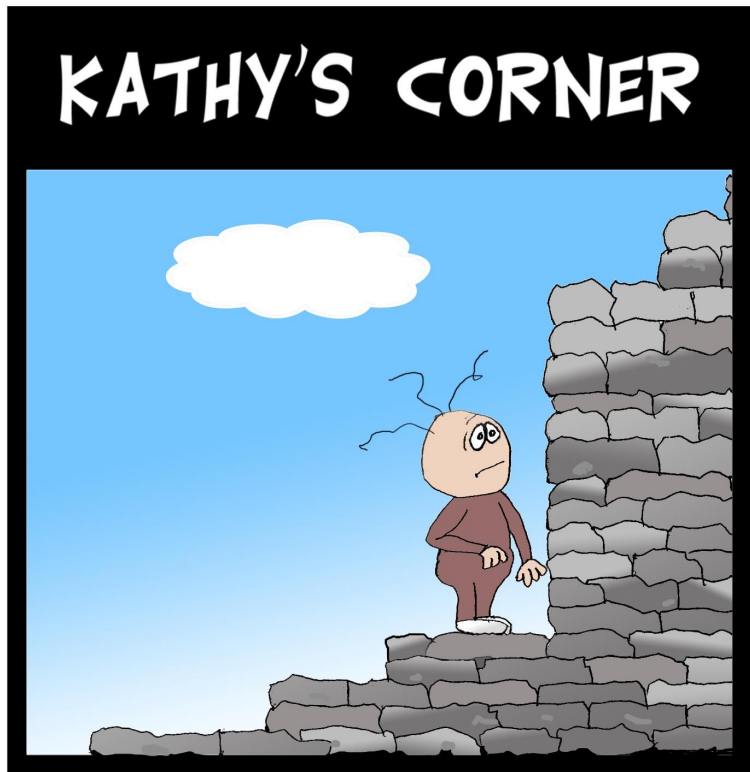


Sometimes I feel like a counterfeit as I know a lot of word, but I don't seem to have the life it should supply. The devil loves to capitalize on these feelings, as he did with me a few days ago. Trying to hear the voice of God clearly and let the Holy Spirit lead in my set apart time with Him has been interesting this week. We started with *abiding in Him*. It is important, but what does it mean? Then I wondered what Paul meant when he was concerned that he wouldn't be a *castaway*. Then along the same line in my thinking was the verse where *King Jesus divided the sheep from the goats*; and where does humility fit into all of this? A lot to ponder—I will try to communicate some of what I discovered. I would love to hear some of your thoughts on these things, as well.



### Abiding in Him

**If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.** (John 15:7 NIV) The word *remain* is the key condition here. In the King James Version it is translated *abide*. It can be translated  *dwell*, or *live* as in the Amplified Bible:

**If you live in Me [abide vitally united to Me] and My words remain in you and continue to live in your hearts, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.** (John 15:7 AMP Classic)

As I thought about abiding, I realized all of our standing as Christians is in Him. Without being in Him there would be no victory or authority available to us, and no hope of approaching God with boldness and expectation. Were it not for the resurrection and ascension of Jesus we would still live hopelessly in our sin, and we could not approach God in that condition.

Thank you Jesus! **Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.** (Hebrews 4:14-16 NIV)

Outside of the conditions of abiding in Him and His word abiding in us should we expect answers to our prayers? Do we allow His words to be life, live in us, or are they just something in our minds? Knowledge puffs up; love builds up.

Jesus said to the Jewish leaders, **“And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you**

have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life....but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts.” (John 5:37-40, 42 NIV)

### The Sheep and the Goats

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angel. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

“They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

“He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

This passage is pretty sobering. Taken literally I certainly fall short. God have mercy on me! There are times when I did some of the above, but not always in that loving spirit of the Lord. To take these words spiritually is important as well. Thinking of strangers as those not yet in the fold—the lost. We should invite them in. When we see the hungry and thirsty do we give them the bread and drink that will satisfy—Jesus? When we see the sick or bound and imprisoned do we offer the freedom and deliverance that only Christ can give? Do we really look after these? When we see the naked do we clothe them? I think of the kinsman redeemer that spread his skirt over Ruth. He was to provide for her, be husband to her. I think of Psalm 91:4, **“He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart (*defense*).”** Are we judgmental or helpful? Are we offering the covering of Christ? Where would any of us be without it?

### Humility

Humility is best demonstrated by the Son of God who laid down so much to become a servant to all. The cost! The suffering! The short earthly life with no place to call His own or lay His head! What a

contrast to us! We give, but with reserve. Are we ever content? Where is our treasure—our heart? When I give I never give as did the widow who gave her last mite. It was all she had to live on according to Jesus. I give thinking will I still have enough to live on the rest of the month—It shows a lack of faith on my part.

And what about the Pharisee within? In his book *Humility*, Andrew Murray talked about Luke 18:10 “*Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.*” Do you remember the account? The Pharisee was thanking God that he wasn’t like the publican and bragging about all his religious—letter-of-the-law activity. Murray reminds, “Pride can lift its head in the very temple of God and make His worship the scene of its self-exaltation.” Murray continues, “Since the time Christ so exposed his pride, the Pharisee has put on the garb of the publican. The confessor of deep sinfulness, equally with the one who claims the highest holiness, must be on the watch. Just when we are most anxious to have our hearts be the temple of God, we will find the two men coming up to pray. And the publican will find that his danger is not from the Pharisee beside him, who despises him, but from the Pharisee within, who commends and exalts. In God’s temple, when we think we are in the Holiest of All, in the presence of His holiness, let us beware of pride.”

### **Paul’s Concern About Being a Castaway**

**So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.** (1 Corinthians 9:26-27 NLT)

**Am I not as free as anyone else? Am I not an apostle? Haven’t I seen Jesus our Lord with my own eyes? Isn’t it because of my work that you belong to the Lord? Even if others think I am not an apostle, I certainly am to you. You yourselves are proof that I am the Lord’s apostle.** (1 Corinthians 9:1-2 NLT)

Wow! Every leader should be able to say to their followers, “You are the proof of my work in the Lord.” And the followers should be able to offer themselves as proof and not be counterfeits of the ministries to which they belong. The loyalty goes both ways.

### **Having a Body (of Christ)—A Team Mindset**

I woke up from a dream this morning. *A bunch of us were going up a very long, stone stairway. It was wide enough so that a few of us could be on the same step at the same time. After ascending several steps I missed one. I realized this step was not of the same increment that the others had been, but was a few inches higher than the previous steps. It took more effort for me, but I mounted it and continued on—we all did. Soon I was faced with a step, a very high step. It was so high that I couldn’t step up on my own. I looked for a way to continue up. I started to look at others. Would they help? Would we help each other?* I woke up at this point. To continue upward I would either need help or a plan.

As part of Christ’s body we are not in a competition with one another. We desire each member to be with us in the victory and in each step of the way. No one should be left behind. We are to esteem others as better than ourselves. **Don’t be selfish; don’t try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.** (Philippians 2:3-4 NLT) Thank God we are not alone on this journey.

## **House of Prayer**

In James it says, **“Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises. Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven. Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.** (James 5:13-16 NLT)

One thing I have been thankful for recently is that after service, ministry through prayer is being offered. I have personally benefited from this, as have others. Serving others through our prayers, and receiving prayers from Jesus’ church are two of the benefits of being in the body of Christ, that family of faith. What a wonderful ministry!

**It is written, “My house shall be called a house of prayer.”** (From Matthew 21:13) Jesus meant for His church, the gathering of His people to be a house of prayer. Our abiding in Him, our standing in Him, is our total reliance on the Son as our covering. Our confidence is in Him. When we cry out to Him, He hears! We are privileged.