

April - June 2016

ARMOR OF GOD

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH



Islam—A Prophetic Consideration (Part II)

Everyday Faith • Discipline

Of Hopes and Promises

The presidential candidates are tense and frantic. The intensity of their campaign sorties tells it all. Added to that are the spiteful and vilifying speeches being delivered against each other during rallies. The effort to present an acceptable profile of themselves is getting boisterous and louder. Those at the bottom of the surveys by various pollsters may try to project a relaxed composure, but without doubt the unimaginable panic keeps mounting deep within as the day of reckoning approaches. Given the incessant coverage of media regarding their proposed programs which are glowingly presented in hyperbolic language, almost all the voters by now are fully aware of their platforms and promises.

If the surveys are to be believed, only a small percentage of the voters remained undecided as to who they will chose to lead the country for another six years. The candidate's last-ditch effort as of this writing is to win the hearts and minds of the "double minded" through all means, fair or foul.

Perhaps, by the time this issue is in your hands, the election is over, and a new president may have been elected. The late President Marcos once said, "The progress of this nation depends upon what you are holding now." The statement sounded like trying to uplift the morale of the citizenry to take part in nation building, but the tack can also be misconstrued as a device to prepare a forthcoming excuse in case the promised reforms do not materialize.

The Presidential Power

Yet we know that the President is the most powerful man in the country. He is vested with powers surpassing even the so-called co-equal branches of government. He appoints the justices of the Supreme Court and the heads of military establishments. That's aside from placing all his favourite and trusted men in cabinet positions. Even congress who holds the "power over the purse" can still be cajoled into

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Islam—A Prophetic Consideration (Part II)

It has been estimated 54 million Muslims live in Europe today. This is approximately 1.5 times the population of Canada. The Islamization of Europe has accelerated exponentially, due primarily to the mass migration of refugees—and it continues to expand on a global scale. Should the world be concerned?

by Bill Watson

According to the Pew Research Center's religious profile predictions, potentially, Islam may become the most popular religion around the world by 2070. This, of course, does not take into account any unforeseen circumstances, natural or supernatural, such as social movements, political upheavals, natural disasters, or simply a major war that would have an effect to alter these projections. Presently, there are about 1.75 billion Muslims and 2.25 billion Christians in the world.

Specifically for Europe, San Diego University did some research resulting in a stunning estimate—they claim in just the next dozen years, 25 percent of Europe's total population will be Muslim. Bernard Lewis, world-renowned Emeritus of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University, predicts that by the end of the 21st century, Islam will *dominate* Europe, *surpassing* Christianity as the continent's leading religion.

Many all over the world do not recognize or place any significance on this changing “cultural tide.” Yet, one *cannot* dismiss the major effects, which are now considerably noticeable, and the *impact* it's having on the lifestyles and economies within European culture. This is primarily due to the growing Muslim population in many cities throughout Europe, and the enormous burden it has caused on the social assistance programs within each country.

For example, the Swedish cities of Malmö, Marseille, and Amsterdam are presently 25 percent Islamic. Currently, Paris is surrounded by Muslim neighborhoods with significant areas identified as “no-go zones,” with large numbers of young people under the age of 18 living in these districts. Admittedly, in the case of Paris, we have seen how this caused a degree of

vulnerability from this culture change and non-assimilating/segregated Islamic lifestyle, and how multiple terrorist attacks are playing out against the indigenous French.

This illustrates what was already mentioned, and how Islam generally employs two specific methods of ultimately infiltrating for the domination of the cultures they target for submission: Jihad, of course, is one—but



Dome of the Rock

secondly, *embedding inside* the host nation, and by means from within, gaining dominance and causing the host nation to submit to Islamic Law. This is how it's done—and it's now occurring in the United States, also! Take a moment to read this link—it's shocking: <http://www.renewamerica.com/columns/zieve/070111>

We are beginning to see this occur most significantly in city after city where *accommodations* for Islamic culture are made. These compromises often lead to relaxing and making concessions that undermine the indigenous culture, consequently displacing ethnicities that were there for generations. Undeniably, sometimes it's done through natural and legal means of migration and granting natural citizenship; but recently, due to the

unrest and civil wars in the Middle East, combined with many competing terrorist groups driving this movement of literally millions of people, an overwhelming number of Islamic *foreign nationals* are now entering Europe as refugees, who are unknown and without any substantive background checks. They're allowed to settle in areas throughout Europe, which obviously stresses the ethos and economics in multiple ways. The size, scope, and enormity of this migration has not been seen since the days of WW II.

Unquestionably, this has caused a lot of hardship and tension within the cultures of Europe. For instance, many public schools in Belgium and Denmark will only

neighborhood has also led to a rise in anti-Semitism, causing a record number of Jews to leave Europe. Clearly, the Islamization of Europe is underway and it isn't "politically correct" any more to stop it. Even Germany is welcoming enormous numbers of Muslim refugees to settle within the nation (approximately one million over 2015), while not knowing who they are, where they're from, or what they can contribute to the country. Actually, truth be known, many are just coming to receive the variety of entitlements offered under the social assistance programs subsidized and provided by the socialistic governments of Europe.

Gaining Some Context—An Historical Thumbnail Sketch

You may ask, *Have we seen this before?* Do we have any historical record of these kinds of circumstances occurring in the past? The Bible indicates that if we want to understand what will happen in the future, it is highly recommended to become familiar with what happened down through history (Isaiah 41:21–23). Why? Because there are patterns. It has been said that those who don't learn the lessons of history are indeed "destined to repeat it." And so often that is exactly what happens over and over again! That's why it's been said, *History repeats itself*, especially when considering the nature and patterns of empires and kingdoms and the cycles repeated time after time.

Since the rise of Islam, going back to the 7th century, just after Mohammed's death in 632 C.E., his followers have been conducting *insurgency*—rising up and either openly exercising jihad, attacking nations and literally slaughtering people, or infiltrating the social structure of the hosting culture, and from within, using the laws *against* the host nation, steering the hegemony to accommodate Islamic tradition and law. Either way, the profile fits the *non-assimilating* Islamic way, because it is not only a religion, but most importantly, it is a *secular* system imposing *political* control by embedding ultimately in the legislative sector of the culture it migrates to. Clearly, it is a *theocracy*! History proves this point very poignantly.

To illustrate: Many will say the *beginning* of the Crusades occurred at the end of the 11th century. Most modern historians will reference the call to arms that Pope Urban II conducted in about 1095 C.E. at the



Crusades

serve halal food (specially prescribed and prepared foods according to sharia law) to the pupils. In French schools, teachers are encouraged to "steer clear" of authors considered offensive to Muslims. Homosexuals in Amsterdam are being beaten and mugged, while women are being sexually assaulted and raped, along with children as young as seven years old, both male and female. The history of the Holocaust can no longer be taught where Muslims attend due to their sensitivities. Sharia courts are now officially part of the British legal system. The following article is shocking as to what Britain is allowing: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1055764/Is-sharia-courts-Britain-legally-binding.html>

This growing increase of Muslim dominance within hosting governments and neighborhood after

request of Alexius Comnenus. Alexius had seized the Byzantine throne in 1081 C.E. and assumed control of the remains of the Byzantine Empire (Eastern Roman) as Emperor Alexius I. It was at the Council of Clermont, November 1095 C.E., that Pope Urban called upon Western Christians to help the Byzantines re-conquer the Holy Land from Islamic dominance. It was met with a great outpouring of support from all classes of the population who were willing to go and fight the Muslims with and for the sign of the cross. But is this really how and what started the Crusades? Or was this a long overdue response to centuries of Muslim aggression, which continued to compound, growing ever more vicious through the years of genocidal jihadi attacks? Those who insist on rewriting history prefer you don't know what led up to Alexius' appeal for help to Pope Urban II—it's just not politically correct today for that historical detail of the narrative to be disclosed.

Interestingly enough, what most people don't realize, and what is often overlooked and dismissed by both Christian and Islamic historians, is that the objective of the Catholic Church sanctioning the Crusades was defined as a mission to *recapture* and *recover* former Christian territory that was taken by Muslims in previous centuries. Yes, the truth is, the Crusades were a direct response by Western Rome to counter the aggressive tactics—jihadi attacks—by Muslim hoards from centuries before. It was a reaction from Western Christians (Rome in particular) to answer the call for help from the Byzantines who wanted to reconquer former Christian territory.

Keep in mind, Muslims attacked and seized Jerusalem as far back as 638 C.E., just six years after Mohammad's death, which was a direct result of the weakening of the Eastern Roman Empire (the Byzantium) due to the Byzantine-Sasanian War of 602–628 C.E. The net outcome of this long, drawn-out and over-extended war contributed to enormous territorial losses that were exacerbated by the Islamic jihadist conquests of the 7th century. It was at this time Muslims initiated *invasions* into Christian Byzantine lands. Some of the richest areas of the Eastern Roman Empire were lost to Muslim dominance as early as the 7th century. Over the years, Egypt, Syria, and parts of northern Africa, including Jerusalem, were all lost to these Arab warriors of Mohammad. They “capstoned”

their conquest of Jerusalem by completing an octagonal domed Islamic building over the rock on Mount Moriah, built by the Caliph Abd al-Malik in 691 C.E. It was this building that we know as the Dome of the Rock today. That's about 400 years *before* what is commonly accepted as the historical beginning of the Crusades!

Approximately 450 years of relentless Islamic jihadist aggression over much of Eastern Rome *preceded* the officially recognized date the Crusades started! Remember, commencing in the 7th century, until the end of the 11th century, Muslims terrorized



Pope Urban II Preaches the First Crusade

enormous numbers of Christian people residing in what was the Eastern Byzantium. This violence escalated in the 8th century when 60 Christians were crucified and the Muslim governor of Caesarea seized a small group of pilgrims, accused them of being spies, and executed all of them. Those Christians refusing to convert to Islam had the *jizya* (religious tax) increased by many Muslim rulers who also engaged in very vicious and horrific acts of violence toward those Christians among

them.

In 772 C.E., the caliph, al-Mansur, ordered a *mark* to be stamped on the hands of all Jews and Christians, and if any were caught proselytizing, they would have their heads cut off as was done in 789 C.E. to many monks, when the Bethlehem monastery of Saint Theodosius was plundered. As the persecutions increased early in the 10th century, many Christians fled to Constantinople and other cities in the West. But the Muslims were unmerciful, harsh, and implacable.

This continued pillaging and ruthless advances of jihadists finally caused a counter attack to erupt in the 960s by a General Nicephorus Phocas who later became a Byzantine emperor. He was able to parlay a series of successful campaigns, which resulted in recapturing Crete, Cilicia, Cyprus, and parts of Syria from the Muslims. In 969 C.E., he was able to secure and recover the city of Antioch and continue his military successes on into Syria for a few additional years. But soon the Sunni caliph from Bagdad declared jihad against these Christian defenders in 974 C.E.

Many years of battles followed, but due to the complication of disunity among the Sunni/Shi'ite Muslims, which hampered their efforts to defend what they believed to be theirs (since Muslims believe once something belongs to Islam it is always Islamic)—a 10-year truce was negotiated in 1001 C.E., but it didn't last. Over the next ensuing years, 30,000 Christian church buildings were destroyed, including the Jerusalem Church of the Holy Sepulcher, where allegedly Christ was buried. During this 11th century, Christians were in



Pope Urban II

a very precarious condition, and throughout this century persecution became more intense. Three thousand people were killed in Jerusalem, and that was nothing compared to the ongoing advances of the jihadists. The Seljuks established the sultanate of Rum (referring to the new Rome of Constantinople) in Nicaea, hoping to use it as a platform to threaten the Byzantines and harass the Christians throughout the area.

It was at this time that Alexius Comnenus, emperor of the Byzantine, reached out to Pope Urban II, asking for help in pushing back and *recapturing* the lands that *originally* belonged to the Byzantium of Eastern Rome. And as mentioned before, Pope Urban sent out the edict during the Council of Clermont in 1095 C.E. for all Christians of the Western world to come and help fight to regain and recapture the lands which originally were part of the Eastern Roman Empire. It's at this point most historians recognize the Crusades began, regardless of these Islamic invasions that were taking place for approximately 450 years previously. It's disingenuous, at best, not to include these attacks going back to the 7th century, if we're going to determine what really caused the Crusades and just how they actually got started.

What Lessons Do We Learn from History?

There is much to be learned from the history of these two religions of the Middle Ages and the *raw hate* expressed when confronting each other during the Crusades. However, it's important we understand a very deep-seated difference that underscores the animosity keeping these followers of Mohammed so visceral toward Christian beliefs. Most don't recognize there is a fundamental driving *doctrinal disagreement* that causes the Muslim to perceive and view the Christian way with disgust, aversion, and repugnance.

In the Qu'ran, there are Suras that present the basis of the antipathy that *all Muslims* hold toward Jesus Christ, and consequently, Christianity in general. They read as follows:

• “In *blasphemy* indeed are those that say that Allah is Christ the son of Mary. Say: Who then hath the least power against Allah, if His will were to destroy Christ the son of Mary, his mother, and all every one that is on the earth? For to Allah, belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all that is between. He

createth what He pleaseth. For Allah hath power over all things” (Qu’ran 5:17, *Yusuf Ali* edition).

- “They do *blaspheme* who say: Allah is Christ the son of Mary. But said Christ: O Children of Israel! worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Whoever joins other gods with Allah, Allah will forbid him the garden, and the Fire will be his abode. There will for the wrong doers be no one to help” (Qu’ran 5:72, *Yusuf Ali* edition).

- “Then whoever disputes with you concerning him [Jesus] after knowledge that has come to you, [Jesus] being a slave of Allah, and having no share in Divinity say: (O Muhammad SAW) Come, let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and your selves— then we pray and invoke (sincerely) *the Curse of Allah* upon those who lie” (Qu’ran 3:61, *Muhsin Khan* edition).

- “That they said (boastfully), We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah; —but they *killed him not, nor crucified him*, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but *only conjecture* to follow, *for of a surety they killed him not:—*” (Qu’ran 4:157, *Yusuf Ali* edition).

- “He (Jesus) said: Verily! I am a *slave of Allah*, He has given me the Scripture and made me a prophet;” (Qu’ran 19:30, *Muhsin Khan* edition).

- “Christ the son of Mary was *no more* than a messenger; many were the messengers that passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth. They had both to eat their food. See how Allah doth make His signs clear to them; yet see in what ways they *are deluded* away from the truth” [of Islam] (Qu’ran 5:75 *Yusuf Ali* edition).

These are just a few of the many references to Jesus Christ, and yes, admittedly, there are additional Suras that appear to speak more favorably about Him, but that is not to ignore this *plain fact*: The Christian belief that Christ was God and actually became man so He could be crucified and die so mankind could live is *utter nonsense* and complete *blasphemy* to Islamic doctrine! It's considered a doctrine of *idolatry* to them! This is an *important distinction* to make!

This is what underpins the extreme hatred toward Christians today—the fact that Christians will not concede this point: “And they were commanded only to

worship Allah, and worship none but Him Alone (no gods beside God), and perform prayers and give charity: and that is the right religion” (Qu’ran 98:4-5). All Muslims are *committed* to this one theological statement of belief: Allah is God and Mohammad is His prophet.

With this as their driving motivation and tireless obsession to conquer the world for Allah, the *second* most important lesson we can learn from history is: Islam is *relentless* and will *not* stand down until all submit to the Islamization of the world. That is the overall objective for this theocracy, this movement that is committed to rule the world and bring all of humanity under Islamic law.



Christianity vs. Islam

Remember, Islam is more than a religion. At its core, it is a *political movement* that is driven by *religious fanaticism* of apocalyptic visions of the 12th Imam, or Mahdi's (Messiah) return to rule the world and recover it from the chaos created by the Muslim jihadist movement! This is part of the “catalyst that generates the resolve” that Western nations are contending with, but *refuse* to acknowledge as a significant Islamic tenant. This denial is detrimental to those suffering from it, and blinds them from addressing this aggressively *determined* theocratic movement. However, that doesn't dismiss in the spiritual eyes and minds of most Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims that it remains a very *real* eschatological doctrine that is foremost in their religious beliefs. Don't doubt for a minute that it isn't a *compelling* belief that motivates them to do whatever it takes—even if they have to *kill themselves* doing it. They are driven by an *overwhelming passion* to dominate for the sake of Allah! In their minds all must “submit” in obedience to Allah, whom they believe is the same God as the God of the Old

Testament. It is derived from the Arabic root *Salema*, meaning peace, purity, submission, and obedience. In the religious sense, *Islam means submission* to the will of Allah (God) and His Law—sharia!

Keep in mind that even the “father” of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther, claimed after studying the Qu'ran that it was a destroyer, enemy, and blasphemer of Jesus Christ. Yet many in the West refuse to admit the Qu'ran calls for the execution of those who commit blasphemy, which is considered worshipping any other God but Allah. It is *imperative* we start allowing this information to resonate with us!

In the minds of certain segments of Islam, there are Muslims who are considered *fundamentalists*, which do, in fact, take the Qu'ran *very literally*, and carry out what it instructs according to the Sura narratives. Therefore, it should not be surprising to know why there are Muslim groups—*Islamic fundamentalists* today, who claim France, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Belgium, England, etc., and multiple cities within many of the Western European countries, are the “carriers of the banner of the Cross in Europe” and must be *conquered*—they *must* be—it's mandated by the Qu'ran that they submit!

It is a well-known fact History, among Muslims today that sharia law, which is *Islamic law*, is *not* compatible with democracy. So, even among the non-violent Muslims (the so-called moderate Muslims), there are movements and groups working within present governmental structures of the hosting community, implementing tactics that fully intend to favor Islamic law. Obviously, as these groups begin to attain majority positions in government, they will be able to effect the changes they want and successfully change the law of the land—it's what they do. Watch this YouTube news story for additional details. It's guaranteed you will be stunned!
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDKk15KcqNk>

In addition, this perception shared by these *Muslim fundamentalists* includes the United States as being the “great Satan” and Israel as being the “little Satan.” In their minds, this isn't just rhetoric, or figures of speech—they really mean this *literally*. Remember, we are dealing with a *theology*—it's a *religion*! Yes, it is an ideology, but it is actually *rooted* and *underscored* by theology written in the Qu'ran and *magnified* by the

Hadith. This makes it *far more dangerous* since the scriptures (Suras) they use for their instruction are so intolerantly myopic and prejudicial toward beliefs outside the laws (sharia) and traditions (culture) of Islam.

The Islamic attacks being conducted by these Islamic fundamentalists, under the guise of jihad, are testaments to this narrow-mindedness. Attacks against Jews and Christians, Yazidis, Hindus, Kurds, and other Sunnis and Shi'ites, only goes to illustrate the confusion and complexity of just what this movement is all about and how it's defined. It's often quite a tangled, convoluted narrative that simply is just vicious, spiteful, and cruel.

One thing is clear: If you do not concede to Islamic sharia law and conform to a Friday sabbath, halal foods, certain holydays and fasts, religious prayer rituals, and particular garb, (especially for women), polygamy, child marriages, and the oppression of women, homosexuals, and those who *do not believe* that Allah is God and Mohammad is his prophet—even execution and/or limbs or heads that can legally be amputated for certain offenses, with stoning included—then you must either pay a jizya (tax), convert to Islam, or be executed. These are some of the rules that govern Islamic sharia law.

Presently, these cultural differences are causing a lot of tension, confusion, hurt, and enormous disappointment and sadness among the European communities that are experiencing an influx of Middle Eastern refugees and immigrants. Due to the *non-assimilation* of these foreign nationals, those indigenous people from the hosting nations are beginning to suffer grotesquely due to the *intolerance* of these Muslim fundamentalists which are now having an effect on the lifestyles, safety, and in some cases laws, of those Western cultures that don't share in this theological ideology that is quite *fascist* in its implementation.

So, where is this leading, and to what prophetic *extent* can we expect this Islamic fundamentalist movement to affect the traditional Western Christian cultures of Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia, and other so-called Christian nations of the world? We will illustrate some of that and what trends are already developing in our next installment. **Ω**



Everyday Faith

by Winston S. Co

We make decisions everyday. Most of the decisions we make in life are minor, and only a small fraction of the decisions are major. Some of the minor decisions we make everyday are: what to wear, what to eat, what to prepare for dinner, which route to take, which public transport to ride, is it Uber or grab a car, which car to buy, which elevator to take, when to talk to the boss, when to make the call, when to do grocery, what to purchase, should I buy a cup of coffee for a friend today, should I accept the invitation?

Some decisions are enterprise related. What business to enter into, which bank to open, what to invest, which stock to pick, when to buy and when to sell. Others are career oriented. What course to take, what job to apply for, which offer to take, which company to join, which career path to pursue. And, yet others are personal in nature—who to marry, who to befriend, and who to trust.

We seem to make this kind of decision all our lives. All our choices and actions are dictated by one

thing—the power of believing. We believe—therefore we act, that is faith. Without faith, nothing can be accomplished in our lives.

Examples

When you prepare dinner for your family you believe they will enjoy the dishes you cook. Then you proceed to cook the dishes.

When you choose a course, say engineering, you believe you will become a good engineer and make a good career out of it. Then you go to enroll in the course.

When you decide to propose to your spouse, you believe that she or he is the best person to share your life with. Then you go to propose for marriage.

When you invest in the stock market, you believe you will make a good return of investment. Then you go to pick the right stock.

All our actions are done through faith—whether small or big. We do something because we believe in the benefits, and we go out to do it.

That is faith! Even the negative actions are based on

faith. Because of the belief that it will not happen or it is not beneficial, then we avoid it. Everything we do in life is based on our belief.

Faith Is

Faith is not believing in the impossible. That is hallucination. Faith is believing that the possible is attainable, or there is someone who is able to make what is seemingly impossible possible. Therefore, faith has an element of certainty, surety and reality.

Therefore in our decision making process, we take a course of action believing that it will bring the right results—a benefit. That is faith in action. When we decide to do an enterprise or a career, we firmly believe that we can be successful. We envision the end result even before we begin. It is this faith that propels men to



do great things and endeavor to pursue it to its conclusion. There are so many examples of visionary men who made a difference in other people's lives through their belief.

Hope is different from faith. In Tagalog hope is *pag-asa*. Therefore, hope is an anticipated fulfillment. Faith is the assurance of certainty, while hope is the anticipated fulfillment. An example of this is looking at a map for direction then hope to arrive at one's destination.

Therefore, the scripture says in Hebrews 11:1 “To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see.” (Good News Translation). Faith therefore is the assurance of an anticipated fulfillment and certainty of things that is not seen yet.

We make our everyday decisions based on this very assumption that what we expect to happen will happen. Without faith we can do nothing in our lives. Because to make a decision—what to wear, what to eat, what course to take, what career to pursue, who to marry—all these decisions are made on faith. So, when God demands faith from us He was asking a simple thing. So that, if we put faith in everything we do, why not put faith in Him and His will first?

Demand of Faith

The scripture says: without faith it is impossible to please God. And that statement is absolutely true. Because for anyone to decide to act and to behave righteously, he has to believe he is doing the right things. And it was for this simple faith that the ancients of old were commended as recorded in the 11th chapter of the book of Hebrews.

Certainty Hoped For

Paul said that there is certainty of the things that we hoped for. In Hebrews he was talking about a city and a promise that the ancients were looking for with longing and expectations—the New Jerusalem—the abode of the righteous (Heb. 11:16). Paul talks about the certainty of our hope—the sonship in the Kingdom. Notice: For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. (Romans 8:14-16)

Summation

Therefore, faith is to believe in the assurance that you will become a son and a daughter in the Kingdom of our Father. That certainty is assured even if it is yet in the future. Thus, we put our belief into action in anticipation of the fulfillment of the reality of these promises.

We live our lives everyday with faith and hope in the mundane things we do. God's expectation of us is to apply the same faith and hope in Him. And that with certainty we shall on that day become a son and a daughter of God to dwell forever in His kingdom. That is the faith that should govern our lives. **AG**

Discipline

by Ferdie S. Padilla

There is one word at the mention of which conjures images of pain, self-denial, unpleasant experience or simply dreadful. This word is often associated with punishment. Mere mention of it brings ideas of being punished. Nobody wants it also for the simple reason that it infringes on one's freedom to do whatever he or she wishes. But it is also one of the things that we, human beings, need more than anything, to make our lives better. That word is "discipline".

Definition of Discipline

In the thefreedictionary site (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/discipline>), discipline has several definitions, but we will list down two, for purposes of our discussion: dis-ci-pline (n.)

1. Training expected to produce a specific character or pattern of behavior, especially training that produces moral or mental improvement; 2. Punishment intended to correct or train". Going by the first definition, we see that there is a process involved in discipline. The operative word is "training". Training, as we know, involves time and experience. The desired result doesn't happen overnight. In our case as Christians, the training or discipline needed for us to learn the right conduct God requires of us may be spread over a period of time. What if we do not progress along the lines or road God intends? Then that's the time the second definition comes in. We might get punished. But the punitive action has a purpose, that is, to correct us so that we go back on the right track.

For many of us, discipline is mostly associated with the second definition. Perhaps, we have had

lots of personal experiences where we were disciplined by our elders and what stuck to our young minds were the unpleasant spanking or rebukes. When we were told we were being disciplined, we missed the point of why it was done in the first place. Discipline then became associated with the punitive actions. However, discipline should not have a negative connotation to us especially if we take note of the first definition, that it entails training to produce a desired moral or mental development. In other words, discipline is definitely needed in character development.

Discipline Advocated by the Bible

The Bible advocates discipline as a way of life. We read in Proverbs 6:20-23, "My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching. Bind them upon your heart forever; fasten them around your neck. When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you. For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life..." Here we see the important role that parents have in disciplining their children. Children are expected to observe the commands and teachings of their parents. This, of course, assumes that the parents themselves are firmly grounded in God's commands or at least have learned the basic moral values like honesty, integrity and care for others. The parents' commands are described as a lamp and a light. Then it goes to say that "the corrections of discipline are the way to life." Discipline is described as the way to life. It is important therefore that we understand what discipline is and not forsake it.

In a similar fashion that parents are described as disciplining their children, God is also described as one who disciplines His children as stated in Proverbs 3:11-12, "My son, do not despise the LORD'S discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in." The implication of the passage we have read is if God disciplines us, He considers us as His children. If that is the case, then we should welcome that discipline. At least in our hearts and minds we know that God cares enough for our eternal well being to discipline us when needed.

The Bible also indirectly speaks of discipline when speaking of the Feasts of God. Discipline is implied when we observe, for example, the Days of Unleavened Bread. During these days, we are commanded to eat unleavened bread and totally avoid products with leavening. Prior to these days, we are commanded to clean up our homes of leavened products. It requires discipline to actually do this. We are so used to eating bread with yeast. When we have this craving for bread, we have to constantly remind ourselves that we cannot just eat any bread during this time of year. It is quite difficult in a real world setting. And that is actually where the discipline to stay faithful to God's commands can be exercised.

In this article, we will talk about three things that would need our attention because this is where we usually fail.

Three Things That Need Discipline

1) Discipline Our Appetites

When we say that we need to discipline our appetites, we will not only refer to our physical appetites, though that one is quite obvious. The lusts of the eye usually drive our appetites. We yearn for material things, the latest gadgets, the latest appliances, the latest clothing, the latest car models and a host of other things. And when we do get them, there is an even bigger craving. Our appetites are not satisfied. Ecclesiastes 6:7 says "All man's efforts are for his mouth, yet his appetite is never satisfied." People become greedy as a result. This unbridled greediness leads people to

do a lot of evil things just to try to satisfy the appetite. People murder others in the name of money because it is the means nowadays to purchase whatever the eye fancies. People engage in adulterous affairs because they cannot rein in their lusts. People engage in character assassination whenever it becomes handy to move their way up the corporate ladder because they are not satisfied with their current positions or simply just to get what they want. These peoples' egos are never satisfied. We can go on and on about human appetites but the few that we have mentioned should be enough to get to our point – the need to discipline our appetites.

2) Discipline Our Emotions

In Proverbs 29:11 we read "A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control." This passage might well be a good argument why we should discipline our emotions. Disciplining our emotions is an indication of maturity—spiritual maturity if we will. Those who are not able to control, discipline their anger is called a fool for good reason. Those who easily get angry place themselves in a situation where no one really wins. Those who get angry only earn enemies and this is a foolish thing to do. Those at the receiving end naturally would not like it and may resent the angry person, getting back in kind. So why would anyone want enemies at all? If we are wise then we should keep our tempers in check. The passage read earlier also implies that if we are at the receiving end of an angry person, we should also keep ourselves under control. If we do this, the angry person will soon realize that he is acting a fool when we do not reply the way he expects. Now closely related to keeping our emotion in check is disciplining our tongues. The tongue is a double-edged sword driven by emotion. Hence, the relation between the two. The tongue is the avenue by which we express ourselves. We feel happy, we verbalize it. We feel angry, we almost always will verbalize it. I think we all know what this means. If we want to get along with other people, we should be careful with what we say. A small seemingly insignificant comment

may actually be the spark to a greater conflict. So let us all watch these two.

3) Discipline Our Hearts and Minds

The third item on our list, if done will almost always automatically cover the two items we have already mentioned. There is an illustration of this in Matthew 5:27-28 "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Here Jesus elevated the observance of the seventh commandment. The implication is we have to discipline our hearts and minds. It is not enough that we do not actually commit the sin of adultery physically. Just thinking about a woman in a lustful manner already constitutes adultery! Time and again, we have read these verses and hopefully, in this article, we see them in another light. If we discipline our hearts and minds, our emotions, our speech, our actions will follow suit. Everything starts with the mind and heart. What we think and what attitudes lay beneath us will find themselves expressed without us knowing it. Therefore, everyone ought to discipline their hearts and minds. Just imagine if everyone does this. The world as we know it will be very much different. Today that is just wishful thinking. Eventually everyone will learn disciplining their hearts and minds. To us who have been called, we should always strive to be disciplined at heart and mind so we can enter God's kingdom.

Conclusion

Dear readers, the three things we have mentioned needing discipline—our appetites, our emotions, our hearts and minds—basically are the same doors that sin enters our lives. If we discipline our appetites, our emotions, our hearts and minds, we are effectively shutting the door to sin. It will not happen instantly but slowly it will take place. The Days of Unleavened Bread will soon be upon us. These days picture the complete putting away of sin out of our lives. It does not happen in a day or two or five. It takes longer than that. We could also argue, and submit for your contemplation that discipline is implied in our observance of these days. The things we do in preparation for these days—putting away leavened products and the eating of unleavened bread and avoiding leavened products somehow instills discipline in us. Remember the definition mentioned at the beginning? Discipline is training geared towards producing character. As we "unleaven" ourselves year in and year out, discipline is instilled in our persona. It becomes second nature for us to remember the significance of these days and to put into action the lessons it imparts to us—putting sin out of our lives. It will take time, true, but it will happen so long as we faithfully observe them. If we do want to enter God's kingdom, let us remember to put discipline into our lives. **AG**

**"Thy word
is a lamp
unto my feet,
and a light
unto my path"**

Psalms 119:105

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giving in to his demands. In short, he has vast powers to effect the necessary changes for the welfare of the country and well-being of the citizens. On account of this, the people pinned their hopes and trust in him to deliver his promises and implement his program of government. Sadly, regardless of how popular and competent the leader is (as in all cases) the majority will always find themselves dissatisfied in the end.

Promised Promises

It is common impression that very few politicians can be relied upon to truly keep their word. Honesty they say is an exception rather the rule—an attribute very common also even among non-politicians. The Bible concluded “Let God be true, but every man a liar, Romans 3:4.

Thus, even if politicians are true to their vocation and sincere in the desire to uplift the lives of the “downtrodden”, they still can't be fully relied upon to deliver the people's expectations. Hindrances and obstructions will always present itself along the way. Disgruntled elements of society will never run out of causes to make things difficult. The brief stint allowed him to govern is not enough to implement the reforms needed especially if he inherited an incompetent regime. Besides, he is subject to human frailties, bodily afflictions, the ageing processes, human attachments that may affect his noble intentions—withstanding the ever-diligent political opponents who will make sure he fails. Likewise his security is not guaranteed, owing to the fact that there is no such thing as an impervious security to prevent a determined destroyer.

Human Capability

Man's promises should just be treated as such—a promise. Thus, to spare one of frustration and discouragement, it pays to mellow down one's expectation from politicians. A good leader will probably rise and succeed to implement changes for the better, and for a while. Yet, history keeps reminding us that there are no guarantees that good things are sustainably getting better all the

time. Leaders come and go. Personalities have more points of disagreement rather than being tolerant with each other. Different people do different things. They are guided by humanly crafted laws that are subject to all kinds of interpretation; sometimes by the men and women who are prone to play favourites.

Although there are many nations on earth today whose citizens are privileged to live convenient lives, the majority are still wallowing in poverty, filth, squalor and are deprived of an existence befitting humans. This despite the advancement of science and technology that ought to make life a little easier in the 21st century.

Human leaders do not possess extraordinary powers to completely find the solutions to problems that plague the nation. The growing population of the impoverished, inequality, rising criminality, corruption in government bureaucracy, bribe-prone judiciary, unabated proliferation of prohibited drugs, smuggling, inefficient government services and all other problems that needed a “superman” to put an end to all of them, have stayed with us ever since. And man is incapable of coming up with solutions to all of his woes.

An honest to goodness assessment of man—regardless of status, achievements, intellectual superiority and presumed competence is candidly summarized by the Psalmist: Do not put your trust in princes, Nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help. His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plans perish (Psalms 146:3-4). The apostle Peter added: All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away (1 Peter 1:24). And Solomon said: This is an evil in all that is done under the sun: that one thing happens to all. Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead (Ecclesiastes 9:3).

Given the reality of human limitations, the hope of the citizenry should not depend on politicians or the nation's leaders. The people should just work hard to sustain their survival needs, and minimize

if not discontinue their reliance on government. After all, the primary consideration of government is to impose taxation first before its citizens can expect them to assume the role of a benefactor. They will have to satisfy those at the helm first, then down the line to the entire bureaucracy. No wonder people aspire to make a career out of politics because therein lies the source of temporary stability.

The bible has a practical advisory saying, "workout your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil.2:12). While this is more of a spiritual admonition, it is a sound principle to consider for the ordinary man's struggle for a better life. This famous line from JFK has been repeatedly mouthed by politicians: "Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country." And that is what everyone need to consider especially those at the helm of government.

Jesus and Politics

When Jesus walked the earth, He performed miracles after miracles. He healed all kinds of sickness and diseases. Yet not at any time did He try to launch a crusade to make life convenient for the masses. He did not espoused nor promote poverty alleviating programs, or try to straighten out a crooked system. His miracles and healing activities would have been an effective tool in popularizing Himself with the masses; and certainly this would have made Him one political figure to reckon with.

Notice: And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. Great multitudes followed Him—from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan (Matthew 4:23-25).

Jesus' mission was not to become famous with

the people then volunteer to become their leader. On one occasion, Jesus escaped from a large crowd who were about to take Him by force and make Him their king (John 6:15). And before Pilate, Jesus admitted that His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36), at least NOT at this present time. There is a being who claimed without hesitation his ownership of the kingdoms of this world. Listen: "Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND HIM ONLY YOU SHALL SERVE.'" (Mat. 4:8-10).

A Promise Worth Waiting

Jesus promised to return (Rev.3:3,11; Rev.22:12). This time He will take over the kingdoms of this world. Revelation 11:15 says, "Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever! That will be the time that He will exercise authority and rulership all over the world together with the saints who are qualified to rule with Him (Rev.2:26-27; Rev. 5:10; Rev.20:4-6).

Jesus Christ will come and set up a kingdom and a government that is meant to provide peace, happiness and goodwill to all of mankind. This is an event worth waiting than the present political happenings in our midst. Everyone who wants to take part in this new world order are encourage to qualify now. This is one important bible truth few preachers dare to proclaim. It is one of the main reasons why Jesus is coming back.

Eleno S. Mellomida

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