run amuck because they prove to be mean-spirited, and their attitude has become entangled by the noxious weeds of anger, unforgiveness, jealousy, bitterness, ingratitude, self-pity, and cruelty. At times, such individuals may slip on their best religious mask in an effort to cover their unloving attitude, and don

fig leaves to conceal the stench created by their shameful, stiff-necked ways, but in the end you can see them seething beneath the surface as its takes everything in them to appear nice or somewhat reasonable to those who do not serve their purpose.

We must not deceive ourselves or try to justify fleshly ways. Even though our flesh tries to appear noble by being decent, religious, or charming at times, there is nothing honorable in its attitude, conduct, or ways. The flesh can only choose the base ways that lead to vanity, emptiness, and hypocrisy. As Christians, we are always called to take the road of excellence in everything we do no matter how much it may rub against our high-minded ideas, self-serving ways, and religious causes. We are here to be a mirror of Christ to others in regard to His lowly disposition and His meek attitude, an epistle that lovingly speaks of His truths regardless of how contrary it may be to others, and a living sacrifice that is quick to offer up our present notions about life in order to ensure that the life of Christ can be formed in others. We are to always exemplify the most excellent example of Christ to ensure that all we do will be void of hypocrisy and will serve as a natural extension of true worship towards the One who is worthy of all consideration and adoration.

As I considered my inward man to be an enclosed garden, I could trace the different conditions of my garden through the years. Solomon's song talks about the enclosed garden. In *Song of Solomon 4:12*, it tells us that the enclosed garden possessed a spring, but the fountain has been sealed. This was true for me. Keep in mind, the condition of the garden was determined by my relationship with the Lord. Before I knew Christ, my garden was a barren wilderness, made unrelenting and hard from years of spiritual drought. There was no life in it. It stood condemned for its fruitless environment and lay in utter ruin. It represented the devastation wrought by sin upon my life.

When I received Christ, the seeds of truth and life were planted into the ground of my heart. Due to the cold north wind of winter that had blown so long on my soul, the seeds had to first germinate in the lifeless ground, waiting for the springtime that pointed to regeneration and new life. In a sense, the precious seeds of life were protected by the warmth of the love of God. As the seeds took root, certain buds begin to spring forth in my garden as the gentle water of the Spirit began to soften the hard ground of my heart. But, it was not until the healing and restoration from the warm breezes of the south that the seeds begin to take on form and beauty. *Song of Solomon 4:16* mentions both the north and south winds, but the purpose was to bring forth spices, the fragrance of heaven for our Lord to enjoy.

However, the life of Christ within my enclosed garden was blocked by stones of selfishness blocking His life from going deep into the ground of my heart. There were indications of life, but the stones of self caused the vulnerable blossoms to be purged by the heat of inconsistency. The inconsistencies of my life made different areas of my soul hard towards the matters of God. When the winds of trial came, it appeared that all was withering away in the dust of despair.

However, God was not finished with the enclosed garden of my heart. He understood the purpose of each season. Each season was to prepare the garden of my heart for the harvest time. *Song of Solomon 4:16* confirms this, "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits."

The Lord is a perfect husbandman in every way. He knows how to place the shady trees of righteousness in my midst. He gave me the living water of the Spirit to cause dew to fall upon my parched soul as He established the blessed wells of salvation within me. He nourished and cultivated the seeds of life with His Word. *Song of Solomon 4:15* describes the well, "A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon."

We cannot imagine the depth of the wells of salvation. Its water is the only means to push the stones of selfishness aside and to go deep into the inner character of our being. It has been made available to all, but we must hear the invitation to come, and then we must drink deeply to experience the many facets of its refreshing and healing qualities.

The challenge I encountered is that once I drank of the wells, I was satisfied. It was during such satisfaction that the weeds of self-sufficiency took place as the world's demands beckoned me further away from the wells. As the weeds of self-sufficiency spread, I would find that my spiritual sharpness was being dulled down as I became more caught up with the world and less concerned about God and His Word.

Even though there was evidence of life in my garden, the weeds of worldliness began to choke it out. Eventually, leanness came to my soul and I realized that I had moved once again from the source of my life. The fruit of such worldly entanglement was vanity and emptiness. There was no lasting substance in any of it.

This brings me to the purpose of the garden. It is a place of fellowship. Remember it was in the garden that God walked with Adam. It was during the cool of the day that the Lord sought him out, only to discover that he was hiding from Him. Clearly, the garden that is being established in our inner lives belongs to the Lord. It has been purchased with His precious blood. God is establishing it for the purpose of fellowshipping with Him. He once again wants to walk with us in a place of life, fragrance, and delight.

To survive the onslaught of what is happening around us, we must make sure our inner garden is flourishing. It is the excellence of the inner life that will sustain and maintain us through the trials of the world. In fact, the trials simply bring out a greater fragrance and sweetness to our lives. Subsequently, it is the life of Christ that is being refined in us, and in the fires our old life will be perpetually consumed, allowing for the new life to come forth in beauty.

As we examine our lives in light of the present age, we must ensure that the rocks of selfishness have been

pushed aside by the Living Water and the weeds of self-sufficiency have been rooted out by the sharp sword of the Word. We must have that continual fire of passionate devotion that will purge our altar (heart) with the blood of the covenant, purify the ground (spirit) with holiness, and cultivate the garden (soul) with godliness.

Consider your walk. Are you walking through the world in your own strength or are you walking in the garden of sweet fellowship with the Lord to know the way in which to walk through the grave darkness that is enfolding the age in which we live? †

QUOTABLE

"Christians lose their edge when they forget what their purpose is. This often occurs because they lose sight of what is truly important to the Lord in the midst of religious activities. Some churches are indulging self with the things of the world, while others have come into unholy agreements or have let too much of the world's influence in. In fact, they are so worldly there is no distinction.

"To lose one's spiritual edge implies the Holy Spirit is withdrawing because there is a lack of passion for what is true and righteous. When Christians indulge themselves with the things of the world, they will grieve the Spirit, forcing a battle to take place that will end in some type of separation or division. When churches come into an unholy agreement, they will quench Him, causing Him to lift from off all activities. When churches allow the world into their midst, they will greatly vex the Spirit, causing Him to depart." -

"We cannot love what we cannot personally associate with or relate to. Jesus came as man so we could relate and interact with Him. Even though He was and is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last to all matters, He came as the Son of man. He made God real to mankind and opened up the way that God could once again fellowship with man." — Excerpted from *The Leadership Series*, by Rayola Kelley

"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." - *1 Peter 5:10*

THE RED BALL

By Jeannette Haley

It was spring of this year, and I decided to take action against the fruit flies that always bore holes into every single cherry to be found on the largest of two cherry trees in our yard. This particular tree produces three types of delicious cherries, which we, along with friends, eagerly look forward to.

Even though we had purchased some poison to spray the tree with once the lovely blossoms faded away, we weren't comfortable with using such a toxic substance. Therefore, I went to my favorite source of information on anything and everything—the Internet. There, much to my delight, I learned about fruit fly traps of various sorts, and one in particular caught my attention. It was apparently an effective weapon in the bug battle, and also easy to use.

Hoping to find this simple method of fixing the fruit fly problem, I toted the unopened can of poison back to the nursery where we had purchased it. There, in a quick glance, I saw exactly what I was looking for and exchanged my prior purchase with this new, exciting solution to the problem. Visions of a tree full of sweet, juicy, perfect cherries filled my mind's eye as I drove the short distance home.

In time the blossoms departed, and the baby fruit began to appear. I waited with my new secret weapon until the cherries began to blush with color. In spite of rain, wind, and hail storms, the hardier fruit clung to the tree, and predictably the reddish tinge began to quickly develop. It was time to set up my new surprise for the relentless fruit flies.

Digging into the box, I told myself to overcome my loathing for instructions of any sort, and read them. They were simple enough, and soon the special traps, three in total, were hanging from the two cherry trees, waiting for their first victims. Three big, red balls covered with an incredibly sticky coating. I felt a sense of accomplishment at this point, little realizing that it would turn into a tragic situation that literally broke my heart.

Supposing that the fruit fly situation was taken care of, which was mistake number one, I turned my at-

tention to other parts of the property. When you are responsible for two acres of grass, evergreens, fruit trees, bushes and flowers, there is no lack for something to do, especially spring through fall. Even though I am not able to do heavy manual labor like I used to, when the assortment of brightly colored annuals becomes available in the spring, I can't resist buying enough to fill a few containers.

As I sat on the deck one day surveying the beauty that surrounds us, I noticed two beautiful butterflies, happily flapping their bright yellow and black wings. I watched in awe as they gracefully soared higher and higher among the towering evergreens, only to float back down to swing lazily over the grape vine. They were the biggest butterflies I had ever seen, and as the days passed I found myself looking for them every morning, delighting in their God-given beauty and grace. Their bright yellow wings intricately



"decorated" with their distinctive black design seemed to carry an extra burst of sunshine wherever they went. They always seemed to be sending a message of sheer joy and happiness in just being alive. In my heart I felt that they were like a special gift from God, one that brought joy, peace, and awe at His amazing handiwork.

One afternoon Rayola and I were especially tired, and took a break on the couch. As exhaustion settled over us like a heavy blanket, I happened to glance through a window and noticed those glorious butterflies flapping excitedly around the cherry tree. The thought came to me that maybe I better get up and go make sure they weren't getting too close to the red death trap. However, my body refused to obey my mind, and I assured myself that butterflies were probably too smart to get near such an obvious object of destruction. That was mistake number two.

Later that day, I drug myself outdoors to go check the red ball where I had last seen "my" special butterflies. To my horror, they were both stuck fast to the red ball, their beautiful wings

held tight by the sticky substance as their bodies struggled to be free. I instinctively knew that I had to act quickly to do what needed to be done, for their sakes. As I reached out and removed the suffering creatures, their fragile wings ripped and tore into pieces, sticking fast to the red ball. Bright yellow with the stunning black design stuck to the red ball, only remnants of a once beautiful, free and happy creation of God, destroyed in a moment. I knew that it would be impossible to extract the delicate wings in one piece from their sticky prison. Impossible to piece together something only God could make. Impossible to save them so they could fly and soar and rejoice in life itself. It was too late.

I cupped my fingers around the struggling, wingless bodies and carried them to the sidewalk where I knew what I had to do. Sobbing, I held them up towards my lips, and whispered, "I am so sorry...I am so very sorry." And then in two crushing blows, as they continued to struggle to fly, to live, to be, they were gone. My ignorance had destroyed the very thing that brought me such delight, and it shattered my heart.

My kind friends quickly disposed of all three red balls, and tried their best to comfort me, assuring me that there were more big yellow butterflies. I am sure there are, elsewhere, but that doesn't help the ones that I destroyed. Never again this summer have we sighted such big beauties near our property. And, the horror of it all, and what I had to do, is a painful memory. To me, it is a poignant reminder of the cost of SIN. *"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" Romans 8:22.*

That red ball has become, in my mind, a symbol of the destruction and death that is a result of sin. The trap of sin is not a popular subject. People do not want to read about it, hear about it, or think about it. Yet all around us, wherever we go, the results of sin are evident. Pain and suffering, sickness, death, sorrow, remorse, depression, guilt, shame and hopelessness. Yet, somehow people only want to be told how "crazy" God is about them, how wonderful they are, how they have some "good" in

them that is worth "saving," and even how God is "understanding" of sin, because, after all, He is "just like us" and wants us to be happy. The fact of the matter is, nothing could be farther from the truth.

Have you ever stopped to consider how your sin (and my sin) has broken God's heart? Have you given much thought as to how the LORD God felt when He called to Adam, and said, "*Where art thou?*" He still calls us, asking the same question, but how many of us are honest with both God and ourselves as to where we are spiritually? We may go to church every week, and we may give of ourselves and our resources a little here and there, we may watch "Christian" TV and we may read the latest Christian best seller, but where are we *really*? Are we merely playing the religious game, giving the religious appearances, and saying the right religious things while our hearts are indifferent, cold, and withdrawn from the Lord's presence because of sin and shame? Job declared this concerning hiding our iniquity, "*If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom*" Job 31:33. We may think we are hiding our iniquity from God's eyes, but the Lord knows our every thought. "*The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity*" Psalm 94:11. The Hebrew definition for vanity in this verse is emptiness, something transitory and unsatisfactory. God forbid that we should be as the ancients of the house of Israel of whom God said to Ezekiel, "*Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? For they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth*" Ezekiel 8:12.

How does wickedness and sin really affect God's heart? Some dare to preach in our day and age that sin is not all that important to God, that He is not all that "uncomfortable" with our sin, or that we are saved "in" our sin, not "from" our sin. However, the Bible says, concerning the pre-flood age, "*And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart*" Genesis 6:5, 6. These verse

make it clear that man's wickedness (lifestyle) was great, and that man's imagination (perceptions) and thoughts (conclusions) were only (without exception) evil continually (without end). This state of mankind made the Lord sorry or regretful that He had made man on the earth, and his heart was grieved, "*for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.*" (See Genesis 8:21.) Are we any better today? No wonder Jesus warned us that in the days prior to His coming it would be as in the days of Noah.

Sin is deceptive and Satan is subtle. Like the red ball, sin can look good to the eyes. It entices our senses, toys with our emotions, stirs up lust, feeds our pride, promises pleasure and even fame, fortune, and power. Consider the ways that Satan tempted Christ in the wilderness. In Matthew 4:3 he tempted Jesus with the lust of the flesh. He tempted Jesus with the pride of life in Matthew 4:6, and with the lust of the eyes in verse 9. In John's first epistle, 1 John 2:15, 16 he sums up the essence of temptation this way, "*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*"

Once we compromise with sin, we become entangled in its deadly grip, just as the beautiful butterflies were stuck fast to the red ball. We can struggle against it with all our might, but we cannot free ourselves of the death sentence we are under. "*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*" Romans 6:23. God's Word is clear, "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die*" Ezekiel 18:20a. Yet, God holds out this promise, "*And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart*" Jeremiah 29:13. God promises that He will be found if we search for Him with our whole heart. A half-hearted, flippant repetition of a "sinner's prayer" does not bring salvation to a lost soul any more than repeating wedding vows you don't truly intend in your heart to keep means you are "one" with your spouse. It is all a half-

hearted fraud, and God, who knows every heart, will judge.

Consider the words of Jesus concerning salvation, "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water [the Word] and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again*" John 3:3, 5, 6, 7. (Emphasis added.) Only by being born again of God's Spirit by placing our faith and trust in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God incarnate, who took our death sentence for sin upon Himself, can we be set free from the penalty and enslavement of sin. If we truly born again, then our disposition will be changed, and our minds will be renewed by God's Spirit. Romans 8:6-9 explains, "*For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*" (Emphasis added.) The question is, does the Spirit of God dwell in you, or are you still living in the flesh?

In closing, allow me to quote a Scripture that can be so well illustrated by the wondrous life and miraculous cycle of butterflies. "*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*" 2 Corinthians 5:17.

May the Lord bless and keep you in your daily walk in this world, and bring you safely Home to dwell with Him forever. †



RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

WHAT IS A "GOOD" PERSON?

Q: The Bible tells us that "none is good, no not one," yet there are many verses in the Bible that mention "good men" (such as Proverbs 2:20; 12:2, 13:22; 14:14; 14:19; Luke 6:45 etc.) In Matthew 19:17, Jesus said, "Why call-est thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God..." I know that the Bible doesn't contradict itself, but how do you explain these seeming contradictions? Thank you for considering my question.

A: It is important to understand what the word "good" means in Scriptural context. This word points to someone or something that is marked by qualities that are considered pleasant and favored. Such qualities will prove to be excellent and beneficial to not only the person who possesses them, but those around him or her.

By Matthew 19:17 telling us that only God is good, it is showing us that all that can be considered "good" strictly comes from God. Clearly, there is no goodness found outside of Him. He is the One who raises the standard of goodness which would be expressed in an attitude of righteousness and the conduct of godliness in our lives. It is for this reason that Romans 7:18 tells us that there is no good thing in the flesh. In other words, there is nothing that can benefit man that originates with the flesh.

This brings us to the contrast, meaning, and the proper conclusion to the subject of Scriptural "goodness." When it comes to the man who operates in the flesh, there is no goodness or benefit in who he is or what he is doing, but if man's attitude and conduct finds its origins with God, it can be properly considered or called "good". In such goodness, there will be a moral decency to it which will display that which is valuable, virtuous, and honest in attitude and action.

When you study what Proverbs is saying about the "good" man, you will find that the qualities that identify him as such point back to God being his source and inspiration for the life he is living.

I hope this answers your question.

GREAT QUOTES FROM GREAT MEN

"The 'show business,' which is so incorporated into our view of Christian work today, has caused us to drift far from Our Lord's conception of discipleship. It is instilled in us to think that we have to do exceptional things for God; we have not. We have to be exceptional in ordinary things, to be holy in mean streets, among mean people, surrounded by sordid sinners. That is not learned in five minutes." - Oswald Chambers

"We always know when Jesus is at work because He produces in the commonplace something that is inspiring." - Oswald Chambers

"The institutions of Churchianity are not Christianity. An institution is a good thing if it is second; immediately an institution recognizes itself it becomes the dominating factor." - Oswald Chambers

"The church has lost the opportunity to win the proletariat to its side. We have given them into the hands of the Communists because we preferred a comfortable life. We were not ready to fight in order to win souls." - Richard Wurmbrand

"...there is a limit to Christian forbearance and charity. In the end, Moses killed Shimon and his subjects because they were not responsive to delicacy. At times we have to have measure in love. One single devil whom we have pitied can destroy a paradise. One day of softness and a nation can lose overnight its happy institutions built up through generations of struggle. Do not think it a virtue to be delicate only. When occasion demands, tell a devil in a high position that he is a devil." - Richard Wurmbrand

"Compare Scripture with Scripture. False doctrines, like false witnesses, agree not among themselves." - William Gurnall

"It is an undoubted truth that every doctrine that comes from God, leads to God; and that which doth not tend to promote holiness is not of God." - George Whitefield

"It is a poor sermon that gives no offense; that neither makes the hearer displeased with himself nor with the preacher." - George Whitefield

CORRESPONDENCE

"Thank you for your newsletters. There is much in them that has been helpful in challenging me to think. Praise God for His word and provisions of all that we need." - ID

"As time flies, the closer that Jesus will be here, I get so excited I can hardly stand it, I am looking forward to seeing HIM in all His love and glory, to go home....my heart is so excited. A few months back I had surgery - it wasn't too important but needed to be done, the short of it - all went well until it was time to wake up, I could hear the people around me saying such things as 'S_____, wake up' or 'wake up now' I tried to tell the nurse that I was awake and that I wasn't ready to 'come back to the room' for I was wrapped in a warm garment, where I was, was very bright and you didn't need sun glasses, people I didn't even know were happy to see me, when I say 'me' in such a place because this must be what 'home' feels like when home is for real....I wish there were words to write down about this place of Peace and Love, the thing I carry with me concerning this experience is 'IT'S REAL' without a doubt. Right now as I am looking for words to share with you, perhaps when you are singing in the Holy Spirit and you feel that beautiful blanket of HIS Spirit come over you and your house, He is all together lovely." - WA

"It's going to get like this.. [shooting at Family Research Council]...When people really know that we serve GOD, we are going to be HATED, BIG TIME. Well, we already are, but it's going to get worse and worse." - OH

"Keep praying for a miracle. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. Ask the Lord to prepare ourselves for extreme persecution. [In the Seattle area] there are two Mosques, and some group bought the Baptist church in _____ and turned it into a Meditation center. There is a huge Hindu arts center by _____ Chapel and another Mosque in Lynnwood and a large Buddhist temple I told you it is

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dark over here and the churches just want to accept everyone without repentance and there is no conviction in our churches because there is no word being preached. There is a lot of hype and soulish stuff, but no anointing that changes hearts. _____ has gone off into the different personality stuff and healing rooms. When they are in deception, they try to convince me that it is I. We are in apostasy, big time. Pastor _____ is into the political and buying up all the churches and schools. A great business person, but Christ never came to form a large corporation, but to build a temple of living stones. Romney is the best choice, but dig in a pray more, lets keep the worship going up and see if God won't do a supernatural miracle of His grace for an undeserving, backslidden church and nation. That is my take from over here. Carry on soldiers of the cross, this is spiritual warfare, not the time to compromise." - WA

"You know, it doesn't seem to matter what Church you go to - even the little Innocent ones. Seems like the Devil has placed HIS OWN in the church to destroy anything that is good. I have found that even in little Bible studies, he plants ONE to destroy. It gets so frustrating." - OH

"Well, this morning I went to church like I told you I was going to do. And, well let's see, first of all the pastor (if that is what one would call him) referred to Jesus Christ as JC, horror of horrors and then he told the congregation that our souls evolve, and then I asked the lady next to me what version of the Bible he used and she said 'all.' I had to think on that for a while and then I finally got it after he started his sermon, if that is what you wanted to call it. He had totally typed out in the sermon handout of the order of the service and the verses that he was reading from and I had never read the version that I saw written. So then I got it, he basically combined what he thought from various versions and that is what he wrote for the congregation to read along with him as he read it from the pulpit. And I saw no Bible that anyone had other than mine. And, then (I know that should have been enough to choke a horse) but now he is having communion. NOT one word about going be-

fore the Lord in regard to the condition of your heart etc., just flat out passed out the bread and wine and before that my heart was broken and I got up and left - it is horrible out there down here, but I will continue to look for where the Lord wants me." - ID

[From a brother in Ghana] "I want know how you are faring in the ministry...I really enjoyed our relationship and partnership in the ministry as far as the morning devotion is concern. I have enjoyed the devotion. It always gives me the joy to read and study those materials. Especially the morning devotion today. Where we came from and where we are going it is only the grace and protection of God upon our lifes that can take us far. It is a long time hearing from me any way but we connected in the spirit since you always send me devotion everyday. I still want to know that just after I finished the Bible College under the Assemblies of God, Ghana I was sent to the Northern part to start a new church there. By the grace of God the church is doing well now and the have sent a new pastor to take over from me. And recently I have been posted back to Kumasi in the Southern part of Ghana. We have just settled in Kumasi last week and we are about to start a new church again. We are still looking for a place of worship hence we need your prayer support. I appreciate your good works and God richly bless you in the ministry...." [GSM Note: Please pray for this Brother in the Lord.] †

Are you in bondage?

"Too often we find saints in bondage to one another's personal convictions. They suppose freedom will be theirs only if they live according to these human convictions. A *false spirituality* has increased this bondage among so many of us. This false spirituality is overly concerned lest it offends anyone's scruples....Did our Lord hesitate to heal the afflicted on the Sabbath, for fear of offending the Pharisees?....There is a major difference between 'offending' other people and 'causing them to stumble.' Our Lord offended many, but He never caused one to stumble. His disciples must know the difference also! - Oswald Chambers

The power of true religion! Thomas Reade

The power of true religion is so little felt by the bulk of professing Christians. There are four evils which mark the decaying state of Christians in general: their love of the world; their love of ease; their fear of man; their distrust of God's providence. The New Testament believers were just the reverse of all this: they despised the world, and its flattering allurements; they took up the cross, and denied themselves; they boldly confessed Christ, and suffered for His sake; they trusted God for all things, and so took joyfully the confiscation of their property.

And what was the blessed fruit? They abounded in consolation; they grew in grace; they shone as lights in the world; they felt joy and peace in believing. But now we see professing Christians, even many of whom we charitably hope well . . . languid in their graces, timid in their confession, afraid of consequences, and fearful of trusting God.

The world's standard of Christianity

"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." Matthew 16:24

"Let me warn everyone who wants to be saved--not to be content with **the world's standard of Christianity**. Surely no man with his eyes open, can fail to see that the Christianity of the New Testament is something far higher and deeper than the Christianity of most professing Christians. That *formal, easy-going, do-little thing*, which most people call 'religion'--is evidently not the religion of the Lord Jesus. The things which He *praises*--are not praised by the world. The things which He *blames*--are not things in which the world sees any harm. Oh, if you would follow Christ--do not be content with *the world's Christianity!* Tremble, tremble and repent!" - J.C. Ryle, 1879