

GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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

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The Odyssey

Part 19

GOING THE DISTANCE

By Rayola Kelley

As we begin to wind down this "great spiritual adventure," as believers we must realize that finishing the course requires us to go the distance. The Apostle Paul talked about pressing forward to gain the prize (*Philippians 3:14*). We know that the prize in the Christian walk is gaining a fuller or complete measure of Christ. To gain such a measure requires us to come to terms with the high calling that we have in Him.

Since our life in Christ is a heavenly life that comes from above, the call in the Christian life is always to come higher, beyond the base ways of the world, to reach towards that which is excellent. Reaching for what is excellent prepares us to not only obtain what is exceptional, but it prepares us to walk in the glory of the next world. Keep in mind, if a person lives like the devil, the glory of heaven would be foreign to him or her, while the tormenting darkness of hell would be foreign to a saint. It is for this reason every saint must keep in mind that the middle ground of the present, temporary world is to prepare individuals either to enter into the glory of heaven or fall into the abyss of hell.

As Christians we must consider what it means to go the distance. The Word of God is clear that we are in a race and a battle, constantly being buffeted by the terrain of the world and the enemies of our souls (*1 Corinthians 9:22-27; 2 Timothy 2:2-4; Hebrews 12:1-3*). We will encounter trials that will test our resolve, tribulations that will prove our character, and adversities that will establish us spiritually or break us emotionally

(*Romans 5:1-5; James 1:2-4*). Although such challenging winds and terrains are not constant, they reveal what we are doing in those times when we are not confronted by such challenges. Are we spiritually preparing or are we assuming that everything will work out alright in the end? After all, we survived the last challenge, so we assume we certainly will survive the next.

I don't know about you, but every challenge has proven to me that I need the Lord's constant intervention. The older I get the more I need His strength. The more experience I have, the more I know that God's grace is the only sufficient means to see me through the next leg of the race or the next battle. The true wisdom of age and time has always brought me to the same conclusion, which is I will never manage to go the distance without the strength of God, I will never finish the course without abiding in Him, and I will never endure the battles without the indwelling power of His Spirit.

Clearly, time has wisely taught me my great need for God, while experiences have humbled me to receive His mercy and grace, and age has tempered and disciplined me to walk in them. Admittedly, at times I get concerned. It seems that at the end of one's life the temptation can become greater to let down one's guard, causing a person to fall into sin. We see this in the life of King David and Solomon. Although both should have been wise to see the traps, David had ceased to go to battle and Solomon had failed to adhere to a fundamental principle regarding coming into an unholy agreement (*2 Samuel 11; 1 Kings 11:1-9*). We know that David repented of his sins of adultery and murder, but great trouble plagued him through his remaining days, and as for Solomon, the book of Ecclesiastes implies he may have regained his senses, but not before the consequences for his idolatry was pronounced. The kingdom of Isra-

el would be split, and much of its glory would be stripped before its final demise as a nation.

As I consider the presence of temptation that easily can thwart one from crossing the finish line, I must remember who keeps who. God is the one who keeps me. He knows how to preserve each of us in spite of the days we live in and the trials and temptations that can befall us, regardless of how young or old we may be (*Psalms 25:20-21 Psalm 121:3-8; John 17:11; 2 Timothy 1:12*).

This brings me to what it takes to spiritually go the distance. We know that God is the one who keeps our feet from slipping on the path, but we need to walk in the path (*Psalms 121:3*). The one practice that ensures we finish the course is going the extra mile (*Matthew 5:40-42*).

Recently, I read a book called, *The Second Mile People*. It was written by missionary Isobel Kuhn. She highlighted the lives of six people whom she called the second-mile people. They earned this title because they did not hesitate to go the extra distance for the sake of Christ, regardless of what it personally cost them. Admittedly, I only recognized one of the individuals among the six I read about. As I read about these people, I realized they were for the most part ordinary people like me. As I considered their lives, the one thing that stood out to me was that they had consecrated every aspect of their lives for the cause of Christ. They were willing to fade into the background as they poured out all in light of their higher calling. As a result, they lived extra-ordinary lives in obscurity as heaven looked on and the powers of darkness raged against their resolve to stand against the obstacles. Ultimately, they were willing to die if necessary to ensure that they finished the course set before them.

As I meditated upon what it means to go the extra mile, I realized



that the second mile would ensure one has indeed gone the distance. It is "human" to just get by in all matters of life. Let's face it, we do not like to step out of comfort zones or be interrupted by inconvenience, but just getting by as we settle down between the columns of self-serving comfort and selfish convenience will never inspire us to reach heights of excellence by going the extra distance.

As a Christian, I realize that the epitome of Christ's walk on earth was comprised of many second miles. He went the second mile of love when He allowed himself to be robed in humanity in the womb of a woman. He went the second mile of submission, when as God in the flesh, He submitted to His earthly parents. He went the second mile of preparation when He allowed Himself to be led out into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil for forty days. He went the second mile of obedience when He allowed Himself to be led to the cross. He went the second mile of redemption when He allowed Himself to be put in a grave. As a result, He paid in full our redemption, secured our salvation, and now insures us an eternal inheritance. The final mile He traveled was when He ascended to heaven to serve as our High Priest before the throne of God. Jesus clearly went the distance by extending Himself to walk and endure those many "second miles."

This is brought out in the last part of one of my favorite choruses by Rick Founds, *Lord, I Lift Your Name On High*.

You came from heaven to earth to show the way,
From the earth to the cross, my debt to pay.
From the cross to the grave,
From the grave to the sky;
Lord, I lift your name on high!

Through the years of my Christian walk, I have tried to go the second mile. Most of the time the obstacle before me was not the distance of the second mile, it was my lazy self-serving flesh or my unwillingness to be inconvenienced with irritating intrusions and interruptions. My attitude often revealed that I was more spoiled than I had thought, and that at the core of my flesh and pride was foul

selfishness. However, I have learned a few things about what it means to walk in the narrow path set before me. Even though what I am about to share is scriptural and well known, it is important to remind ourselves what the Christian life is all about. Although I have not yet finished my course, I have been aware of what keeps me on the right path. Hopefully some of the insights I have gained will prove helpful to you.

Examination: It is easy to replace the various aspects of our life in Christ with religious things and activities. It can be easy to replace Christ with the church building and leaders. At such times, we do not recognize our attitude towards Christ being taken captive and veering off in idolatry to embrace something that can prove to be lifeless or flawed. Then when such things fail us, we become disappointed and often succumb to unbelief towards the true God of heaven. This is why it is important to periodically examine ourselves as to our devotion, agendas, priorities, and calling. I believe this is one of the reasons the Apostle Paul instructed believers to examine themselves during Communion (*1 Corinthians 11:28*).

Consecration: The Apostle Paul instructs us to present our bodies as living sacrifices (*Romans 12:1-2*). This is not an occasional offering, but a daily one (*1 Corinthians 15:31*). It is for this reason consecration often requires us to go the extra mile to ensure its quality. True consecration involves offering daily, on the altar our lives, our present activities, goals, and dreams. We must then ask the Lord to sanctify everything on the altar with the purifying fires from His altar. We must trust that He will burn up the unholy, separate the dross from what is pure, and refine what is right. Consecration is clearly the godly exercise that will keep us in the narrow path.

Obedience: The Bible talks a lot about obedience to God, but many of the watered-down beliefs have erroneously put such obedience into the category of works. Obedience to God is a matter of faith in what He has said, and love for who He is. We do not try to please God with good works; rather, we are showing our confidence in who He is and what He has said by our works. We know unless God counts

our activities as being righteous, they will not be associated to the type of faith that is able to please Him (*James 2; Hebrews 11:6*).

Lordship: The concept of "lordship" is foreign to most Americans. Although we all start out enslaved to sin, we fail to see it as the oppressive, harsh taskmaster it is (*Romans 6:6, 18, 22*). However, those who live in a society that enslaves others understand the dynamics of "lordship." Although as Americans, we like to believe that slavery is a matter of the past, it is alive and present throughout the world. Even today, there are deluded people in our government who are trying to transform America by making every one of us slaves to wicked, oppressive ideologies. If we are being honest with ourselves, we must admit that we are beginning to taste the bitter oppression of slavery in our society through higher taxes and the obvious suppression of free speech and religious freedom.

This brings us to the significance of lordship. Everyone will end up serving something or someone. In the fallen state, people are the most vulnerable. Lust can easily take them captive, the world can cleverly indoctrinate them into delusion, seductive leaders can deceive and blind them to the destruction awaiting them, and the self-life can easily sell the soul as it strives to experience some false promise of happiness, success, or riches. This brings us to the next influencing factor in our Christian walk.

Servitude: The idea of Lordship brings us to the reality of servitude. As stated previously, we are servants to something. It is for this reason that we must be wise in choosing whom we serve. The lusts of the flesh will always serve the whims and attractions of the world, while the pride of life will serve the god of this age, and the lusts of the eyes will serve the fading glory of the present world.

As Christians we only have one lord to serve and please, the Lord Jesus Christ. Compared to the oppression of worldly masters, Jesus is the most benevolent and fair of all masters and lords. The biggest problem occurs when as Christians we try to serve two masters at the same time. Sadly, it is not unusual to try to juggle

worldly matters and pursuits with tender devotions towards the Lord. The Bible is clear that trying to serve two masters will not work (*Matthew 6:24*). It will cause a mixture and inconsistency in a Christian's life. It is for this reason that the difference between a servant and a bondservant is brought out in Scripture.

The Apostle Paul called himself a servant of Christ. He said this in *1 Corinthians 7:22*: "*For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman; likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.*" Regardless of his status, Paul's life of service revealed that he was a bondservant to the Lord. He carried the bonds of complete love and devotion for him. He strived to turn everything into an opportunity to honor Jesus Christ (*Philippians 1:12-20*).

The concept of bondservant goes back to *Deuteronomy 15*. Every seven years, (the year of release), Jewish people who sold their service to pay a debt to other Jews were set free to go back to their homes or inheritances. If out of love the Jewish servant decided to stay with his or her master until death, the servant would allow his master to take an aul and thrust it through his or her ear unto the door. This act would signify that he or she was a bondservant. Instead of serving out of duty or debt, the bondservant would be serving out of loving devotion and commitment that would span his or her lifetime.

When the Apostle Paul referred to his obligation as a servant to Jesus, he was making a declaration that when it came to service to the Lord Jesus Christ, he would be one of those who out of love, would choose to go all the way, the second mile for his Lord. It is for this reason that Paul could confidently make this declaration, "*For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith*" (*2 Timothy 4:6-7*).

Service: Now that we have talked about Lordship and servitude, we need to talk about service. To be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, you must give up your rights to serve your flesh, pride, or the world to faithfully serve Him. This brings us to the reality that to be a good servant it is nec-

essary for us to give up our old life of serving the self-life with its various masters and lords. Sadly, new converts to the Christian faith believe that giving up the old is an offering or sacrifice, when in reality it is a necessity in order to ensure godly servitude.

When a servant simply carries out his or her responsibilities, such actions are considered to be one's *reasonable* service. Once again, new Christians have a tendency to think what they do for the Lord is sacrifice, when in reality it is most likely their reasonable service. Reasonable service implies it is the least you can do in a situation to fulfill necessary obligations to ensure order and function.

Finally, there is a *sacrifice* in service that is worthy to be offered to God. However, such a sacrifice requires one to go the extra mile. The widow who gave her mites and the three soldiers who broke through the battle line in order to secure water at the well of Bethlehem to offer to King David would fall into this category. Such sacrifice leaves behind the old, steps over the reasonable, and pushes towards offering up everything for the sake of another without regard to personal cost. We see this same example in Jesus when He left heaven, stepped over His human weaknesses and obstacles, and went to the cross on our behalf. As a result, His sacrifice became an offering that was worthy for God to receive on our behalf.

Much of service is tied into what makes a person feel good. However, if a servant accepts the scriptural responsibility to do his or her reasonable service by doing what is right and obedient before God, he or she will be able to prove what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God. However, such offerings will never denote the second-mile of excellence. Second-mile service has nothing to do with how something makes us feel, and it will always go beyond mere reasonable service to doing something that will personally cost us.

Modern events reveal that everything is winding down to Jesus coming. As Christians, it would be a good time to see if we are going the distance in our lives before God, and even securing the victory and prize by going the extra mile. †

A.W. TOZER ON PRAYER

It was a saying of George Mueller that faith grows with use. If we would have great faith we must begin to use the little faith we already have. Put it to work by reverent and faithful praying, and it will grow and become stronger day by day. Dare today to trust God for something small and ordinary and next week or next year you may be able to trust Him for answers bordering on the miraculous. Everyone has some faith, said Mueller; the difference among us is one of degree only, and the man of small faith may be simply the one who has not dared to exercise the little faith he has.

According to the Bible, we have because we ask, or we have not because we ask not. It does not take much wisdom to discover our next move. Is it not to pray, and pray again and again till the answer comes? God waits to be invited to display His power on behalf of His people. The world situation is such that nothing less than God can straighten it out. Let us not fail the world and disappoint God by failing to pray.

Dr. Moody Stuart, a great praying man of a past generation, once drew up a set of rules to guide him in his prayers. Among these rules is this one: "Pray till you pray." . . .

The Habit of breaking off our prayers before we have truly prayed is as common as it is unfortunate. Often the last ten minutes may mean more to us than the first half hour, because we must spend a long time getting into the proper mood to pray effectively. We may need to struggle with our thoughts to draw them in from where they have been scattered through the multitude of distractions that result from the task of living in a disordered world. . . .

If when we come to prayer our hearts feel dull and unspiritual, we should not try to argue ourselves out of it. Rather, we should admit it frankly and pray our way through. Some Christians smile at the thought of "praying through," but something of the same idea is found in the writings of practically every great praying saint from Daniel to the present day. We cannot afford to stop praying till we have actually prayed. †

HEAVEN'S DOORKEEPER

By Jeannette Haley

They had formed a small mob, and were coming after me as fast as their little legs could go. Even though this incident took place in my preschool years, I still remember running down the narrow sidewalk towards home, hollering as I went, "Mom! Open the door! They're after me!" I can't recall just what I did to stir up such an angry response from those pint-size kids; but, I do remember the wonderful feeling of relief when, just in the nick of time, mother swung the front door open just wide enough for me to zip through. Once I was safely in the embrace of home sweet home, she shut the door with a bang, leaving the disappointed would-be assassins dazed and confused on the porch. It was an epic moment.

Perhaps this little episode can, in some small way, be illustrative of the profound relief, joy, and indescribable happiness that awaits those who find heaven's door opened to them at the "appointed time." We know from the Bible that heaven does have a door. The Apostle John wrote, "*After this I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter*" Revelation 4:1. Flesh and blood cannot enter this door, but only those who are in the spirit, and those to whom it is opened. This door cannot be opened by man in spite of his best efforts for the keeper of this door is Jesus who declared, "*These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth*" Revelation 3:7b. Jesus is not only Heaven's Doorkeeper, but He is the door. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture*" John 10:7b, 9.

In a past article I related the true story of a man who thought he was saved, but, as his spirit began to leave his body he cried out in great anguish, "Open the door! Open the door!" It is beyond sobering to consider that as this man entered eternity, he actually

saw heaven's door, but it remained closed to him. Only heaven's Doorkeeper can open the door, for all power has been given to Him in heaven and on earth. (See *Matthew 28:18*.) Consider what Jesus prayed, "*Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent*" John 17:1-3. [Emphasis added.] Jesus' warning in *Matthew 7:21-23*, is a warning we cannot afford to take lightly, "*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*"

When I think about the "narrow squeak" I experienced as a little kid when escaping my pursuers through the door's narrow opening, I am reminded of *1 Peter 4:18*, "*And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*" Truly, just the thought of the weeping, and wailing and gnashing of teeth for those to whom the door is shut on that great day of judgment should motivate us to not only examine ourselves before the Lord, but to do all within our power to win lost men, women and children to Christ. Yet, I daresay, as the day and hour approaches for the sudden appearing of our Lord, the question is what has happened to the once great wave of evangelistic endeavor of the Church? The emphasis has shifted from soul winning to soul "warming." The great evangelistic wave that once swept through the early Church has been receding through the years, leaving in its wake willy-nilly ripples of sympathetic humanism and universalism. After all, we don't want to rock the boat, insult people's sensitive little psyches, or be politically incorrect. Besides, it is no fun being a "fool for Christ."

Since it is important to understand the meaning of humanism, and Univer-

salism, here are the definitions of both: The definition of humanism is "any system or mode of thought or action in which human interests, values, and dignity predominate." "Philosophy: A variety of ethical theory and practice that emphasizes reason, scientific inquiry, and human fulfillment in the natural world and often rejects the importance of belief in God." (dictionary.reference.com).

"Universalism is a doctrine that teaches all people will be saved. The main argument for Universalism is that a good and loving God would not condemn people to eternal torment in hell. Some Universalists believe that after a certain cleansing period, God will free the inhabitants of hell and reconcile them to himself. Others say that after death, people will have another opportunity to choose God. For some who adhere to Universalism, the doctrine also implies that there are many ways to get into heaven.

Both humanism and Universalism fly in the face of biblical truth, yet people prefer the "feel good" false teachings that they promote. However, truth is truth and it will forever remain truth. Jesus, who is "the way, the truth, and the life" said, "*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*" Matthew 7:13, 14. The gate, or door, to eternal life is narrow, and not only is it narrow, but it is hard to find. We also know that this narrow gate is the Lord Jesus Christ. *Acts 4:12* assures us, "*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*" Both humanism and Universalism, along with every other religion and cult in the whole world, point to another gate, or door, that leads to a broad path ending in destruction. Broad paths are easy to find. They appeal to the flesh, and can be satisfying to the emotions. Broad paths are popular to the masses, offering the traditions of men, and the delusions of fallen angels. The gates that stand open to the broad path can be invit-

ing, enticing, beguiling, alluring, compelling, and strangely sensational. The broad path appeals to a person's pride, worldview and high opinion of self. It also offers a type of spiritualism that is "strange fire" to the Lord, but appeals to a lost soul's need for "spiritual enlightenment" outside of the narrow boundaries and secure confines of God's Word. Whichever door we choose to step through in order to pursue our goals in life, spiritually or physically is a decision that God leaves up to us. If we find ourselves on the broad path that leads to destruction, it will be because that is the door we chose to go through.

In ancient Israel every item in both the Tabernacle in the wilderness and Solomon's temple pointed heavenward. The representations of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, heaven and redemption are found within and without. The magnificent doors in Solomon's Temple make for a wonderful study. There are five components to the doors: five represents grace. These doors were made of olive wood which is the biblical symbol for Israel. Wood also represents humanity, depicting Jesus as fully man, as He is also fully God. Olive trees and olive oil represent light, divine blessing, peace, holy anointing, and separation to God.

The doors were beautifully carved with cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers overlaid with pure gold. Cherubim, the second component, stand for mighty, blessing, and represent the righteous government of God, and are the executors of God's judgment. Thus, Cherubim represent the judgment of God. Their position indicates that God's judgment upon Israel was averted because of the blood-sprinkled mercy seat. The Cherubim are revealed by Ezekiel in chapter 1:5-10 as four living creatures, each one having four different faces, the face of a man, lion, ox, and eagle. These four faces are symbolic of Christ as the son of man, the lion of Judah, the burden bearer and sacrificial ox, and the One who reveals God's perspective through the Holy Spirit. The four Gospels are also represented by these four "beasts." (The lion, king of the wild beasts – *Matthew*, Jesus as King of kings; the ox, burden bearer and sacrifice – *Mark*,

Jesus as our burden bearer, sacrificed for mankind; the Son of Man – *Luke*, Jesus, the Son of Man; the eagle, represents heavenly perspective – *John*, Jesus as the Son of God, Giver of the Holy Spirit.

Thirdly, there were carved palm trees. Palm trees symbolize victory, triumph, peace, and eternal life. Jesus was victorious over death and the grave, triumphed over His enemies, and brought peace through reconciliation to God, and eternal life. Concerning victory, when He returns we have this powerful promise, "*He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it. Isaiah 25:8. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" 1 John 5:4. Concerning triumph, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place" 2 Corinthians 2:14. Concerning peace, Ephesians 2:14 says, "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" Colossians 1:20.*

Finally, concerning eternal life, Jesus made plain the way to eternal life when He said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me" John 14:6. The Door to eternal life is in Christ alone. Speaking of His sheep, Jesus said, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" John 10:28. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" Romans 6:23. "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life" 1 John 2:25.*

When Jesus fulfilled prophecy and entered Jerusalem riding upon a colt, the foal of an ass, the people waved palm branches, and laid them before the Lord, knowing that the palm tree represented victory, triumph, peace and eternal life. To quote from

www.christiancourier.com: "Some "paved" the road with their garments; others with layers of leaves, at least some of which were from palm trees (Jn. 12:13), hence the expression "Palm Sunday." Spreading garments before a dignitary was a symbol of submission (see 2 Kgs. 9:13). Palm branches were employed also as token of victory (Suetonius, *Caligula*, 32). Some Jewish coins from the first century had palm leaf engravings with the accompanying inscription, "the redemption of Zion." Note the "palm" symbolism that is portrayed in the book of Revelation (7:9). The Jewish disciples doubtless were expressing the hope that Jesus would be the one to lead them to victory over their oppressor (Rome)."

Open flowers were the fourth subject engraved on the temple doors. Flowers, of course, represent fragrance, beauty, and denote purity, memory, knowledge of truth. Some interesting thoughts on these flowers are as follows: "The open-flower carvings are to show us that Jesus Christ is now our High Priest. Aaron's rod that budded was physically used to show that Aaron and the House of Levi were chosen to be High Priests. The rod seems to be showing us a living tree, just as Messiah was the living tree in the Garden, the branch that made the water sweet at Marah, or the Tree of Life of Revelation 22:2. In Solomon's Temple, Aaron's rod is no longer in the Ark, symbolizing that the Levitical Priesthood would be replaced and that Jesus Christ is now our High Priest under the order of Melchisedek. This is why we also see the same word being used for the gold plate on the High Priest's garments. It all ties together and points us toward Jesus Christ as our Lord and High Priest." (<http://www.ccg.org/english/c/cb112.html>)

Finally, the doors were overlaid with pure gold. Gold symbolizes Deity, purity, good, wisdom, intelligence, rare, precious, glorious and Holy to God. Job declared, "*But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*" Jesus said, in *Revelation 3:18*, "*I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich. . . .*" Gold, in order to become pure, must go through a purifying process. If we are

to be like Jesus, we will also go through a purifying process, a process that Peter spoke of when he wrote, *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" 1 Peter 4:12, 13.*

The door of heaven!—who can truly say that he or she understands all the details of that glorious door? Nevertheless, the Bible makes it clear that there is only one way—a very narrow, hard to find way at that which leads to the door of eternal life; and, that way is only through Jesus Christ. Some may wrongly believe that the door to heaven is forever open to every soul, whether good, bad or indifferent. Some may think that the door to heaven is like a swinging door, easy to access. Others may think that the door to heaven is like a revolving door—all you have to do is step inside and follow whoever seems to be in the lead. However, the Word of God makes it clear that God is the Doorkeeper, the Lord Jesus Christ holds the key, and whatever door He closes, no man can open.

When God closes the door, or bars an entrance, it is forever closed. We are given three poignant examples of this fact: 1) *Genesis 3:23, 24, "Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."* 2) *Genesis 7:13,16, "In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark; And they went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in."* 3) *Matthew 25:10-13, "And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch*

therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." [Emphasis added.]

There is a door to heaven, glorious to behold—a celestial gate, a glorious gate, a door of royal gold. Oh! Who can enter through this door—who can be assured—of manifold, blessings, joy and peace—of eternal life procured? There is only One—the Bible tells us true)—One who is worthy the door to open—the One who died for you. So, tell me friend—what is your choice—it's up to you to choose—enter through the narrow gate—or your soul eternally lose. †

SPEAKING OUT

The last church we were in veered off into New Apostolic stuff and other questionable stuff and there was a definite, carefully veiled "other spirit" at work in that church.

So needless to say, I have seen a lot and I never take anyone's word, ALWAYS do my own homework, and am not the least bit intimidated just because someone has been to seminary. In fact, I find that many people who go to many (not all) seminaries come out much more deceived and confused than they were before they went in.—VA

SOUND FAMILIAR?

What is happening in America and around the world is paving the way for the ultimate government that will be god. The "Man of Lawlessness" is waiting in the wings. Jesus Christ will ultimately bring Godly government to the world during the Millennium.

Here's just a partial list of comparisons from Germany, 1938, to America, 2014:

- The demise of Capitalism was fine and the rise of Socialism was accepted.
- Few blinked when prayer was taken out of school in 1935.
- Daycare raised the children of Germany in the 1930s and 1940s.
- Christmas and Easter were taken out of the German public schools.
- Socialized medicine ruined the German healthcare system. The elderly and handicapped were marginalized.

- Abortion became the new normal and was even expected.
 - Private education was gone by 1938.
 - Government spending skyrocketed and no one said a word. Taxation soared to 80%.
 - First there was gun registration but that was followed by gun confiscation by the Nazis.
 - Free speech gradually faded. The newspapers and other media proclaimed the pro-government side of a story.
 - The green agenda was adopted as it was steeped in paganism and Hitler loved paganism.
 - Government spying went off the charts.
 - Children sang songs of praise to Hitler.
 - Germans were spellbound by the great oratory skills of Hitler. He couldn't possibly be lying to them.
 - The church in Germany did not want to make waves; it did not want to tackle controversy. Pulpits would never address serious issues or politics.
 - The church in Germany was steered into mysticism such as today's American pulpits that are okay with Christian Yoga-type deceptions. Hitler knew this would weaken the church and make it ineffective. Most, but not all churches in Germany, were riddled with compromise. Many pastors in Germany wanted to be popular and find favor with the government. They did not want to offend anyone.
- By Jan Markell, May, 2014

PROMISES OF THE LORD

"For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low...And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness."
Isaiah 2:12, 17; 3:10; 5:16

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

THE NARROW WAY

Q: *This question may be considered silly, but what does it mean for the way to be narrow? I know it should be obvious, but it seems that nowadays everyone thinks they are on their way to heaven.*

A: Your question is very appropriate. For many in our society, everything is relative; therefore, nothing is true, sure, or right, making them right in their own eyes, while broadening the way. We even see this in the religious world. Much of religion has substituted its moral compass with worldly philosophies and practices. The moral standard of the Bible has been readjusted to condone abominable lifestyles, compromised to promote a pseudo peace with the world, and done away with in the name of benevolence in order to compete with the world. The world is spinning out of control as many individuals are calling good evil and evil good as the world becomes more lawless, immoral, and insane.

Jesus clearly stated, *"Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and marrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it"* (Matthew 7:13-14). In Luke 13:24, this instruction was added to it, *"Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able to."*

The first word, we must note is the word "enter." "Enter" means to go through. It is not enough to come up to the entrance to eternal life, one must go through it. This requires one to believe God's Word about sin, Jesus' death, and His resurrection, repent of being on the broad path, and be born again with the Spirit (John 3:5; Luke 13:3; 1 Corinthians 10:9, 10; 15:1-4). There are many people who come just so far in their religious walk. They come up to the door of life and stand on the outside hoping their religious attempts of coming thus far will be good enough, but it is clear one must go through that which has been provided by God to secure eternal life.

We are instructed to strive to enter in at the strait gate. "Strive" means

to struggle, compete for a prize, to contend with adversity. This brings us to why one must strive. It is because the gate is straight and narrow. "Strait" actually means narrow in this text, but "narrow" means a point or place of affliction where one suffers trouble and tribulation. Acts 14:22 confirms the description of the narrow way, *"Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."*

The reason the entrance is strait is because we must come by way of a person and not a religion. Jesus stated that He is the way to life. There is only one correct Jesus. The challenge for Christians is to remain within the narrow boundaries of Spirit and truth to ensure that the Jesus they believe and worship is the Jesus clearly presented in the Bible. Today, there are many who are enlarging the narrow way by erecting their own Jesus. They refuse to let the truths of the Bible align them within the narrow confines of who Jesus really is, and must be, in their lives. Since the narrow width of the gate is defined by the God-Man Jesus, many will seek to enter in, but will fail to do so because they will not believe the Word of God concerning Him, preventing them from finding the actual entrance. In fact, they will seek another way to enter in according to their own personal understanding, righteousness, and religion. They will deceive themselves to the harsh reality that they have rejected God's provision. Jesus refers to such people as thieves and robbers (John 10:1) and reveals that being clothed in their self-righteousness will cause them to be cast into outer darkness (Matthew 22:11-13). The parable of the sower and the seed implies only one out of four possesses the right heart condition when it comes to the kingdom of God.

This brings us to the fact that the way to heaven is also wrought with trials and tribulation. The narrow entrance can cause one to balk at its rigid boundaries, but once an individual passes through the entrance, then he or she must walk down a narrow path that requires the disciplines of faith and obedience. This path is the way of the cross. It is about self-denial, death to

the old ways, and following Jesus into a new living way. Since a cross is involved, it points to affliction, while contending with the self-life entails trials, and confronting Satan along the way points to tribulations. The cross is about putting the old life to death so that it ceases to be an entrance for Satan to tempt us, causing us to stumble by taking a detour to taste the deadly fruits of the world, or enlarging the borders of the narrow path to include the ways of error, heresy, and unbelief.

Although this simply touches on the subject of the narrow path, it explains why few find it. Christianity is not a feel-good religion; rather, it entails a hard way of self-denial and death, but the path leads to an eternal, glorious end. †

O. T. BIBLE QUIZ (Use your Concordance)

1. Where did Adam and Eve live after the Lord God banished them from the Garden of Eden?
2. What was the name of the first city ever built in the world?
3. Where did Noah's ark come to rest?
4. Who feared his twin brother?
5. Who is the father of Edom?
6. Who did God bless and make houses for in Egypt?
7. What did God send to drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before Israel?
8. What is the unleavened bread of the Passover feast known as?
9. Who killed Abimelech?
10. What does Samson's name mean?
11. What priest fell backwards, suffered a broken neck, and died?
12. Where did all the people make Saul king?
13. Who was known as the sweet singer of Israel?
14. What is an unprofitable, worthless, evil, naughty man called?
15. Who sought for a woman with a familiar spirit?

ANSWERS: (1) Eden, (2) Enoch, (3) Mountains of Belial, (4) Saul, (5) Esau, (6) Egyptian midwives that feared God, (7) A Hornets, (8) Bread of affliction, (9) A "certain woman", (10) Sunlight, (11) Eli, (12) Gilead, (13) David, (14) Son of

QUOTABLES

“Sunday morning in America is the greatest hour of idolatry in the whole week. Why? Because most people who are even worshiping God are worshiping a God they don't know. They're worshiping a god that looks more like Santa Claus than the God of Scripture. They're worshiping a god that is a figment of their own imagination. They created a god in their own likeness and they worship the god they've made.” - Paul Washer

“Entertainment is the devil's substitute for joy. The more joy you have in the Lord the less entertainment you need...when you can say, 'Thou, O Christ, art all I want.' But listen, be careful: it may strip you of everything else you have; you may lose some of your best friends who think you're fanatical; they don't mind you being kind or good, but you become holy and zealous...” - Leonard Ravenhill

“This is evangelicalism today: sensual, carnal, unconverted people that have just enough deceptive religion to drive them straight into Hell! Are you that kind of person? Or do you have new affections?” - Paul Washer

“If you have made the good profession, if you claimed to have passed through the gate, if you have received baptism in a public declaration of your faith, and you begin to walk—it doesn't matter how long it appears you're walking in that path—if you step off that path and there's no discipline and you continue on that path, you can have no assurance whatsoever of your salvation. And it is not that you lost your salvation, it's that you're showing now that you never had it. If we would only preach these truths...” - Unknown

“If God is glorified, then His people will be edified.” - Rayola Kelley

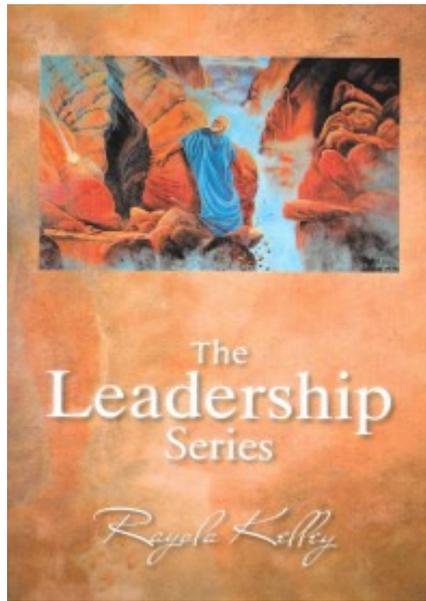
“As a house implies a builder, and a garment a weaver, and a door a carpenter, so does the existence of the Universe imply a Creator.” - Marquis de Vauvernargues

“It is impossible to account for the creation of the universe without the agency of a Supreme Being.” - George Washington

From a knowledge of His work, we shall know Him.” - Robert Boyle

PREPARING FOR LEADERSHIP & STRENGTHENING YOUR WALK WITH THE LORD *The Leadership Series*

The Leadership Series by Rayola Kelley



The three books that make up the Leadership Series were written after my friend and co-laborer in the Gospel, Jeannette Haley, pointed out that there seemed to be much confusion surrounding godly leadership in the kingdom of God. The main reason for this confusion is that many Christians consider leadership according to the world's standards. Jesus even warned His followers in Matthew 20:24-27 that there is a vast difference between what the world considers to be greatness in leadership, and how the kingdom of God regards leadership that is marked with the excellence of greatness. As this book illustrates, true leaders in God's kingdom are not born; rather, they are forged. In order to effectively bring forth a leader, such individuals must learn to recognize that which hinders them and overcome these enemies. Obviously, a leader cannot lead others where he or she has not yet walked.

The first book, *Overcoming*, addresses the true enemies of the cross of Christ, and reveals that they do not always come from without. Many such hindrances prove to be nothing more than moral deviations that are present in our character.

Therefore, the first book identifies the true enemies of the Christian life and brings insight into what it takes to overcome each enemy. Great leaders also understand how authority and power are to influence and work in their lives. The second book, *A Matter of Authority and Power* reveals that real leaders recognize true authority and understand how power is to be used to carry out their responsibilities. This book will undo any misconceptions about these two subjects and will produce the sobriety that must be present when it comes to possessing the quality of true leadership in the kingdom of God. The final book, *The Dynamics of True Leadership*, follows the lives of the great leaders of the Bible. This book reveals the type of soul each leader possessed. It explains the choices these leaders made and how it impacted the kingdom of God.

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Sadly, most people are quick to accept a casual or distant encounter with God through some type of mediator. Whether it be that of a religious leader such as a pastor, religious rituals, or activities, people are content to accept long distance encounters with God as being an indication that all is well on their spiritual front. However, you cannot effectively know someone as long as you keep it at the level of being long-distance. (Excerpt from page 188)