

God, His Gauntlet, the Switch and Our Shift, Part II

By Christine Meier

Last month we set the foundation for the set of circumstances that we see played out as God uses a people group to accomplish His set of plans and circumstances. As we discussed some things about God last month and looked at some of His previous 'gauntlet' people, three questions arose. In a nutshell, these questions ask whether or not it's possible for gauntlet people to be in rebellion and strife. How can they be sensitive enough to the Holy Spirit to know if they are; and, are there any dynamics to let God's people know when God is getting ready to do this? I see God raising up a group of people that are willing to go through some 'stuff' in order to see Christ exalted. As a result they challenge mediocre Christianity and the world as well. They can be labeled as weird or possibly even rebellious by their Christian brothers and sisters. These saints are going to be willing to spend their 'all' for Jesus. Since this is not the 'norm' for a large group of those in western Christianity today, a transition will be evident as God requires many to lay down more and more of their possessions and positions in both the world and the 'church' world. Since this is a transition, for some it may be as simple as giving up some time in ways they never did before. For others it may mean saying no to that important job offer because Jesus told them to come and follow Him. And for others, it may mean giving

up their coveted positions in religion and risking ridicule to do what our Lord has required them to do. For all of us, it will mean a daily desire to go to the cross in our lives.



This is why our first question concerning rebellion is so important. As I read the Scriptures and look at the lives of those that seem equipped with this call, I see five different tests that Father God will take them through to test their faith, obedience and motives. These are five tests that Jesus went through. They are five tests the early church experienced. What these five tests will produce is a people that come in total agreement with the Word of the Lord on the face of the earth. Jesus came in total agreement with God's word on earth. The disciples, Rome and the Jewish priests did not come in total

agreement with God's word concerning Messiah. Because the disciples' heart was to believe, as well as some Romans (centurion) and Jewish priests (Nicodemus), our Lord challenged them to believe and follow Him totally. As a result, they also became 'gauntlet' people that challenged religious norms within their own spheres of influence. There are definite life experiences that God will take such people through to prepare them for this walk. The first is obvious and it is childhood education. If one is raised without discipline or is raised in an environment of abusive discipline, God will have to rearrange our upbringing to line up with His discipline. If they are raised without a hard work ethic (the word couch potato comes to mind), God will put them in years of a hard work environment to change them. People like Nicodemus and the disciples were well trained in the Scriptures and hard work at very early ages. So God may have to take some today through many, many years of Biblical training as well as hard labor. Much of this training will surround their character. These five tests or circumstances are experiences that expose any and all areas of rebellion. While Jesus had no areas of rebellion to be exposed, He still walked through these tests: **One**, He allowed His feelings to be hurt (See Matthew 23:37, John 11:35). **Two**, He allowed Himself to be exposed no matter the consequences (See John 10:25-39). **Three**, even though He was right in His assessment of situations, He never flaunted it (See John 19:10, 11). If I were

talking about a mere mortal I would explain this circumstance this way: Gauntlet people swallow their pride, even *if* they're right. **Number four**, He allowed Himself to be wronged and falsely accused (See Luke 22:37). **And last, but definitely not least**, He allowed Himself to be tested by Father God in these as well as many other areas with no outward sign of approval from God that He passed the test and no approval from friends, family, religious or governmental leaders around Him (See Isaiah 53:3, 4).

Even if you have read the Gospels through once, I think you will agree that we see these same patterns over and over again. If we apply our present world troubles to these circumstances, we can see that if everyone allowed Jesus to take them through these five areas, there would be no wars and no rumors of wars. These areas are hard to be tested in. But after awhile, it almost becomes easy. You might say, how do you know that you're in one of His tests? My answer: say something – go ahead, open your mouth. You'll know. I've learned that if I'm in one of His tests, the more I say will only make it worse.

When you're walking with God through one of these tests, you will learn how to love people, even when you know you don't want to love them. Jesus loved us while we were still His enemies (See Romans 5:8). Love is not a feeling. Love is a choice. I wish love were just a feeling, then this would be easy. Because gauntlet people are going to be used by

God to challenge some things, their motive can be nothing other than God's motives. In fact, I doubt very much that they know they have made any impact until some time later (except in the case of Jesus). This is how one will know that they can be sensitive enough to hear the Holy Spirit in these situations: they still love. In an attitude of love you can hear Jesus say anything He wants you to know. A mistake concerning these tests is to expect everyone to be on the same level. This simply is not fair. What God may require of me as a test is not the same experience that He may require of someone else. A test for a young mother with children or a grandmother may be to open their home to people making a mess of it in let's say for example a bible study. While a test for a young, single man may be to go off to war. These two tests couldn't be more different in their experiences, yet Jesus can be just as pleased with the grandmother as the young soldier. They all were tested in their obedience, faith and love and in the end bitterness and unforgiveness never grabbed their hearts. They loved the unlovely just like Jesus did.

Now that we have discussed our first two questions, we have one last question remaining:

Are there any dynamics or patterns that we see evidenced that will let us know God is "Taking off the gloves" and throwing down a gauntlet? There are four Scripture verses that I felt led to read. They are: Deuteronomy 29:4; Psalm 115:7 and Psalm 135:16 & 17 read as one reference together; Isaiah 6:9 and

finally Matthew 13:15. You might read these and say, they all say the same thing. Yes, they do and no, they don't. Each portion of Scripture was written during a different time period in Israel's history. In Deuteronomy we see the first part of the book with God recalling His people's past, while the next portion of the book envisions Israel's future life in this new land. From chapter 29 to 30, with the exception of some texts concerning the wilderness, God now places their possible future before them if they heed his warnings. The choice is theirs. They are a 'new' people, having had the brokenness of slavery stripped off of them. What will their choice be? Will they receive eyes to see and ears to hear? Or will they go back to their old ways and circumvent this new eyesight and spiritual hearing? This is important. Because it's at just such a place in all new believers' lives that satan tries to convince them to turn back from following Christ. It's at just such a place in a newness of Christian experience in a seasoned believer's life that satan will tempt them to return to the old, nominal Christianity. You know, you may have experienced a spiritual awakening of some kind from visiting a church or just a newness of a walk in your prayer life and some well meaning friend will come along and say, "it doesn't take all that to please Jesus. You don't have to wake up so early in the morning and fast all those days. You don't have to put yourself or your family out like that." At that point you are just developing new eyes to see Jesus with or new ears to hear Him. If you listen to

these voices, mark my words, you will lose your new eyesight and hearing. I'm not saying repentance won't restore you. But that's satan's point. When you fall back, you may not even have the spiritual eyesight or hearing to know you need to repent. In Israel's case, God, so to speak, 'threw down' Joshua and Caleb as examples of proper leadership and proper 'hearing and seeing' responses to God and His Word. And so our Lord may send a preacher, a book, an article, our private Bible reading time or a different friend to challenge us right back onto His path of proper eyesight and hearing.

Psalms 115 and 135 are interesting psalms in deed. Historically they were probably written at different times. The bulk of scholars place Psalm 115 as having been written during the second temple building revival and Psalm 135 as possibly being written much earlier by Hezekiah during that temple revival. Whether that is true or not, one thing is certain: These were written by a people who are spiritually on fire for God. Both these psalms are hymns used in temple worship. In fact, after the Passover supper finished with the fourth cup, the second portion of the Hallel (Psalms 113-118 of which Ps.115-118 was the second part) would have been sung. This is the reference Matthew makes when he says, "When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives." (See Matthew 26:30) It is not always during times of backsliding that satan comes to tempt a people, but when they are on the mountain top with God. When you

are feeling your strongest in Christ and all is going well, you have to remind yourself how easy it is to serve an idol in your heart. Maybe your idol is not a carving of Buddha or some other icon. Maybe your idol is comfort and a nice car. Maybe God has given you these. Maybe you belong to a church that is on fire for God. Maybe you get caught up in working hard in that church but ever so subtly in your heart you judge another's work as not work enough or another's service as not as important as yours. It won't take long for other areas of judgment to creep in. Before you know it, your idols have become your own thoughts. God is never able to do anything that challenges you in front of anybody else. All the while, even in the midst of spiritual renewal, you can develop ears that won't hear and eyes that refuse to spiritually see. This is how new moves of God become persecuted by the old move of God. This is how this spiritual pattern keeps playing out in history and in revival after revival. In fact, in my opinion, this is why I think God raises up a new movement, as a 'gauntlet' people to challenge the old movement. Thank God He does. It is His kindness showing the old movement that He alone is God. No work or program or new thing moves Him. He alone moves us. (See Acts 17:28) He alone does the work that turns the earth. (See Psalm 135:6)

Isaiah 6:9 would seem to portray the same example as the previous psalms. But a closer look at who God was sending Isaiah to would change that

understanding. This is Israel pre-exile. What encouraged that exile along is what Isaiah was sent to warn them about. They will refuse to listen, developing the same hardness of hearing their hymns have warned them about. This category of people are falling in line with God's promise to them from Deuteronomy 30. They are about to be a banished people. They have no idea that their sin will exile them because their ears are stopped up and they have developed spiritual blindness. Isaiah and many of the subsequent prophets (See Jeremiah 5:21, Ezekiel 12:2, Zechariah 7:7-12) are 'thrown down' as gauntlet people to warn their brethren of their complacency and blindness. Because they refuse to listen, this turns events toward exile. While in exile, they repent and believe. Their ears are opened and their eyes see. They now see the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 30:1-6 and they are restored. I have seen folks who have had a relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit and then turn back. It is almost as if there are blinders on their eyes. They simply will not and cannot see that their course of action will take them farther away from God, not closer. I've seen it take days, weeks, months and years (on some, I'm still waiting) for them to want the Holy Spirit to take over their lives again. What has brought many back is a jolt back to reality. Either a word that had been spoken over them is brought back to memory or an event in which God previously spoke to them. In some cases even a time of severe hardship woke them up. It should not surprise us that

saved and Holy Spirit filled people should turn back from following their God. We can be thankful that Deuteronomy 30 was written. We should be thankful that the story of the prodigal son was told to us. Whatever our experience with backsliding, we can all be thankful that we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Son. (See 1 John 2:1) We can remember Ecclesiastes 7:20 (See also 1 John 1:8-10) pertains to all those who claim Christ as their own. And we can thank God for 1 John 1:9.

The last Scripture, Matthew 13:15 is written to a twice pardoned people who are on their way to ruin. As a group they're putting up a good front. But deep inside they know that they're lost. This is why, for the most part, the common man followed Christ as Messiah and why, for the most part, their religious leadership did not believe He was who He said He was. Jesus was a 'gauntlet' person used by God to challenge their natural laws (See Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:25, Mark 10:51,52), their theology (See John 10:30) and their understanding of Roman rule and Messiah (See John 7:32-52). He is sent not only as Isaiah was sent to jolt them back to God's reality, but to change every aspect of how they functioned and perceived themselves in relationship to 'their' world. This is why there is a constant command to have ears that hear all throughout the gospels (See Mark 4:23, 7:12; Luke 8:8, 14:35). It is also why there was the same constant command made by the apostles throughout the

rest of the early church's history.(See Acts 28:26,27; Romans 11:8) And it is why Jesus makes the final command in the book of Revelation for him that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches (See Revelation 3:22). It seems the condition of having ears that don't hear and eyes that don't see is not just relegated to the Old Testament. It is a condition that is prevalent in our society today, both in religious circles and secular ones. Any time we have been forgiven and set free, we can stand at the door of this condition. As Christians we cannot deny it as a possibility. As Christians if we say God cannot perform a miracle, He will mess with our understanding of 'natural' law. If we say God cannot be in such and such a situation, He will mess with our theology. If we say He must come back a certain way, watch it, He just may come back the way that suits Him, yet still fulfills all Scripture. If He tries to show us our error and change our hearts, but we refuse – watch it. We have just crossed the doorway of this condition. And unless God continues to jolt us, we will have spiritually deaf ears and spiritually blinded eyes.

These are four historical patterns that let us know God is getting ready to 'take off the gloves' and send our world changing. As we look around us we can see how close we are to this happening. Log on next month for more . . .

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